

How To Study The Bible

I. Proper Attitudes Toward Bible Study

- A. We should approach the Bible **realizing it is the inspired word of God** - not the words of men. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- B. We should approach the Bible **with a love for the truth** - not with a prejudice mind. (Psa. 119:97, 113).
- C. We should approach the Bible **with a reverent and prayerful attitude**.
 - 1. We must have “fear” (reverence) of God. (Prov. 1:7).
 - 2. We should pray for understanding of the Scriptures.
 - 3. We should pray for the love and courage to obey them.
- D. We should approach the Bible **with a diligent attitude**. (2 Tim. 2:15).
 - 1. Just reading the Bible is not enough.
 - 2. We must study it and meditate upon it. (Psa. 1:2).
 - 3. Many do not understand the Bible for the simple reason that they do not make the necessary mental effort.
 - 4. Some things in the scriptures are so simple that a child can understand them, but some things challenge even the greatest minds among men.
- E. We should approach the Bible **with a desire to obey the truth**. (Jas. 1:22-25; 4:17).
- F. We should study the Bible **with the attitude it can be understood**. (Psa. 119:105; Matt. 28:18-30; Jn. 8:32; Eph. 5:17).

II. Some Rules For Understanding The Bible

A. Who is the author?

- 1. The Bible contains the words of God, Jesus, Satan, Moses, Paul and many others.
- 2. We are not to obey everything recorded in the Bible.
- 3. Evil men and the uninspired men/women speak in the scriptures.
 - a. Job’s wife (Job 2:9).
 - b. Job’s three friends
 - c. The former blind man. (Jn. 9:31).

d. There are the words of many evil men and women.

B. To whom was the text written?

1. Some things were written to the Jews. See the Old Covenant.
2. Some passages are written to alien sinners. (Acts 2:38).
3. Others were written to Christians. (Acts 8:12, 13, 22).

C. Of whom does the text speak?

1. We need to know something about the persons discussed in the text in order to appreciate what is said about them or to them.
2. For example to know something of the background of the Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and others will help us better understand the text.

D. What is the nature of the writing in the text?

1. In the Bible is found many types of writings: law, prophecy, proverbs, poetry, letters, visions, etc.
2. To understand the text, one must take into account the particular type of material under consideration.

E. When was the text written?

1. This question will enable us to see if the text has direct application to our lives.
2. Some statements do not have direct application to our lives because they were written for those who lived under the Mosaic or Patriarchal Age.
3. For instance the Sabbath day was given to the Jews. (Deut. 5:12, 15, 1-3; Col. 2:16, 17).

F. From where was the text written?

1. The surroundings and atmosphere of a text often contribute to its meaning.
2. For instance many expressions in some of Paul's epistles are more meaningful when we realize that Paul made them while in prison and under the threat of death. (Phil. 4:4-6, 11-13).

G. The circumstances of the writing are quite important.

1. The early Christians sold their possessions to help poor brethren.
2. This was not a mandate, but was done voluntarily. (Acts 5:1-4).

H. We must let the Bible be its own interpreter.

1. Baptism and immersion. (Acts 2:38 with Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12). See Jn. 3:23.
2. It helps us understand how Jesus sometimes used the word "hate". (Lk. 14:26; Matt. 10:37).

3. The word “hate” is sometimes used literally. (Matt. 5:43; 24:10; Lk. 6:22, 27).

4. We must always study the word itself, the context, and other related passages.

I. We must remember that words do not always have the same meaning.

1. The word “soul” and “spirit” sometimes means “breath,” but not always. (Eccles. 12:7; Matt. 10:28; Jas.1:21; 5:20; 1 Pet. 1:9).

2. Read these verses substituting “breath: for “spirit” and see if the translation makes sense.

J. We must take the whole of the Bible on the subject. (Matt. 16:24; Acts 16:30; Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38).

1. One could draw a false conclusion about how to be saved if only one of these verses was read.

2. We must read all the scriptures to draw the proper conclusion.

3. Salvation is not by denial of self only or by faith only or by repentance only, or by confession only, or by baptism only.

K. We must use common sense when interpreting the Bible.

1. The disciples met on the 3rd floor. (Acts 20:7-9).

2. Common sense indicates this is not binding on us.

3. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible to indicate the disciples believed this was binding.

