

How to Study the Bible

Fourteen Vital Keys to Understanding the Word of God

Today, in the face of rampant religious confusion, the diligent study of the Scriptures—Old *and* New Testament—is more important than ever. After all, the Holy Bible is *not* a collection of mythological fables conceived by human minds. Rather, as Paul wrote, “All Scripture is God-breathed”—and thus reflects the very mind of God. It is His *personal revelation* concerning His awesome, eternal plan for mankind. And having one’s mind *in* the Word of God is one of the *key defenses* Christians have in this sin-plagued world. Yet, many Christians do not realize that their study of the Scriptures is hampered by failing to follow basic “rules” of Bible study.

Indeed, there are definite spiritual *keys* to understanding the Scriptures. The primary key is continually being in a loving, faithful and obedient relationship with God. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments” (John 14:15). Likewise, in the Psalms we find that those who keep the commandments of God will be *given understanding*: “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: **a good understanding** have all they that do *His commandments* (Psa. 111:8). This is the foundation of understanding the Word of God.

In order to understand doctrine, we must study the Bible “line upon line and precept upon precept.” The prophet Isaiah writes: “Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Those* weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts [that is, fully grounded in the basics of the Word of God]. For **precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little**” (Isaiah 28:9-10). That is exactly how we need to study any scriptural question—look at *all* relevant passages on any given subject. The New Testament confirms this approach to understanding the Bible and establishing sound doctrine. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy: “Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman [in the Word of God] who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing [precept upon precept, and line upon line] the Word of the truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

The Word of God is called the Word of truth—and it is the Spirit of truth that teaches us all things. Jesus said, “But *when* the Comforter *comes, even* the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one **shall teach you all things**, and shall bring to your remembrance everything that I have told you” (John 14:26). This is a promise Jesus gave!

The Bible makes it clear that the Word of truth works together with the Spirit of truth to give understanding to those who love God and seek His will. It is self-evident that it is not possible for the carnal mind—which is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9)—to come to the knowledge of the truth of God. In fact, the carnal, unconverted mind is naturally *hostile* toward God and is not willing to be subject to God’s laws (Rom. 8:7). Regardless of how brilliant or how great one’s intellect may be, God’s Word is not understood by human wisdom or reasoning. It is only through the Spirit of God that the Word of God can be understood.

Paul taught that spiritual truths can only be discerned and understood through the Spirit of God: “But God has **revealed them to us by His Spirit**, for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God. For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him? In the same way also, **the things of God no one understands except by the Spirit of God**. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God; which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in *words* taught by *the* Holy Spirit *in order to* communicate spiritual things by spiritual *means*. But *the* natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand *them* because **they are spiritually discerned**” (I Cor. 2:10-14).

Notice what Paul has to say about the profound value of studying the Scriptures: “And

that from a child you have known the holy writings, which are **able to make you wise unto salvation** through faith, which *is* in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* God-breathed and *is* **profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**; so that the man of God may be **complete, fully equipped** for every good work” (II Tim. 3:15-17).

The following “Fourteen Rules for Bible Study” outline how to “rightly divide” the Word of God. When these rules are followed, the student will find the truth of the Bible as revealed by the Spirit of truth. These rules are not designed to justify the various doctrinal positions of men—but only the truth of God and the true doctrines of the Bible.

In addition to carefully examining the historical context of a particular passage of Scripture, students should refer to the original Hebrew and Greek in order to determine the precise meanings of key words. But one should never base doctrine solely on commentaries or other such “Bible helps.” Doctrine must never be based on traditions of men—regardless of how knowledgeable or authoritative such men may appear.

Finally, we should all heed the apostle Peter’s warning about allowing *personal* ideas and interpretations to cloud the truth of Scripture: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone’s own *private* interpretation; because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:20-21).

Fourteen Rules for Bible Study

- 1) Begin with Scriptures that are *easy* to understand.
- 2) Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don’t look for what you *want* to prove look for what the Bible *actually* says.
- 3) Understand the *context*—the verses before and after, and the chapters before and after. Does your understanding of a particular verse harmonize with the rest of the Bible?
- 4) As much as possible, try to understand the original Hebrew or Greek. But never try to establish doctrine or teachings by only using *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. *Strong’s* can be helpful at times, but is very limited.
- 5) Ask: What does the Scripture *clearly* say?
- 6) Ask: What does the Scripture *not* say?
- 7) Ask: Who was the book written to?
- 8) Ask: Who wrote it?
- 9) Ask: Who said it?
- 10) Understand the *historical time frame* in which the book was written.
- 11) Base your study on the scriptural knowledge you already have. What do you *know* up to this point in time?
- 12) Do not allow personal *assumptions* or *preconceived* ideas to influence your under-

standing and conclusions.

- 13) Do not form conclusions based on *partial* facts, insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.
- 14) Opinions—regardless of how strongly you feel about them—don’t necessarily count. Scripture *alone* must be your standard and guide.

A final note: Having a *quality* Bible translation is also important—because many so-called “translations” are *unfaithful* to the original inspired texts. *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* is a *new*, east-to-read English translation that is faithful to the inspired Hebrew and Greek texts—and one which follows the original manuscript order of the books of the Old and New Testaments. For more information on *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order*, please visit **restoringtheoriginalbible.com**.