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Forward

We must read, listen, obey and confess the word of God.

The word is available to all.

Rev. 22:18-19

And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the prophetic words of this book:

If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book.

And if anyone removes any of the words of this prophetic book, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

This warning is given to those who might purposefully distort the message in this book. Moses gave a similar warning in Deut. 4:1-4.

We too must handle the Bible with care and great respect so that we do not distort its message, even unintentionally.

We should be quick to put its principles into practice in our lives.

No human explanation or interpretation of God's Word should be elevated to the same authority as the text itself.

In this study, many aspects of God's word is considered.

Chapter 1

What if authorities ask us to disobey Bible principles?

Exodus 1:17-21

But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king and allowed the boys to live, too.

Then the king called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?"

"Sir," they told him, "the Hebrew women are very strong. They have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time! They are not slow in giving birth like Egyptian women."

So God blessed the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Against Pharaoh's orders, the midwives spared the Hebrew babies. Their faith in God gave them the courage to take a stand for what they knew was right. In this situation, disobeying the authority was proper.

God does not expect us to obey those in authority when they ask us to disobey him or his Word. The Bible is filled with examples of those who were willing to sacrifice their very lives in order to obey God or save others.

Esther and Mordecai (Esther 3:2; Esther 4:13-16) and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:16-18) are some of the people who took a bold stand for what was right.

Whole nations can be caught up in immorality (racial hatred, slavery, prison cruelty); thus following the majority or the authority is not always right. Whenever we are ordered to disobey God's Word, we must "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

You can't know the word unless you read it.

Deut. 17:18-20

"When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy these laws on a scroll for himself in the presence of the Levitical priests.

He must always keep this copy of the law with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of this law.

This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. This will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel.

The king was to be a man of God's Word. He was to (1) have a copy of the law made for his personal use, (2) keep it with him all the time, (3) read from it every day, and (4) obey it completely.

Through this process he would learn respect for God, keep himself from feeling more important than others, and avoid neglecting God in times of prosperity.

We can't know what God wants except through his Word, and his Word won't affect our lives unless we read and think about it regularly.

With the abundant availability of the Bible today, it is not difficult to gain access to the source of the king's wisdom. What is more of a challenge is following its directives.

2 Chron. 34:31

The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the Lord's presence.

He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all his commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul.

He promised to obey all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll.

When Josiah read the book that Hilkiah discovered (2 Chron. 34:14), he responded with repentance and humility and promised to follow God's commands as written in the book.

The Bible is God's word to us. It is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12), but we cannot know what God wants us to do if we do not read it.

And even reading God's Word is not enough; we must be willing to do what it says.

Deut. 18:21-22

You may wonder, 'How will we know whether the prophecy is from the Lord or not?'

If the prophet predicts something in the Lord's name and it does not happen, the Lord did not give the message.

Measuring the effectiveness of your Bible study time.

Deut. 32:46-47

He added: "Take to heart all the words I have given you today. Pass them on as a command to your children so they will obey every word of this law.

These instructions are not mere words—they are your life! By obeying them you will enjoy a long life in the land you are crossing the Jordan River to occupy."

Moses urged the people to think about God's word and teach it to their children.

The Bible can sit on your bookshelf and gather dust, or you can make it a vital part of your life by regularly setting aside time to study it.

When you discover the wisdom of God's message, you will want to apply it to your life and pass it on to your family and others.

The Bible is not merely good reading—it's real help for real life.

James 1:22-25

And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself.

For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance.

You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like

But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

It is important to listen to what God's Word says, but it is much more important to obey it, to *do* what it says.

We can measure the effectiveness of our Bible study time by the effect it has on our behavior and attitudes.

It seems paradoxical that a law could give us freedom, but God's law points out sin in us and gives us the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness (see Romans 7:7-8).

As Christians, we are saved by God's grace, and salvation frees us from sin's control. As believers, we are free to live as God created us to live.

Of course, this does not mean that we are free to do as we please (see 1 Peter 2:16). We are now free to obey God.

Forcing the message of the word to fit our desires.

2 Kings 16:10-16

King Ahaz then went to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria.

While he was there, he noticed an unusual altar. So he sent a model of the altar to Uriah the priest, along with its design in full detail.

Uriah built an altar just like it by following the king's instructions, and it was ready for the king when he returned from Damascus.

