

01: PRINCIPLES A: BASIC BIBLE STUDY RULES



The Most Important Principle of dealing with Biblical Prophecy is that the Bible is its own Interpreter and the Holy Spirit, Who is the true Author of the Scriptures, will aid the honest in heart to understand its truths.

Turning on the Light!

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

When it comes to Bible study, some folk cannot seem to see and understand the truth of the Word. Others seem to easily grasp them. What can be making the difference?

There are many factors that can affect our ability to receive the deeper things of the Word of God. Of course the biggest blockade to understanding is an attitude of just not wanting to see it; or they may believe it is so complex they are sure it is beyond them. If you really do want to learn, but have been convinced it is so hard, let us see what the Word has to say for our encouragement.

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

So be encouraged, even a child can understand! Jesus promises:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32.

Let's explore things that may affect our perceptions.

Our Backgrounds.

For many folk these days, learning something new is not easy. Many have had bad experiences connected with study and reading; others have problems with dyslexia and perceptive challenges; these things can make the task seem insurmountable. But take courage; we have a promise for such situations:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." James 1:5.

Remember, Jesus has extra special compassion for us bashed up sheep; the patience He shows and the special protection He gives such persons is amazing. One can only fall to one's knees before Him in amazement at His grace and mercy!

Just acknowledge all your weaknesses to Him; don't allow yourself to keep thinking that "this is just the way you are and it can't be helped". It can be helped; just get real close to Jesus and keep asking Him for help in all you do. When you have to do something you know is hard for you, plead for extra angels to be sent you for special help and guidance. Ask for the Holy Spirit and all of the heavenly powers to come to your aid. All the help you will ever need is available to you, just for the asking.

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Some believe they are just too common and unworthy to be able to claim the very powers of heaven for assistance. They have this mind-set that God has super-people and it is only to them He gives all these promises. Many have this idea that the 144,000 are going to be polished, special, super-people, so strong and healthy and intelligent. This is not so; they are going to be gathered from the very dregs of this world's pile of rubbish. They are going to be the little people from the highways and hedges and dung-hills of this world! Jesus is going to demonstrate to the universe His power to recreate the most messed up and broken, fitting them to stand with Him, and for Him through all that Satan can throw at them and on into Eternity. Be sure to grab hold of all that is your privilege to receive from Jesus by asking!

“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.” Zechariah 12:8

Living up to Light we have:

We must live up to all the light we have, before God will teach us more. As truth is opened to our understanding, we should determine by God's grace to walk in its light. God has set before us an upward pathway and it is His will that we should walk in His footsteps. As our Savior therefore leads us further along the pathway of advanced truth, we must determine to follow, if we would keep in step with Him, and remain His disciple. Also, living according to the truth that we already have, qualifies us to receive more light and truth from God.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31, 32.

“And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.” Psalm 119:45-48.

Dangerous Distractions in our Lives.

Do you have television or other worldly entertainment in your home? Do you watch it? Do you play video or computer games or watch movies? Do you listen to the music of the world? Indulgence in these worldly things will place us where the Holy Spirit cannot teach us and God's angels cannot be with us in our homes. When that happens, the devil's angels come right in and take their place. We cannot be 'double-minded' wanting one foot in the world and the other on the heavenly path; there will be no clear spiritual understanding in such a case.

Even watching a so-called 'good movie' creates a dullness of spiritual perception that takes days to overcome. It is like when Mary and Joseph lost track of Jesus and sought after Him for three days. Also worldly music or stories seem to have a most adhesive nature when it comes to staying in our minds and crowding out spiritual thoughts.

Importance of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's job is to lead each individual person into truth through the pure Word of inspiration. He will give the true hearted the ability to discern truth from error.

We should ask the Heavenly Father, in the Name of Jesus, to send the Holy Spirit to guide us as we study the Bible. Though written by men, the Bible has been supernaturally inspired. We therefore need the Holy Spirit, the Author of all scripture, to guide and instruct us as we study. Prayer for divine instruction and enlightenment should always precede study of God's Word. Without heaven's assistance to render our minds spiritually receptive, it is not possible to properly interpret and appreciate the truths of the Bible, which are often hidden beneath the surface and readily missed by the casual, superficial approach.