L. Verses must be understood in the light of the context in which they appear. (Eccles. 9:5, 6).

ECC 9:5 For the living know they will die; but **the dead do not know anything**, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.

ECC 9:6 Indeed their love, their hate, and their zeal have already perished, and **they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun.**

1. Some argue the dead do not know anything.

2. The text says they do not know anything “under the sun.”

3. It is not affirmed that the dead have ceased to exist and do not know anything anywhere.

M. Obscure passage must not be used to interpret simple ones.

1. Some have used Revelation 20:1-6, a highly symbolic passage, to teach that Christ will set up a kingdom on the earth and reign a 1,000 years.

2. They have interpreted simple passages on the basis of their understanding of this obscure passage.

3. It is safer to interpret obscure passages in light of the simple ones

4. The verses show the kingdom was established on the 1st Pentecost after Chris’s resurrection. (Mk. 9:1; Acts.2:4, 32-36; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9).

N. No teaching or practice can be considered scripturally valid unless it is authorized by the word of God.

1. If the Bible does not authorize something, it is condemned or questionable at best.
2. It is unwise and very dangerous to practice things unauthorized by God.

III. Methods of Bible Study

- A. Determine that you intend to study the Bible rather than to just carelessly browse through it.
- B. Set aside a period each day as a time for Bible study.
- C. Choose a setting and time for Bible study that will be conducive to learning.
 1. When we are rushed, tired, or distracted, this is not the best time to study.
 2. Those who are serious about God's word will seek to study the Bible when their minds are prepared to learn.
- D. Study the Bible with thoughtfulness and meditation.
 1. When we are studying, it is easy for our thoughts to drift to other matters and to read without meaning.
 2. It is helpful at times to stop and reflect upon what has been read and see if we can recall the important points or the main ideas of the text.
- E. Make notes and markings in your Bible. These notations are invaluable in ones study.
- F. Put memory to work in Bible study. Memorize important texts, names of the books of the Bible, names of the apostles, and other vital information.
- G. Plan to study through the whole Bible. By reading only a few chapters a day, one can study the entire Bible in a year.
- H. An effective method of Bible study is to study topically.
 1. Select a subject upon which you wish further information, and with a concordance find numerous texts which discuss it.
 2. By bringing these texts together, we have a composite view of what the Bible teaches upon that subject.
- I. The book method is also an effective way to study the Bible. By studying a book verse by verse, one is able to arrive at a much better and more comprehensive understanding of the Bible.

IV. Useful Aids In Bible Study

- A. A Good Bible.** A good Bible with a legible print is an absolute must for an effective Bible study .
- B. A Modern Speech Translation.** This simplifies the language of the Bible by putting it in the language we speak today.
- C. A Concordance.** This is a book which lists the words of the Bible and the texts where they are found. It is indispensable in locating texts.

D. **A Commentary.** This is a book in which the author explains and interprets the Bible. Commentaries can be very valuable. We should keep in mind they are written by uninspired men and are not infallible.

E. **A Bible Dictionary.** Its purpose is to furnish information on Bible characters, places, events, etc..

F. **A Bible Atlas.** The design of a Bible atlas is to provide information on the geography and history of Bible lands.

V. **Some Simple Rules For Determining If Something Is Binding On Us**

A. **We must consider to whom was it written?**

1. Was it written to those who lived in the Patriarchal Age? Was it written to those under the Old Covenant? Was it written to those under the New Covenant?
2. Was it written to the apostles, husbands, wives, children, slaves, elders, deacons, etc?
3. Everything written is not binding on us.

B. **There must be the following for something to be binding.**

1. There must be a commandment that is intended for Christians at large.
2. Examples can be binding if there is evidence the action was binding on Christians at large and not incidental.
3. We have a binding example in Acts 5:28, 29.
4. We have a binding example in Acts 20:7. See 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
5. Such things as walking, riding a donkey, traveling in a boat, meeting at night, lying on ones side when eating, etc. are incidentals.

C. We must determine if something is cultural or intended for all peoples and nations. **See The veil** - 1 Cor. 11.

D. We must recognize that some gifts were temporary such as the miraculous gifts imparted by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. (Act 8:14-17; 19:1-6; 1 Cor. 13:8-10).

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