When the king returned, he inspected the altar and made offerings on it. The king presented a burnt offering and a grain offering, poured a drink offering over it, and sprinkled the blood of peace offerings on it.

Then King Ahaz removed the old bronze altar from the front of the Lord's Temple, which had stood between the entrance and the new altar, and placed it on the north side of the new altar.

He said to Uriah the priest, "Use the new altar for the morning sacrifices of burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and grain offering, and the offerings of the people, including their drink offerings.

The blood from the burnt offerings and sacrifices should be sprinkled over the new altar. The old bronze altar will be only for my personal use."

Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz instructed him.

Evil King Ahaz copied pagan religious customs, changed the temple services, and used the temple altar for his personal benefit.

In so doing, he demonstrated a callous disregard for God's commands.

We condemn Ahaz for his action, but we act the same way if we try to mold God's message to fit our personal preferences.

We must worship God for who he is, not what we would selfishly like him to be.

Ahaz replaced the altar of burnt offering with a replica of the pagan altar he had seen in Damascus. (The original bronze altar was not thrown out, but was kept for use in divination.

Building this new altar was like installing an idol. But because Judah was Assyria's vassal, Ahaz was eager to please the Assyrian king.

Sadly, Ahaz allowed the king of Assyria to replace God as Judah's leader. No one, no matter how attractive or powerful, should replace God's leadership in our lives.

Chapter 2

The word should have immediate impact on us.

2 Kings 22:11

When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair.

When Josiah heard the law, he tore his robes in grief. He immediately instituted reforms. With just one reading of God's law, he changed the course of the nation.

Today many people own Bibles, but few are affected by the truths found in God's Word. The Word of God should cause us, like Josiah, to take action immediately to reform our lives and bring them into harmony with God's will.

Acts not condemned in Scripture aren't necessarily OK.

Chronicles. 8:8-10

After Shaharaim divorced his wives Hushim and Baara, he had children in the land of Moab.

Hodesh, his new wife, gave birth to Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, Jeuz, Sakia, and Mirmah. These sons all became the leaders of clans.

These verses list Shaharaim's children by Hodesh after he had divorced his first two wives, Hushim and Baara.

Divorce and polygamy are sometimes recorded in the Old Testament without critical comments.

This does not mean that God takes divorce lightly.

Malachi 2:15-16 “. . . do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ‘I hate divorce,’ says the LORD God of Israel. . .” Jesus explained that although divorce was allowed, it was not God’s will: “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard.

But it was not this way from the beginning’ ” (Matthew 19:8). Don’t assume that God approves of an act because it isn’t vigorously condemned in every related Bible reference.

The word teaches us difference between right and wrong.

Job 4:7-8

"Stop and think! Does the innocent person perish? When has the upright person been destroyed?

My experience shows that those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same.

Part of what Eliphaz said is true, and part is false. It is true that those who promote sin and trouble eventually will be punished;

It is false that anyone who is good and innocent will never suffer.

All the material recorded and quoted in the Bible is there by God’s choice.

Some is a record of what people said and did but is not an example to follow.

The sins, the defeats, the evil thoughts, and misconceptions about God are all part of God's divinely inspired Word, but we should not follow those wrong examples just because they are in the Bible.

The Bible gives us teachings and examples of what we *should* do as well as what we *should not* do.

Eliphaz's comments are an example of what we should try to avoid—making false assumptions about others based on our own experiences.

Reliability of the word.

Psalm 34:4

I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me,
Freeing me from all my fears.

Psalm 48:14

For that is what God is like.
He is our God forever and ever,
And he will be our guide until we die.

We often pray for God's guidance as we struggle with decisions. What we need is both guidance and a guide—a map that gives us landmarks and directions and a constant companion who has an intimate knowledge of the way and will make sure we interpret the map correctly.

The Bible will be such a map, and the Holy Spirit will be the constant companion and guide. As you make your way through life, use both the map and your Guide.

Jonah 1:17

Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Many have tried to dismiss this miraculous event as fiction, but the Bible does not describe it as a dream or a legend.

We should not explain away this miracle as if we could pick and choose which of the miracles in the Bible we believe and which ones we don't.

That kind of attitude would allow us to question any part of the Bible and cause us to lose our trust in the Bible as God's true and reliable word.

