



Understanding And Applying
The Word of God

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Forward

In this study we are dealing with the impacts of the Scriptures, that is the word of God.

Many have sought to build a foundation on many things other than the word of God. All such foundations will crumble and fall.

Some seek to understand God's word without the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

As the result of man's ideas and understanding of the word of God many errors have occurred. This causes distortion. False teachers have used the scriptures to raise money for profit rather than salvation to the lost..

Whenever we are ordered to disobey God's Word, we must "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

It is important to listen to what God's Word says, but it is much more important to obey it and 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. Put into action what you have learned.

In this study, many scriptures are given to direct us to the correct understanding of God's word.

May God give us all a true understanding of his word.

Chapter 1

What if authorities asked us to disobey the 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.

Shiphrah and Puah may have been supervisors over the midwives, or else these two were given special mention.

Hebrew midwives helped women give birth and cared for the baby until the mother was stronger. When Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the Hebrew baby boys, he was asking the wrong group of people.

Midwives were committed to helping babies be born, not to killing them. These women showed great courage and love for God by risking their lives to disobey Pharaoh's command.

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 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).

The Word of God will never contradict true prophecy

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.

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 and 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. Put into action what you have studied?

Forcing the word of God 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.

The word of God should have immediate impact upon 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 clothes 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.

Chapter 2

Acts not condemned in the Scripture may still be wrong

1 Chron. 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. Mal 2:15, 16, says to "remain loyal to the wife of your youth. `For I hate divorce!' says the LORD, the God of Israel."

Jesus explained that although divorce was allowed, it was not God's will: "Moses permitted divorce as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness, but it was not what God had originally intended" (Mathew 19:8). Don't assume that God approves of an act because it isn't vigorously condemned in every related

**The Word of God teaches us the difference
between right and wrong.**

Job 4:7-8

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap 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 recorded in 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.

The reliability of the word of God

Psalm 33:4

For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.

All God's words are true and trustworthy. The Bible is reliable because, unlike people, God does not lie, forget, change his words, or leave his promises unfulfilled. We can trust the Bible because it contains the words of a holy, trustworthy, and unchangeable God.

Psalm 48:14

For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

We often pray for God's guidance as we struggle with decisions. What we need is both a map that gives us directions and a constant companion who has an intimate knowledge of the way and will make sure we interpret the map correctly. The Bible is such a map, and the Holy Spirit is our 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 prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah had disobeyed God. While he was running away, he stopped and submitted to God. Then the ship's crew began to worship God because they saw that the storm had stopped. God is able to use even our mistakes to help others come to know him.

It may be painful, but admitting our sins can be a powerful example to those who don't know God. Ironically, the pagan sailors did what the entire nation of Israel would not do—prayed to God and vowed to serve him.

The word of God is a map to guide us.

Psalm 119:19

I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

The psalmist said that he is a "foreigner here 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 that needs 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 of God helps us find wisdom

Psalm 119:97-104

O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. [98] Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

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 God's teachings to guide us.

The word of God is 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.

Chapter 3

Our Responsibility to pass the word of God to others

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.

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 of God 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 chaff and wheat. Chaff is useless for food and cannot compare to nourishing wheat. 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 must accurately communicate and live 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 part of the word that makes 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—"Include every word." Jeremiah may have been tempted to leave out the parts that would turn his audience against him, sound too harsh, or 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 exclude important parts of God's Word to please someone.

Pastors and teachers must know 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. [8] 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 at the priests because, although they were to be God's messengers, they did not know God's will. And 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?

Using the word of God 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.

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 he was tempted by Satan. 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. For a more detailed account of Jesus' temptation, read Matthew 4:1-11.

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.

Luke 4:1-13

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit to go out into the wilderness, where the Devil tempted him for forty days. He ate nothing all that time and was very hungry.

Then the Devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change this stone into a loaf of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life.' "

Then the Devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

The Devil told him, "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them—because they are mine to give to anyone I please.

I will give it all to you if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him.' "

Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

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

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'Do not test the Lord your God.' "When the Devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

Knowing and obeying God's Word is an effective weapon against temptation, the only *offensive* weapon provided in the Christian's "armor" (Ephes. 6:17).

Jesus used Scripture to counter Satan's attacks, and you can too. But to use it effectively you must have faith in God's promises, because Satan also knows Scripture and is adept at twisting it to suit his purpose.

Obeying the Scriptures is more important than simply having a verse to quote, so read them daily and apply them to your life. Then your "sword" will always be sharp.

Chapter 4

Using the word wrongly to support sinful desires

Matthew 4:6

And said, "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 law, but missing the 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.

When Jesus said, “But I tell you,” he was not doing away with the law or adding his own beliefs. Rather, he was giving a fuller understanding of why God made that law in the first place.

For example, Moses said, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13); Jesus taught that we should not even become angry enough to murder, for then we have already committed murder in our heart.

The Pharisees read this law and, not having literally murdered anyone, felt righteous. Yet they were angry enough with Jesus that they would soon plot his death, though they would not do the dirty work themselves. We miss the intent of God’s Word when we read his rules for living without trying to understand why he made them.

People sometimes keep God’s rules but close your eyes to his intent?

Killing is a terrible sin, but *anger* is a great sin too because it also violates God’s command to love.

Anger in this case refers to a seething, brooding bitterness against someone. It is a dangerous emotion that always threatens to leap out of control, leading to violence, emotional hurt, increased mental stress, and spiritual damage.

