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The Neglected Bible The Tragedy of and Remedy for the Illiteracy of Scripture

by Gary E. Gilley

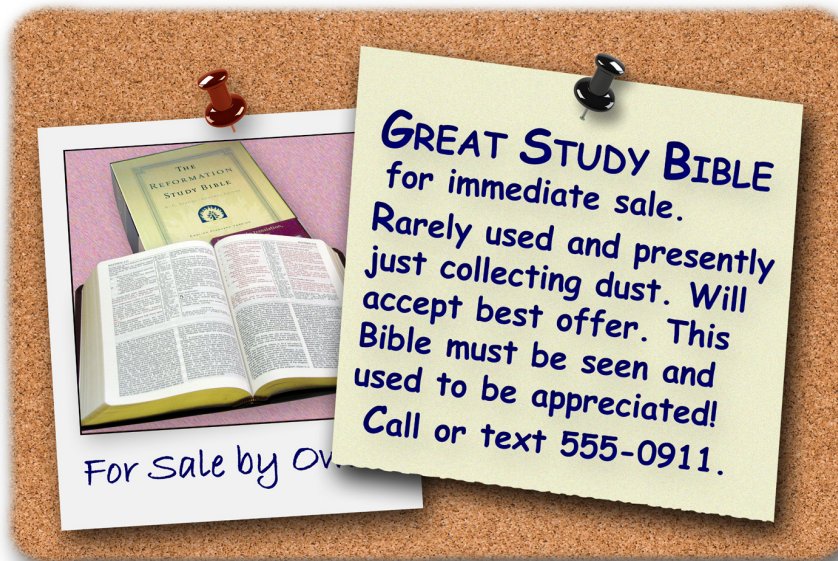
Both statistical research and anecdotal observation have reached the same conclusion: America, a nation once steeped in Scripture, if not always living in obedience to God, has joined the ranks of the biblically illiterate from around the globe. Theologians and sociologists both speak of our “post-Christian” culture, while to some extent is still being fueled by the capital of Christianity, which is now all but coasting on empty.

More than a quarter century ago, pollsters George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli reported, “Americans revere the Bible — but, by and large, they don’t read it. And because they don’t read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates.”¹ As a result, Gallup and Castelli informed us that, “Fewer than half of all adults can name Matthew, Mark, Luke and

John as the four Gospels of the New Testament, while many do not know that Jesus had twelve disciples or that he was born in Bethlehem.”²

Another more recent survey, this one conducted by The Barna Group, revealed an outcome that was even more alarming: 82 percent of Americans believe that “God helps those who help themselves” is a quote from the Bible, 12 percent of adults believe Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife, a large number think Billy Graham preached the Sermon on the Mount, and more than 50 percent of graduating high school seniors think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.³

If drawn from secular society, these findings and stories
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