Christ himself as an illustration of Christ's death and resurrection used Jonah's experience. (Matthew 12:39-40).

The word, a map to guide us

Psalm 119:19

I am but a foreigner here on earth; I need the guidance of your commands. Don't hide them from me!

The psalmist says that he is a “stranger on earth,” and so he needed guidance. Almost any long trip requires a map or guide.

As we travel through life, the Bible should be our road map, pointing out safe routes, obstacles to avoid, and our final destination.

We must recognize ourselves as pilgrims; travelers here on earth who need to study God’s map to learn the way. If we ignore the map, we will wander aimlessly through life and risk missing our real destination.

The word helps us find wisdom.

Psalm 119:97-104

Oh, how I love your law! I think about it all day long.
Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for
Your commands are my constant guide.

Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always
Thinking of your decrees.

I am even wiser than my elders,
For I have kept your commandments.

I have refused to walk on any path of evil,
That I may remain obedient to your word.

I haven't turned away from your laws,
For you have taught me well.

How sweet are your words to my taste
They are sweeter than honey.

Your commandments give me understanding;
No wonder I hate every false way of life.

God's Word makes us wise—wiser than our enemies and wiser than any teachers who ignore it.

True wisdom goes beyond amassing knowledge; it is *applying* knowledge in a life-changing way.

Intelligent or experienced people are not necessarily wise. Wisdom comes from allowing what God teaches to guide us.

Chapter 3

The word as a light

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

To walk safely in the woods at night we need a light so we don't trip over tree roots or fall into holes.

In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible can be our light to show us the way ahead so we won't stumble as we walk.

It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. Study the Bible so you will be able to see your way clear enough to stay on the right path.

Our responsibility to pass the word on

Isaiah 8:16

I will write down all these things as a testimony of what the Lord will do. I will entrust it to my disciples, who will pass it down to future generations.

“Bind up the testimony” and “seal up the law” mean that the words would be written down and preserved for future generations.

Because some people faithfully passed on these words from generation to generation, we have the book of Isaiah today.

Each of us needs to accept the responsibility to pass on God's Word to our children and grandchildren, encouraging them to love the Bible, read it, and learn from it. Then they will faithfully pass it on to their children and grandchildren.

The word must be put into practice.

Jeremiah 23:28

Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between chaff and wheat!

True prophets and false prophets are as different as straw and grain. Straw is useless for food and cannot compare to nourishing grain.

To share the gospel is a great responsibility because the way we present it and live it will encourage people either to accept it or reject it. Whether we speak from a pulpit, teach in a class, or share with friends, we are entrusted with accurately communicating and living out God's Word.

As you share God's Word with friends and neighbors, they will look for its effectiveness in your life.

Unless it has changed you, why should they let it change them?

If you preach it, make sure you live it!

Don't ignore the parts of the word that make you uncomfortable.

Jeremiah 26:2

The Lord said, "Stand out in front of the Temple of the Lord, and make an announcement to the people who have come there to worship from all over Judah. Give them my entire message; include every word.

God reminded Jeremiah that he wanted his entire message given—"Do not omit a word."

Jeremiah may have been tempted to leave out the parts that would turn his audience against him, would sound too harsh, or would make him sound like a traitor.

But by God's command, he was not to delete parts of God's message to suit himself, his audience, or the circumstances in which he found himself.

Like Jeremiah, we must never ignore or repress important parts of God's Word to please anyone.

Pastors and leaders must not be ignorant of the word.

Malachi 2:7-8

The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the Lord Almighty.

But not you! You have left God's paths. Your 'guidance' has caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites," says the Lord Almighty.

Malachi was angry with the priests because, though they were to be God's messengers, they did not know God's will.

This lack of knowledge caused them to lead God's people astray.

Their ignorance was willful and inexcusable. Pastors and leaders of God's people *must* know God's Word—what it says, what it means, and how it applies to daily life.

How much time do you spend in God's Word?

Chapter 4

Using the word to combat temptation.

Matthew 4:3-4

Then the Devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change these stones into loaves of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God.' "

Jesus was hungry and weak after fasting for 40 days, but he chose not to use his divine power to satisfy his natural desire for food.

Food, hunger, and eating are good, but the timing was wrong. Jesus was in the desert to fast, not to eat.

And because Jesus had given up the unlimited, independent use of his divine power in order to experience humanity fully, he wouldn't use his power to change the stones to bread.