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Corinthians 2:10-14.

Our Purpose and Attitude in the Study of the Scriptures

Let us explore a little story found in the book of Acts. Paul was presenting Present Truth to Sergius Paulus, who was a deputy in the government and there was a man present who had great impact previously with the Deputy. He was determined to keep the Deputy from accepting the Present Truth, as this would certainly cause him to lose all his influence with the man.

“But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” Acts 13:8-11.

Now this was a dramatic occurrence and helped a lot to further the gospel in that area. But I want to draw attention to the last sentence; “And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” Notice; he did not repent of his wickedness and seek the Lord's forgiveness and ask God, or even beg Paul to restore his sight; no, he went about 'seeking some to lead him by the hand'.

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This is what is behind these theories of 'Higher Criticism' and 'Historic Grammatical' theories of Bible study. People and leaders are determined to turn away from the simple and obvious Bible Truths that require a commitment on their part. The 'Bible just as it reads' cuts across their path of self-indulgence and their ambitious plans of self-exaltation. They have to find a method of making that cutting Word null and void; they seek a method of ignoring the Word that will pass as a method of exalting it, and also bring the praise of men to themselves.

When we despise and turn from the plain Word of God, then whether we are common lay persons or the highest authority in the religious system, we move into mist and darkness. Then it is that we seek some to lead us by the hand; we look to scholars and theologians who are more than glad to tell us what to believe. They will lead down any and all winding devious paths that can satisfy the carnal heart and shield from the pricking of the conscience by the sword of the Word.

If our goal in study is to evade responsibility presented to us by the Authoritative Word of God, then we will always grope in mist and darkness, seeking the theories of so-called 'Higher Education' to lead us by the hand.

"Yea hath God said?"

It is a dangerous thing when people are not allowed to simply read and believe the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy just as it plainly reads, but they must accept and submit to the mind of another weak and erring mortal man who interprets what inspiration really means for them. This is not only a repetition of the serpent's words "yea, hath God said", but is directly in conflict with Miller's rule which states that "if I should have another man interpret the Bible for me, and he should guess at its meaning, then his guessing, creed, etc. becomes my rule and not the Bible".

If you accept any person as your authority and guide in spiritual matters, you are in no way different from Roman Catholics who kneel at the feet of the Pope and make him their god. People all need to pray and study Scripture and inspiration for themselves because that is our path to know truth. The theologians are not that source of light, nor are any human beings or group here on earth.

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." Jeremiah 17:5

Freedom of Conscience

It is totally contrary to the very spirit of the Character of God to think that any one has the right to sit and judge and denounce everyone they don't agree with, and try to coerce or manipulate or threaten all into following only what they holds as truth. Even attempting to do that, one loses the Holy Spirit; and without this Heavenly Guide, that person's 'truth' will only degenerate into mist, darkness and foolishness.

As human beings we have no right to forbid others the same privileges of religious and doctrinal freedom that we expect for ourselves. We are not to try and do the job of the Holy Spirit! We cannot use the devil's methods to promote the Lord's work. God will

have nothing to do with methods that do this! The solemn thing is, if we get into a position where the Holy Spirit cannot support us because we have unconfessed sin in the way, we will lose all the light we had and go far away into darkness and not know it! We will be as the blind leading the blind by the hand when they both are in mist and darkness.

Praying for the Spirit to Teach us

Praying for guidance is not a formality. Satan is out to destroy all and humanly we cannot throw off the blindness he casts over people. When once we have accepted a mixture of truth and error as solid ground, we can study our eyes out, and we will not see the clear answers because of mist and darkness. This is a heart thing, none of us can do this for another, like the wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish. We all need to seriously pray and plead that we will be able to see! We need to be 'full of eyes'.

We must search out in our hearts, "Am I willing to see possible error in what I have formerly considered truth? Or am I really deeply determined to stay where I am in understanding? Have I determined already that I am right and am not willing to actually hear anything otherwise?" Pray and ask the Lord to please allow you to see your heart. The Holy Spirit will try to drag us into truth—we have to be willing to go there.

An Experience in Deception

This is a story that happened to this writer a long while back. It illustrates what we are sharing here.

