WEAVER BOOKS

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

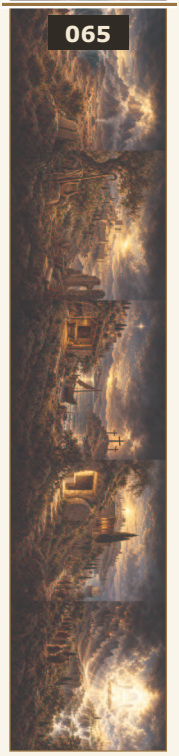
PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE





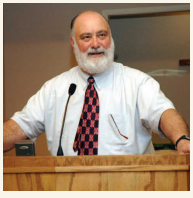
Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Truth and the interpretation of Scripture require careful attention. Across this series, John Weaver considers why readers must examine meaning, assumptions, and the application of God's Word. These messages encourage an approach that tests conclusions by Scripture rather than making the text serve a preferred answer.

“I would rather drive two hours one way to get truth than walk across the street in fifteen steps to get error and heresy.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

BOOK 065

WEAVER BOOKS

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Apologetics

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 065

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Contents

Chapter 1: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part One 7

Introduction and Series Overview 7

The Problem of Superficial Bible Reading 7

The Principle of Measured Truth (Mark 4:23-25) 8

Our Responsibility and Dependence on God for Understanding 10

The Necessity of Divine Illumination 11

No Private Interpretation (2 Peter 1:19-21) 12

The First Reason We Must Interpret Scripture 15

The First Reason to Interpret: Explaining Seeming Contradictions 16

Practical Applications 24

Chapter 2: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Two 27

Introduction and Review 27

Interpreting Scripture by Context 29

Second Reason: Prevent Being Misled by the Sound of Words 29

The Word 'Flesh' Has Multiple Meanings 30

The Word 'World' (Kosmos) Has Multiple Meanings 31

John 3:16 and the World of Believers 36

Other Greek Words for 'World' 38

Third Reason: Insert Explanatory Words 40

Application: Knowledge Must Be Applied 42

Chapter 3: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Three 45

Introduction and Review 45

Biblical Examples of Asking for Understanding 46

The Tools Necessary to Study and Learn 48

The Necessity of Seeking Truth from God 48

Six Things Necessary to Interpret Scripture: Introduction 48

First Necessity: Proper Tools for Study 49
A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit 51
Second Necessity: A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit 52
The Holy Spirit as Teacher and the Danger of Carnality 58
J.I. Packer Quote and Summary 60
Conclusion: Buy the Truth 62

Chapter 4: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Four 65

Review of Previous Messages 65
An Impartial Spirit 68
The Need for an Impartial Spirit 68
A Humble Mind 74
The Need for a Humble Mind 74
The Need for a Praying Heart 77
A Holy Design 79
The Need for a Holy Design 79
Applications and Conclusion 80

Chapter 5: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Five 83

How to Study and Learn Biblical Truth 83
Introduction and Review of Previous Principles 83
The Measure and Reception of Truth 87
Obedience as a Prerequisite for Receiving More Truth 88
Introduction to the 13 Ways and the First: Consider Linguistically 89
The Word 'Love': Agape, Phileo, and Eros 90
The Word 'All': Does Not Always Mean All 91
The Word 'Friend': Philos vs. Hetairos 93
The Word 'Temple': Hieron vs. Naos 96
Other Words: Euthus, Selah, Tirshatha 98
Conclusion: Every Word of God is Pure 99