We also may be tempted to satisfy a perfectly normal desire in a wrong way or at the wrong time.

If we indulge in sex before marriage or if we steal to get food, we are trying to satisfy God-given desires in wrong ways.

Remember, many of your desires are normal and good, but God wants you to satisfy them in the right way and at the right time.

Jesus was able to resist all of the devil's temptations because he not only knew Scripture, but he also obeyed it.

Ephes. 6:17 says that God's Word is a sword to use in spiritual combat. Knowing Bible verses is an important step in helping us resist the devil's attacks, but we must also obey the Bible.

Note that Satan had memorized Scripture, but he failed to obey it. Knowing and obeying the Bible helps us follow God's desires rather than the devil's desires.

Mark 1:12-13

Immediately the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness.

He was there for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.

Jesus left the crowds and went into the desert where Satan tempted him. Temptation is bad for us only when we give in.

We should not hate or resent times of inner testing, because through them God can strengthen our character and teach us valuable lessons.

When you face Satan and must deal with his temptations and the turmoil he brings, remember Jesus. He used God's Word against Satan and won. You can do the same.

Satan is an angel who rebelled against God. He is real, not symbolic, and is constantly working against God and those who obey him. Satan tempted Eve in the garden and persuaded her to sin; he tempted Jesus in the desert and did not persuade him to fall.

To be tempted is not a sin. Tempting others or giving in to temptation *is* sin.

To identify fully with human beings, Jesus had to endure Satan's temptations.

Although Jesus is God, he is also man. And as fully human, he was not exempt from Satan's attacks.

Because Jesus faced temptations and overcame them, he can assist us in two important ways:

- (1) As an example of how to face temptation without sinning, and
- (2) As a helper who knows just what we need because he went through the same experience.

Using the word wrongly to support sinful desires.

Matthew 4:6

"If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He orders his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you with their hands
To keep you from striking your foot on a stone.' "

The devil used Scripture to try to convince Jesus to sin!

Sometimes friends or associates will present attractive and convincing reasons why you should try something you know is wrong.

They may even find Bible verses that *seem* to support their viewpoint.

Study the Bible carefully, especially the broader contexts of specific verses, so that you understand God's principles for living and what he wants for your life.

Only if you really understand what the *whole* Bible says will you be able to recognize errors of interpretation when people take verses out of context and twist them to say what they want them to say.

Keeping God's laws but missing true intent.

Matthew 5:21-22

"You have heard that the Law of Moses says,

'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.

But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council.

And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

False teachers aren't consistent with.

Matthew 7:20

Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced.

We should evaluate teachers' words by examining their lives.

Just as trees are consistent in the kind of fruit they produce, good teachers consistently exhibit good behavior and high moral character as they attempt to live out the truths of Scripture.

This does not mean we should have witch-hunts, throwing out church schoolteachers, pastors, and others who are less than perfect.

Every one of us is subject to sin, and we must show the same mercy to others that we need for ourselves.

When Jesus talks about bad trees, he means teachers who deliberately teach false doctrine.

We must examine the teachers' motives, the direction they are taking, and the results they are seeking.

Sadducees only believed in part of the word. □

Matthew 22:21

"Caesar's," they replied.

"Well, then," he said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God."

Jesus avoided this trap by showing that we have dual citizenship (1 Peter 2:17). Our citizenship in the nation requires that we pay money for the services and benefits we receive. Our citizenship in the kingdom of heaven requires that we pledge to God our primary obedience and commitment.

Chapter 5

Knowing the word but not living it.

Matthew 23:5

"Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear extra long tassels on their robes.

Jesus again exposed the hypocritical attitudes of the religious leaders. They knew the Scriptures but did not live by them. They didn't care about *being* holy—just *looking* holy in order to receive the people's admiration and praise.

Today, like the Pharisees, many people who know the Bible do not let it change their lives. They say they follow Jesus, but they don't live by his standards of love.

People who live this way are hypocrites. We must make sure that our actions match our beliefs.

People desire positions of leadership not only in business but also in the church. It is dangerous when love for the position grows stronger than loyalty to God.

This is what happened to the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Jesus is not against all leadership—we need Christian leaders—but against leadership that serves itself rather than others.

False teachers contradict the word.

Matthew 24:23-24

"Then if anyone tells you, 'look, here is the Messiah, 'or there he is,' don't pay any attention.