Many years ago I came across a writer that I enjoyed very much. When I first got one of his books I thought I had discovered the greatest light! For years I bought and read every one of his books I could get and sad to say, I also bought many and gave them to others! There was something about his message that seemed to be a break-through into a higher spiritual experience; maybe a bit like how Eve felt when she ate the fruit! But I never found any real victory in my life through his teachings, and I never saw anyone else who actually did either! In fact, they would often stop progressing spiritually altogether and even backslide.

There came a time when I began to know there was really something wrong with his teachings, and I would take the books and struggle and try so hard to be able to see what the problem was, and I could not see it! Still, I felt impressed there was something wrong. This impression only came to me at the time I began listening to the pure KJV Bible on cassette tapes. Always remember the Holy Spirit speaks to us mainly through the Bible and the unadulterated Spirit of Prophecy. So the Holy Spirit began impressing me that there was a problem, but I still could not see it.

Finally one day in desperation, I got down on my knees and I Pled with the Lord, "Oh Lord, I know there is a problem and I can't see it! Please help me! Please show me the problem!" This was how I prayed; then I took the books again, and suddenly I could see! It was a jumble of truth and error; one page would contradict another and so on. I could

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see it clearly; the Lord showed me! I destroyed all of those books I had left and I still feel badly that I shared them with others.

I know that unless you truly want to know truth, and not just defend your own ideas, you will not see no matter what. The Lord dwells with those of a humble and contrite heart. Seek to have a teachable spirit; plead to have your eyes opened and the Holy Spirit to guide you, and light will open before you in glorious rays.

Principles

In order to study the Bible, including the Prophecies in it, and arrive at an accurate conclusion, we must be willing to abide by the following principles:

1. We must believe that the whole Bible is the inspired word of God, or at least we must have a desire to find out. We must be willing to abide by its teachings, even if they go contrary to our own personal ideas and practices.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4.

2. We must be humble and teachable. However great and extensive our knowledge and educational achievements humanly speaking, we must come humbly to the Word of God, not seeking to study it from a secular standpoint, as a scientific or philosophical work, with a dependence upon human intellect. If we are putting our trust in intellectual pride and humanistic opinion, it will prevent us from being able to understand the deep spiritual truths of the Bible. God requires us to come humbly and with a teachable attitude; sincerely and prayerfully seeking to understand His word. Jesus said,

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Matthew 11:25

3. We must compare scripture with scripture, and allow the Bible to explain itself. It is not uncommon to find individuals and groups of people who build a whole theology upon one single statement of the Bible, when other passages would show a completely different meaning. This can be very dangerous and misleading. The only correct and safe way of securing an understanding of a particular truth, is to study everything that the Bible has to say about that specific topic.

We must study broadly, permitting the Bible to define its own terms. This will preserve us from the practice of taking an isolated passage and twisting it to fit or “prove” our own ideas. We should always approach the Bible with an open and honest attitude, willing to lay aside any established beliefs and practices, whenever we find them to be without scriptural foundation.

“Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine?... For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little.” Isaiah 28:9, 10.

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4. We must truly desire to know truth before we can learn truth. Our motives for studying the Bible must always be honorable and acceptable to God if we would receive instruction and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

If it is our determined purpose to research the Bible in order to find arguments against the truth, God will leave us to our own devices. For example, some use a few isolated verses to supposedly prove that God's law was abolished when Jesus Christ died upon the cross. A proper method of research will clearly demonstrate that such is not the case, and the verses used to substantiate this idea, are found to say no such thing when placed in their proper context.

Only those who are willing to love and accept the truth when it is made plain, and not seek to construct arguments against it, will be preserved from the dangers of self-deception. God will not force us to believe anything against our will. His Word clearly describes what will happen to those who still choose contrary to what He has plainly revealed:

"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11.

5. Bible study must become a priority in life. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to:

"a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matthew 13:45, 46.

We must earnestly search for truth, recognizing that it is worth more than anything else in life. This quest must be made a priority, when other things seek to crowd into the time that should be assigned to personal Bible study. Our desire, our relish and our love for the Bible will strengthen and deepen, as we discipline ourselves to study it every day. God's promise to us is:

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.