Chapter 6: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Six 101

Introduction and the Problem of Lack of Study 101

The Historical Principle 103

Review of Linguistic Consideration 103

Historical Consideration 104

Judicial/Legal Consideration 105

Experiential Consideration 109

Expositional/Contextual Consideration 111

Application and Conclusion 116

Chapter 7: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Seven 117

Introduction and Review 117

Contextual Consideration: 1 Corinthians 3 118

Truth Must Be Considered Applicatorily 122

Considering Truth Applicatorily 122

Considering Truth Heavenly and Humanly 124

Considering Truth Eternally and Temporally 125

Considering Truth Negatively and Positively 127

Considering Truth Doctrinally 130

Practical Application and Conclusion 133

Chapter 8: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Eight 135

Introduction and Context 135

The Importance of Bible Doctrine 136

Doctrine as the Foundation for Steadfastness 138

The Command to Teach No Other Doctrine 139

Paul's Method: Reasoning out of the Scriptures 140

Reasoning with Scripture and Disputing 142

Opening the Scriptures 143

Alleging: Setting Teaching Beside Scripture 147
Mixed Responses to Faithful Teaching 148
Conclusion: The Seriousness of Preaching 150
Chapter 9: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part Nine 153
Introduction: The Question of Berean Receptivity 153
Election and the Means of Salvation 155
First Reason: A Noble Character 155
A Ready Mind 160
Second Reason: A Ready Mind 160
Third Reason: Searching the Scriptures Daily 165
The Result: Belief and Opposition 167
Applications for Learning Truth 168
Topical Index 173
Scripture Index 177
Study Guide Link 185

CHAPTER 1

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part One

Introduction and Series Overview

The title of this message is Three Reasons We Need to Consider Truth and Interpret Scripture. However, we're going to have more reasons probably on down the line and more sermons following this as well. The Apostle said, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

The Problem of Superficial Bible Reading

Most Christians read their Bibles. However, most Christians do not read their Bibles daily, consistently, constantly, and repeatedly. When they do read their Bibles, usually they read them without thinking, without grasping what is being said, without even noting the place in which they're reading. Usually, a lot of Christians who

try to read their Bibles all the way through every year read them so quickly that it's almost impossible to absorb and learn that which they have read.

I've often said that I'd rather read three verses with understanding than three chapters and not understand a word that I had read. Moreover, usually when we read something from the Bible, we don't normally think about it, we don't meditate upon it, and we certainly do not apply it. Consequently, it's easily lost.

There's a warning in Scripture. Hebrews 2 and verse 1 says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Certainly things do indeed slip away from us. I find it not only most interesting, but sometimes even amusing to observe that most Christians can listen to a well-developed sermon, an interestingly communicated sermon, and one with excellent oratory, and by the end of the day they've already forgotten what the sermon was about. Usually, they've forgotten everything within a week's time.

Now, you have to ask, why in the world is that true? There are a number of reasons. One of the first, I suppose, is that most people really do not listen. Listening indeed is an art. A lot of people who come to church sit there thinking about other things. They are not really thinking about what is being said. Sometimes they are planning a week's worth of events in their minds, and sometimes they are mentally dozing or acting as if they are in a mental stupor. I have known a lot of people who stay up late on Saturday night, either going out, watching television, or watching some movie, and then on Sunday morning they stand or sit there and keep dozing off. They did not really come to hear or learn; they simply came out of habit.

The Principle of Measured Truth (Mark 4:23-25)

The second, and probably the most important, reason is a biblical one: when we hear something, we do not really make application of it to our lives. In Mark 4:23–25, our Lord gives us this truth: “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” And He said unto them, “Take heed what you hear: with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he

that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

There are three principles in this passage that we really need to comprehend. The first is in verse 24: "Take heed what you hear: with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you." In other words, God is going to measure truth to us to the same degree and in the same measure that we give in seeking and learning truth. He is not going to give us an ounce more. You are not going to study the Scripture for two hours and get a week's worth of knowledge. It is impossible. Neither are you going to study for fifteen minutes and get two hours' worth of knowledge. If you study ten minutes, you are going to get ten minutes' worth of knowledge, and that is it, because He said He is going to measure back to you exactly the same measure that you put in in giving the truth.

The second principle is found again in Mark 4:24–25. He said, "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." And, "And unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given."

The word hear in verse 24 means to hearken: to give audience, to consider, to learn, to understand, and to comprehend. Our Lord is teaching us that the more we understand the truth and apply the truth, the more truth you and I are going to be given, and the more truth we will receive. In other words, if you want to learn more truth, you need to apply the truth that God has already given you. Here is a good question to ask: Why in the world should God give you any more truth if you will not obey the truth that he has already given you? If you want more truth, then you have to apply and use the truth you have already been given.

This fits right in with the text in 2 Timothy 2:7, when the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." The word consider is the Greek word noieo, meaning literally to consider, perceive, understand, think, ponder, and grasp with the mind. It is also a present active imperative. An imperative is a command; you are being commanded to consider. Since it is present active, this is something you are to be doing continually. In other words, you are commanded to consider his Word incessantly. Therefore, it is a present active command.