For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great miraculous signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones.

Jesus' warnings about false teachers still hold true. Upon close examination it becomes clear that many nice-sounding messages don't agree with God's message in the Bible.

Only a solid foundation in God's Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching.

The truth of the word never changes

Mark 13:31

Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever.

In Jesus' day the world seemed concrete, dependable, and permanent.

These days many people fear its destruction by nuclear war.

Jesus tells us, however, that even if the earth passes away, the truth of his words will never be changed or abolished. God and his Word provide the only stability in our unstable world.

How shortsighted people are who spend their time learning about this temporary world and accumulating its possessions, while neglecting the Bible and its eternal truths!

The word reveals a living God.

Luke 24:1-9

But very early on Sunday morning the women came to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone covering the entrance had been rolled aside.

So they went in, but they couldn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. They were puzzled, trying to think what could have happened to it. Suddenly, two men appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes.

The women were terrified and bowed low before them. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive?"

He isn't here! He has risen from the dead! Don't you remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again the third day?"

Then they remembered that he had said this. So they rushed back to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened.

The women brought spices to the tomb as we would bring flowers—as a sign of love and respect. The women went home and kept Sabbath as the law required, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, before gathering up their spices and perfumes and returning to the tomb.

The two angels (appearing as “men in clothes that gleamed like lightning”) asked the women why they were looking in a tomb for someone who was alive.

Often we run into people who are looking for God among the dead.

They study the Bible as a mere historical document and go to church as if going to a memorial service. But Jesus is not among the dead—he lives! He reigns in the hearts of Christians, and he is the head of his church.

We learn from Matthew and John that these two men in gleaming clothes were angels. When angels appeared to people, they looked like humans.

The angels reminded the women that Jesus had accurately predicted all that had happened to him (Luke 9:22, 44; Luke 18:31-33).

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central fact of Christian history.

On it, the church is built; without it, there would be no Christian church today. Jesus’ resurrection is unique. Other religions have strong ethical systems, concepts about paradise and afterlife, and various Holy Scriptures.

Only Christianity has a God who became human, literally died for his people, and was raised again in power and glory to rule his church forever.

Why is the resurrection so important?

- (1) Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know that the kingdom of heaven has broken into earth's history.
- (2) Our world is now headed for redemption, not disaster. God's mighty power is at work destroying sin, creating new lives, and preparing us for Jesus' second coming.
- (3) Because of the resurrection, we know that death has been conquered, and we too will be raised from the dead to live forever with Christ.
- (4) The resurrection gives authority to the church's witness in the world. Look at the early evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts: the apostles' most important message was the proclamation that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead!
- (5) The resurrection gives meaning to the church's regular feast, the Lord's Supper. Like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, we break bread with our risen Lord, who comes in power to save us.
- (6) The resurrection helps us find meaning even in great tragedy. No matter what happens to us as we walk with the Lord, the resurrection gives us hope for the future.
- (7) The resurrection assures us that Christ is alive and ruling his kingdom. He is not legend; he is alive and real.
- (8) God's power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us so that we can live for him in an evil world.

Christians can look very different from one another, and they can hold widely varying beliefs about politics, life-style, and even theology. But one central belief unites and inspires all true

Christians—Jesus Christ rose from the dead! (For more on the importance of the resurrection,

The word offers help for our problems.

Luke 24:25-27

Then Jesus said to them, "You are such foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.

Wasn't it clearly predicted by the prophets that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his time of glory?"

Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining what all the Scriptures said about himself.

After the two disciples had explained their sadness and confusion, Jesus responded by going to Scripture and applying it to his ministry.

When we are puzzled by questions or problems, we too can go to Scripture and find authoritative help. If we, like these two disciples, do not understand what the Bible means, we can turn to other believers who know the Bible and have the wisdom to apply it to our situation.

Holy Spirit helps us understand the word.

Luke 24:45

Then he opened their minds to understand these many Scriptures.

Jesus opened these people's minds to understand the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does this in our lives today when we study the Bible.

Chapter 6

Knowing the word is not enough for salvation.

John 3:10-11

Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? I assure you, I am telling you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe us.

This Jewish teacher of the Bible knew the Old Testament thoroughly, but he didn't understand what it said about the Messiah. Knowledge is not salvation. You should know the Bible, but even more important, you should understand the God whom the Bible reveals and the salvation that God offers.

