SOFTWARE & TECH

That The World May Know

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Introduction: The Enduring Power of a Phrase

Few phrases carry the weight of divine purpose quite like "That The World May Know." These four simple words encapsulate a profound mission that has echoed through millennia, from ancient biblical texts to modern-day educational ministries. At its core, this expression speaks to a universal human longing: the desire for truth to be revealed, understood, and shared across boundaries of time, culture, and geography. Whether encountered in scripture, in a classroom, or through a documentary series, "That The World May Know" resonates as a call to deeper understanding and connection with the divine story that has shaped Western civilization.

In contemporary Christian education and faith formation, this phrase has taken on new life through resources that bridge the gap between ancient text and modern reader. The journey to grasp what "That The World May Know" truly means involves exploring both its biblical foundations and its practical applications for believers today. This article delves into the origins, significance, and transformative power of this timeless declaration, offering readers a comprehensive look at how a single phrase can inspire a movement of discovery.

The Biblical Origin of "That The World May Know"

The phrase "That The World May Know" finds its roots deep in the scriptural narratives of the Old and New Testaments. One of its most striking appearances occurs in 1 Kings 8:43, during Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple. The king pleads with God to hear the prayers of foreigners who come to worship, **"that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel."** This moment reveals a heart for global witness that transcends national boundaries.

Similarly, in 1 Kings 18:37, the prophet Elijah cries out to God on Mount Carmel, asking for divine fire to consume the sacrifice **"that this people may know that You, Lord, are God."** Here, the phrase becomes a rallying cry for authentic faith against false worship. The entire narrative of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal hinges on this desire for public, undeniable revelation of God's power.

The New Testament Echo

The theme continues in the Gospel of John, where Jesus speaks of His mission in terms that mirror this ancient declaration. In John 17:21, Jesus prays for His followers **"that the world may believe that You sent Me."** This high priestly prayer underscores the evangelistic heartbeat of the Christian faith: unity among believers serves as a testimony to a watching world. The phrase "That The World May Know" thus becomes the lens through which all of redemptive history is viewed.

The Ministry: Bringing Scripture to Life

In the late twentieth century, a groundbreaking educational initiative adopted "That The World May Know" as its

That The World May Know ministry emerged from a simple but powerful conviction: the Bible cannot be fully understood apart from its original historical, cultural, and geographical context. Vander Laan, a gifted communicator with a passion for the land of Israel, began teaching small groups in Michigan, but his message quickly spread far beyond local boundaries.

The ministry's flagship product is a series of video Bible studies that take viewers on location to the very places where biblical events unfolded. Rather than simply reading about the stories of Scripture, participants walk through the streets of Jerusalem, stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and explore the ruins of ancient cities. This immersive approach transforms abstract concepts into tangible realities, making the Word of God come alive for modern audiences.

Why Context Matters

The central thesis of the That The World May Know ministry is that **geography is theology**. The terrain of Israel is not merely a backdrop for biblical events but an active participant in the story. When Jesus taught in parables about sowing seeds, shepherds, and vineyards, He was drawing on the everyday experiences of His listeners. Understanding the rocky soil of Galilee, the seasonal rains, and the economic realities of first-century farming opens up layers of meaning that are often lost to readers separated by two thousand years and thousands of miles.

By recovering this context, the ministry enables believers to hear the Word as its original audience heard it. This approach does not change the message of Scripture but deepens its impact, revealing nuances that transform personal study and group discussion alike.

The Importance of Historical and Cultural Context

Many Christians read the Bible through a modern Western lens, unconsciously imposing their own assumptions on the text. The phrase "That The World May Know" challenges this approach by inviting readers to step into the world of the Bible. Understanding the cultural practices of ancient Israel and the Greco-Roman world illuminates passages that might otherwise remain obscure.

For example, the concept of **community honor and shame**played a far greater role in biblical times than in contemporary individualistic societies. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath or spoke with a Samaritan woman, He was not simply performing a miracle or having a conversation—He was challenging deeply ingrained social hierarchies. Recognizing these dynamics helps modern readers grasp the radical nature of Jesus' ministry and the cost of discipleship.

Archaeology and Faith

Archaeological discoveries continue to confirm the historical reliability of Scripture, providing tangible evidence that the Bible is rooted in real places and events. The excavations at sites like Megiddo, Dan, and Jerusalem's City of David offer glimpses into the world of Abraham, David, and Jesus. For believers seeking to strengthen their faith, this convergence of archaeology and Scripture provides a solid foundation for confidence in the Word of God.

The That The World May Know series frequently incorporates archaeological insights, showing viewers the very stones that bear witness to biblical narratives. This visual connection between past and present makes history feel immediate and personal, reinforcing the truth that the Bible is not a collection of myths but a record of God's faithful dealings with real people.