The third principle is found in verse 25: “For he that hath, to him shall be given.” Then he says, “And he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” In other words, if you do not consider the truth, if you do not hear, grasp, understand, and apply the truth, you will lose it. It will be gone.

Because it is not really yours anyhow. It is like students I knew in college who would cram for a test. They would pass the test and then immediately forget everything they had studied. It really did not do them any good. This is what God is saying here: if we truly do not grasp the truth and apply it, it is not ours at all. We will lose it.

Our Responsibility and Dependence on God for Understanding

When you look at 2 Timothy 2:7, where the Apostle Paul says, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things," you must first discern our duty, responsibility, obligation, and privilege: we are to consider the Word of God. As we consider it, we fulfill our responsibility. However, responsibility does not necessarily imply ability. We may be responsible to study, consider, and hear, but that does not mean we have the ability in and of ourselves. Paul says, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding." The word give is the Greek word didomi, which literally means that it is a gift, a grant; it is furnished and given as a favor.

Therefore, as we study, contemplate, and consider, we must also seek the Lord to give us understanding. We may study independently in the sense that we study by ourselves or individually, but our independent study is to be dependent upon the Lord to give us understanding. David said it like this in Psalm 119 and verse 169: "Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word." And Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." The truth is that we must study, meditate, and ponder, while at the same time asking the Lord to grant us wisdom, insight, illumination, and understanding.

So many people think, “All I have to do is sit down, read the Bible, and that is it.” But reading the Bible is quite different from reading

another book, because we must have God's gracious understanding in our lives.

I do not suppose that any men on earth were closer to the Lord Jesus Christ than His disciples. Yet oftentimes, when He taught, they did not understand what He was teaching. They had to ask. On two occasions, in Matthew 15:16 and Mark 7:18, our Lord asked His disciples, the apostles, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" In Mark 7:18 He said, "Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him?" Twice He asked them, "Are you without understanding?" Numerous times in Scripture, they understood not.

The Necessity of Divine Illumination

What our Lord did for His disciples is what we need Him to do for us. In Luke 24:44-45, before His ascension, our Lord said, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

Here is a principle, a lesson, and an application we should already draw: we may study until we are completely fatigued. We may fill our brains with Scripture and work tirelessly in seeking for truth, but unless He opens our eyes, opens our understanding, and illuminates our minds to the truth, we will never see it.

You could have the best preacher on earth. He could present the clearest message and have the best illustrations. But unless God opens your eyes, you will never see. Unless He opens your ears, you will never hear. Unless He opens your heart, you will never receive. It is true that the Holy Spirit is to be our teacher. However, that does not mean that we do not need human instruction or human teachers.

If you take the time to read Ephesians chapter 4, you will find that our Lord gave gifts of ministry to the church. The Bible says that He gave some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers. Why? For the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the church, for the building up of the church, to bring us into the fullness of the body of Christ and the fullness of the stature

of Christ. In other words, He gave pastor-teachers as His ministry gift to the church.

When you get to Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 15, God told His people this. He commanded them to repent and turn back to Him, and He said, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." So God said, "I will give you pastors, and they will feed you."

In 2 Timothy chapter 2, look at verses 1 and 2 and see what the apostle said. He tells Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The apostle Paul taught Timothy, and now he is telling Timothy to teach faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

The truth is, no matter how gifted the preacher, and no matter how clear, plain, and simple the presentation is, no one is going to understand unless God the Holy Spirit opens their eyes. Illumination is indeed the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, whereby He opens our minds that we might understand the words that He has revealed in Scripture.

No Private Interpretation (2 Peter 1:19-21)

In 2 Peter 1, the Apostle Peter addresses the fact that there is no such thing as a private interpretation. He says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The more sure word of prophecy in verse 19 is indeed the Word of God. It is not only the written Word of God, but also the living Word of God, because he says, “until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts.” In the Scripture, Jesus Christ is the bright and morning star. He is the day star. Thus, the more sure word of prophecy is not only the written Word of God, but also the living Word of God.

Consequently, there cannot be any private interpretation. Verse 21 explains verse 20; that is what the little word "for" is about. When he says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," what does that mean? He explains it: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In other words, the Bible is not man's word; the Bible is God's Word. Men moved, or men ran, as God sent them. The Bible is not the work of man, but it is indeed the work of God.