Jumping to wrong conclusions about what it says.

John 7:40-44

When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "This man surely is the Prophet." Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee?"

For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born."

So the crowd was divided in their opinion about him. [44] And some wanted him arrested, but no one touched him.

The crowd was asking questions about Jesus.

Some believed, others were hostile, and others disqualified Jesus as the Messiah because he was from Nazareth, not Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

But he *was* born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7), although he grew up in Nazareth.

If they had looked more carefully, they would not have jumped to the wrong conclusions. When you search for God's truth, make sure you look carefully and thoughtfully at the Bible with an open heart and mind.

Don't jump to conclusions before knowing more of what the Bible says.

The word an accurate record of what Jesus taught and did.

John 20:30-31

Jesus' disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life.

To understand the life and mission of Jesus more fully, all we need to do is study the Gospels. John tells us that his Gospel records only a few of the many events in Jesus' life on earth. But the gospel includes everything we need to know to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, through whom we receive eternal life.

Home Bible studies in the early church.

Acts 5:42

And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

Home Bible studies are not new. As the believers needed to grow in their new faith, home Bible studies met their needs, as well as serving as a means to introduce new people to the Christian faith. During later times of persecution, meeting in homes became the primary method of passing on Bible knowledge. Christians throughout the world still use this approach when under persecution and as a way to build up believers.

Ask others to help you understand the word.

Acts 8:30-31

Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah; so he asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The man replied, "How can I, when there is no one to instruct me?" And he begged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

The eunuch asked Philip to explain a passage of Scripture that he did not understand. When we have trouble understanding the Bible, we should ask others to help us. We must never let our insecurity or pride get in the way of understanding God's Word.

Some think that the Old Testament is not relevant today, but Philip led this man to faith in Jesus Christ by using the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is found in the pages of both the Old and New Testaments.

God's entire Word is applicable to all people in all ages. Don't avoid or neglect to use the Old Testament. It too is God's Word.

Don't accept only certain parts of the word.

Acts 11:8

Never, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything forbidden by our Jewish laws.'

God had promised throughout Scripture that he would reach the nations. This began with his general promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18) and became very specific in Malachi's statement: "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Malachi 1:11).

But this was an extremely difficult truth for Jews, even Jewish believers, to accept.

The Jewish believers understood how certain prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, but they overlooked other Old Testament teachings.

Too often we are inclined to accept only the parts of God's Word that appeal to us and support our own agendas, ignoring the teachings we don't like. We must accept all of God's Word as absolute truth.

Galatians 6:13

And even those who advocate circumcision don't really keep the whole law. They only want you to be circumcised so they can brag about it and claim you as their disciples.

Some of the Judaizers were emphasizing circumcision as proof of holiness—but ignoring the other Jewish laws. People often choose a certain principle or prohibition and make it the measure of faith. Some may abhor drunkenness but ignore gluttony. Others may despise promiscuity but tolerate prejudice. The Bible in its entirety is our rule of faith and practice. We cannot pick and choose the mandates we will follow.

Compare what you hear with the truths of Scripture.

Acts 17:11

And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth.

How do you evaluate sermons and teachings? The people in Berea opened the Scriptures for themselves and searched for truths to verify or disprove the message they heard.

Always compare what you hear with what the Bible says. A preacher or teacher who gives God's true message will never contradict or explain away anything that is found in God's Word.

Chapter 7

What to do when Bible is silent on an issue

Romans 14:23

But if people have doubts about whether they should eat something, they shouldn't eat it.

They would be condemned for not acting in faith before God. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

We try to steer clear of actions forbidden by Scripture, of course, but sometimes Scripture is silent.

Then we should follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” means that to go against a conviction will leave a person with a guilty or uneasy conscience.

When God shows us that something is wrong for us, we should avoid it.

The word not for information but transformation.

Col. 1:6

This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners.

Wherever Paul went, he preached the gospel—to Gentile audiences, to hostile Jewish leaders, and even to his Roman guards. Whenever people believed in the message that Paul spoke, they were changed.

God's Word is not just for our information it is for our transformation!

Becoming a Christian means beginning a whole new relationship with God, not just turning over a new leaf or determining to do right. New believers have a changed purpose, direction, attitude, and behavior.