Key Themes in the "That The World May Know" Series

The video series covers a wide range of biblical books and themes, but several recurring motifs tie the entire body of work together. These include:

- God's Relentless Pursuit of His People - From the Exodus to the exile, God consistently reaches out to a wayward people, demonstrating His covenant faithfulness.
- The Kingdom of God as a Present Reality - Jesus' proclamation that the kingdom is at hand is explored in light of Jewish expectations and Roman political realities.
- Discipleship as Imitation - In the ancient world, disciples did not merely learn facts; they sought to become like their teacher. This model challenges modern notions of passive learning.
- Witness in a Hostile World - The early church grew amid persecution, and the series highlights how believers today can draw strength from their example.
- The Promise of Restoration - The biblical narrative moves from creation to new creation, and the land of Israel serves as a foretaste of the world to come.

Each study session combines on-site teaching with discussion questions and application points, making the material accessible for groups of any size. The format encourages participants to move beyond intellectual understanding to heart-level transformation.

How This Approach Deepens Faith

Engaging with the Bible through the lens of "That The World May Know" produces several concrete benefits for believers. First, it **increases understanding** by clarifying difficult passages. When readers grasp the significance of a mustard seed, the function of a winepress, or the location of a synagogue, the text comes into sharper focus.

Second, it **strengthens faith** by demonstrating the historical trustworthiness of Scripture. Seeing the places and artifacts described in the Bible confirms that these events occurred in time and space. For those wrestling with doubts, this evidence can be deeply reassuring.

Third, it **inspires worship**. The more one understands God's work in history, the more reason there is to praise Him. The grandeur of the biblical story, set against the backdrop of the land itself, evokes awe and gratitude.

Finally, it **motivates mission**. The phrase "That The World May Know" is not merely descriptive but prescriptive. Believers who have been transformed by their encounter with Scripture are compelled to share what they have learned with others, continuing the chain of witness that began with the patriarchs and prophets.

Practical Applications for Small Groups

Many churches and home groups have adopted the That The World May Know series as their curriculum for adult education. The videos are designed to be used in a group setting, with each session lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes, followed by discussion. Leaders are provided with guides that include background information, discussion questions, and activities that reinforce the lesson.

One of the strengths of this format is its **accessibility**. No prior knowledge of biblical history or theology is required to participate. The teaching is engaging and relatable, filled with stories and illustrations that resonate with viewers from all walks of life. Whether a new believer or a seasoned pastor, everyone can find fresh insights in these studies.

The Global Impact of the Ministry

Since its inception, the That The World May Know ministry has reached millions of people around the world through videos, books, and live teaching events. The materials have been translated into multiple languages, and the curriculum is used in churches, schools, and prisons. The ministry also leads study tours to Israel, giving participants the opportunity to experience the land firsthand under the guidance of expert teachers.

This global reach reflects the universal appeal of the message. The Bible belongs to all people, and

understanding its original context helps believers from every culture connect with its timeless truths. The ministry's commitment to excellence in teaching and production has earned it a reputation as one of the most trusted resources in Christian education.

Challenges and Criticisms

No ministry is without its challenges, and That The World May Know has faced its share. Some critics argue that an overemphasis on historical context can lead to a form of antiquarianism, where the focus on the past overshadows the present application of Scripture. Others caution against the assumption that understanding the original setting automatically produces spiritual growth.

However, the ministry's leaders have consistently emphasized that context is a tool, not an end in itself. The goal is always to encounter the living God through His Word, not merely to accumulate historical knowledge. When used wisely, the insights gained from studying the land and culture of the Bible enrich rather than detract from personal devotion.

Conclusion: A Call to Know and Make Known

The phrase "That The World May Know" carries within it both a promise and a commission. It is a promise that God has revealed Himself in history, in Scripture, and ultimately in Jesus Christ. It is also a commission that those who have received this revelation are called to share it with others. In a world marked by confusion, division, and spiritual hunger, the message of the Bible remains as relevant as ever.

Whether you are a long-time student of Scripture or someone just beginning to explore the Christian faith, the resources inspired by this phrase can open doors to deeper understanding. By stepping into the world of the Bible, you can hear its message with fresh ears and see its truth with new eyes. And as you learn, you too become part of the great story that began with a promise to Abraham and continues today—that the world may know the One who made it, loves it, and is drawing it to Himself.

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#that • #world • #may • #know

DIGITAL EDITION

that-the-world-may-know

DIGITAL EDITION

that-the-world-may-know

DIGITAL EDITION

that-the-world-may-know

DIGITAL EDITION

that-the-world-may-know