Anger keeps us from developing a spirit pleasing to God. Have you ever been proud that you didn’t strike out and say what was really on your mind?

Self-control is good, but Christ wants us to practice thought-control as well. Jesus said that we will be held accountable even for our attitudes.

False Teachers are consistent with keeping the word of God.

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 school teachers, 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 keeping part of the word of God.

Matthew 22:21-22

"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." His reply amazed them, and they went away.

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.

Some know the word of God but do not keep it.

Matthew 23:5-7

"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.

And how they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the most prominent seats in the synagogue!

They enjoy the attention they get on the streets, and they enjoy being called 'Rabbi.'

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.

Chapter 5

False Teachers contradict the word of God.

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 of God 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!

God's 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. [9] So they rushed back to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened.

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. Do you look for Jesus among the living? Do you expect him to be active in

the world and in the church? Look for signs of his power—they are all around you.

The word of God 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.

Beginning with the promised offspring in Genesis (Genesis 3:15) and going through the suffering servant in Isaiah (Isaiah 53), the pierced one in Zechariah (Zech. 12:10), and the messenger of the covenant in Malachi (Malachi 3:1), Jesus reintroduced these disciples to the Old Testament.

Christ is the thread woven through all the Scriptures, the central theme that binds them together.

The Holy Spirit helps us understand the word of God

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.

Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult Bible passage? Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people, and consulting reference works, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand, giving you the needed insight to put God's Word into action in your life.

Knowing the Word of God 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.

Chapter 6

Jumping to wrong conclusions about the word of God 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 lines of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born.” So the crowd was divided in their opinion about him.

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 of God gives an accurate description
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.

There were 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."

Peter and John were warned repeatedly not to preach, but they continued in spite of the threats. We, too, should live as Christ has asked us to, sharing our faith no matter what the cost. We may not be beaten or thrown in jail, but we may be ridiculed, ostracized, or slandered.

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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.

Don't accept only parts of the word of God

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.

Chapter 7

Compare what you hear with the truth of the 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.

What to do when the 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 our consciences. “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. But we should not look down on other Christians who exercise their freedom in those areas.

The scriptures are not for information, but for 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 main point of the Scriptures 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.

Arguing about details of the Bible can send us off on interesting but irrelevant tangents and cause us to miss the intent of God's message.

The false teachers at Ephesus constructed vast speculative systems and then argued about the minor details of their wholly imaginary ideas.

We should allow nothing to distract us from the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, the main point of Scripture.

We should know what the Bible says, apply it to our lives daily, and teach it to others. When we do this, we will be able to evaluate all teachings in light of the central truth about Jesus.

Don't focus on the minute details of the Bible to the exclusion of the main point God is teaching you.

Chapter 8

Ignoring the Scripture is neglecting God's word.

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.

The word of God is a word of inspiration

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.

The Bible is not a collection of stories, fables, myths, or merely human ideas about God. It is not a human book. Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed his person and plan to certain believers, who wrote down his message for his people (2 Peter 1:20-21).

This process is known as *inspiration*. The writers wrote from their own personal, historical, and cultural contexts. Although they used their own minds, talents, language, and style, they wrote what God wanted them to write.

Scripture is completely trustworthy because God was in control of its writing. Its words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives. The Bible is “God-breathed.” Read it, and use its teachings to guide your conduct.

The whole Bible is God’s inspired Word. Because it is inspired and trustworthy, we should *read* it and *apply* it to our lives.

The Bible is our standard for testing everything else that claims to be true. It is our safeguard against false teaching and our source of guidance for how we should live. It is our only source of knowledge about how we can be saved.

God wants to show you what is true and equip you to live for him.

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.

Understand the purpose of the scriptures

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 good.

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.

You cannot shape the scripture to math 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 makes us vulnerable to deception

2 Tim. 3:6-7

They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by many desires. Such women are forever following new teachings, but they never understand the truth.

Because of their cultural background, women in the Ephesian church had had no formal religious training. They enjoyed their new freedom to study Christian truths, but their eagerness to learn made them a target for false teachers.

Paul warned Timothy to watch out for men who would take advantage of these women. New believers need to grow in their knowledge of the Word, because ignorance can make them 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.

Even some of our churches today have false (“godless”) teachers who “have secretly slipped in” and are twisting the Bible’s teachings to justify their own opinions, life-style, or wrong behavior.

In doing this, they may gain temporary freedom to do as they wish, but they will discover that in distorting Scripture they are playing with fire. God will judge them for excusing, tolerating, and promoting sin.

Some people avoid studying the Bible because they think theology is dry and boring. Those who refuse to learn correct doctrine, however, are susceptible to false teaching because they are not fully grounded in God’s truth.

We must understand the basic doctrines of our faith so that we can recognize false doctrines and prevent wrong teaching from undermining our faith and hurting others.

Many first-century false teachers were teaching that Christians could do whatever they liked without fear of God's punishment.

They had a light view of God's holiness and his justice. Paul refuted this same kind of false teaching in Romans 6:1-23.

Even today, some Christians minimize the sinfulness of sin, believing that how they live has little to do with their faith. But what a person truly believes will show up in how he or she acts.

Those who truly have faith will show it by their deep respect for God and their sincere desire to live according to the principles in his Word.

Chapter 9

The word of God 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 of 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.

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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 word of God 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 in life?

Don’t distort the message of the word of God

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.

Jesus is knocking at your heart's door



Rev. 3:20

"Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

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