They are no longer seeking to serve themselves, but they are bearing fruit for God. How is the gospel reaching others through your life?

Don't miss the word's main point for the details.

1 Tim. 1:6

But some teachers have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time arguing and talking foolishness.

Today we could also enter into worthless and irrelevant discussions, but such disputes quickly crowd out the life-changing message of Christ.

Stay away from religious speculation and pointless theological arguments.

Such exercises may seem harmless at first, but they have a way of sidetracking us from the central message of the gospel—the person and work of Jesus Christ. And they expend time we should use to share the gospel with others. You should avoid anything that keeps you from doing God's work.

Ignoring the word is neglecting God.

2 Tim. 2:15

Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for him and serve him.

Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God's Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

Inspiration of the word.

2 Tim. 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.

In important areas of Christian teaching, we must carefully work through our disagreements.

But when we bicker long hours over words and theories that are not central to the Christian faith and life, we only provoke anger and hurt feelings.

Even if “godless chatter” reaches a resolution, it gains little ground for the kingdom. Learning and discussing are not bad unless they keep believers constantly focusing on false doctrine or unhelpful trivialities.

Don’t allow anything to keep you from your work for and service to God.

2 Peter 1:16-21

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again. We have seen his majestic splendor with our own eyes.

And he received honor and glory from God the Father when God's glorious, majestic voice called down from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; I am fully pleased with him."

We ourselves heard the voice when we were there with him on the holy mountain.

Because of that, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. Pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a light shining in a dark place—until the day Christ appears and his brilliant light shines in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets themselves or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God.

This section is a strong statement on the inspiration of Scripture. Peter affirms that the Old Testament prophets wrote God’s messages.

He puts himself and the other apostles in the same category, because they also proclaim God's truth.

The Bible is not a collection of fables or human ideas about God.

It is God's very words given *through* people *to* people.

Peter emphasized his authority as an eyewitness as well as the God-inspired authority of Scripture to prepare the way for his harsh words against the false teachers.

If these wicked men were contradicting the apostles and the Bible, their message could not be from God.

The purpose of the word

2 Tim. 3:17

It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

In our zeal for the *truth* of Scripture, we must never forget its *purpose*—to equip us to do well.

We should not study God's Word simply to increase our knowledge or to prepare us to win arguments. We should study the Bible so that we will know how to do Christ's work in the world.

Our knowledge of God's Word is not useful unless it strengthens our faith and leads us to do well.

Chapter 8

You cannot shape its doctrines to match your opinions.

2 Tim. 2:18

They have left the path of truth, preaching the lie that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; and they have undermined the faith of some.

The false teachers were denying the resurrection of the body. They believed that when a person became a Christian, he or she was spiritually reborn, and that was the only resurrection there would ever be.

To them, resurrection was symbolic and spiritual, not physical. Paul clearly taught, however, that believers will be resurrected after they die, and that their bodies as well as their souls will live eternally with Christ (1 Cor. 15:35ff; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thes. 4:15-18).

We cannot shape the doctrines of Scripture to match our opinions. If we do, we are putting ourselves above God. Instead, our beliefs should be consistent with God's Word.

Ignorance of the word makes us vulnerable to deception.

Jude 1:4

I say this because some godless people have wormed their way in among you, saying that God's forgiveness allows us to live immoral lives.

The fate of such people was determined long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The word reveals who we are and what we are not.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.

The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing, and dynamic as it works in us.

With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil.

The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our lives.

The Authority of the word

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The Word is relevant to all ages.

1 John 2:12-14

I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been forgiven because of Jesus.

I am writing to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young because you have won your battle with Satan.

I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father.

I have written to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan.

John was writing to believers of all ages, his “dear children”
Who had experienced forgiveness through Jesus.

The older men (“fathers”) were mature in the faith and had a long-standing relationship with Christ. The young men had struggled with Satan’s temptations and had won.

The boys and girls had learned about Christ and were just beginning their spiritual journey. Each stage of life in the Christian pilgrimage builds upon the other.

As children learn about Christ, they grow in their ability to win battles with temptation.

As young adults move from victory to victory, they grow in their relationship with Christ.

Older adults, having known Christ for years, have developed the wisdom needed to teach young people and start the cycle all over again.

Has your Christian growth reached the maturity level appropriate for your stage of life?

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**