John Trapp explains that "private" in this passage means human interpretation, not public interpretation: "Private is not here as opposed to public, but to the divine, to the Holy Ghost." When the Bible says there is no private interpretation, verse 21 explains that it is not private versus public. It is not the difference between whispering something heard from another person and telling everyone what was heard. Rather, it is private versus divine.

Matthew Poole writes: "The meaning is, not that private men are not to interpret Scripture, only referral to the church, but that no man, nor company of men, no church, nor public officers are to interpret the scripture of their own heads according to their own minds so as to make their private sense to be the sense of scripture, but to seek the understanding of it from God, who shows them the meaning of the word in the word itself, the more obscure places being expounded by the more clear, and by his spirit leads believers in their searching the scripture into the understanding of his mind in it. God himself being the author of the word is the best interpreter of the word."

Poole then says, "Mission or dismission," a metaphor taken from races in which those who ran were released from the stage where the race began so that they might run their course. The prophets in the Old Testament are said to run as God's messengers, as in Jeremiah 23:21, and God is said to send them in Ezekiel 13:6-7. This does not immediately concern the interpretation of Scripture, but the first revelation of it spoken of in the next verse, verse 21.

The question is not who has authority to interpret the Scripture now written, but what authority the penman had to write it, what respect is due to it, and why believers are so carefully to take heed to

it. The meaning is that the first principle of our faith is that Scripture is not of human invention, but divine inspiration. The prophets wrote not in their own private sense, but in the mind of God, at His command, and not at their pleasure. Thus verse 20 makes perfect sense: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”

In other words, the men that God used to pen the Word of God did not sit down and say, “I think this is what this means, and I think this is what I am going to write.” No. He says, “For.” Here is the explanation why it cannot be that the prophecy came in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost, who inspired them to write that which was true. So what we are being taught is that the Scriptures are indeed the Word of God, and they are not the word of man. Since that is clear, this also leads to another application.

No one has a right to determine or force a private interpretation upon a passage. One cannot lawfully, biblically, or hermeneutically simply state independently, “This is what the Scripture means, and I am not going to allow it to mean anything else. No one else can allow it to mean anything else.” Why? The answer is because God is the true interpreter of Scripture. It is God the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible to be written, and God the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the Bible. Therefore, one of the very first rules of hermeneutics is that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We are to allow Scripture to interpret itself. Scripture gives us the true meaning and the true interpretation, which leads us to another truth: We cannot interpret Scripture so as to make it contradict itself.

I have had plenty of people tell me that they have interpreted a passage and say, “Let me tell you, this is what I think.” When they finish, I ask, “What are you going to do with this other passage over here that contradicts what you just think? What are you going to do with what you just said to me?” If your interpretation of a Scripture contradicts other plain passages in the Bible, the Bible is not wrong. Your interpretation is wrong. This is what I mean by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. The problem is never with the Scripture. The problem is always with our limited, finite understanding.

You have heard me use the word hermeneutics several times. Hermeneutics is nothing more than the art or science of Bible interpretation. If you are going to be a serious student of the Bible, you need to get a book such as A. W. Pink's The Interpretation of Scripture, where he lays down certain biblical rules and gives illustrations on how to interpret the Bible. There are many other books on interpretation.

But if you get a book on the rules of hermeneutics, you need to make sure it was written by a Christian. Liberals, leftists, Marxists, and communists all write books to discredit the Bible. When the Lord first saved me many years ago, I wanted to know the Bible. I was under the impression that if it was a Christian book in a Christian bookstore, then a Christian must have written it. But that is not true.

I remember reading through the Old Testament and seeing a book on the Exodus. I thought it would be an excellent book, so I bought it. It was written by a woman—not necessarily discrediting women by any stretch of the imagination—but this woman happened to be an unbeliever. I read the book eagerly until I came to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. She stated plainly that Moses and the Israelites got across because Moses knew when the tide would be out, while Pharaoh and his army drowned because they did not know when the tide would come back in. Really? The Bible said they went across on dry ground.

This book was being presented as a Christian book in a Christian bookstore, yet it totally and absolutely contradicted Scripture. So you have to make sure. You also have to consider that, in reality, everyone interprets Scripture. It is impossible not to interpret. We may not interpret accurately, but we interpret. In fact, we interpret every day. We interpret everything said to us, and everything that is not said to us: "I wonder why he did not say this. I bet I know." Then we go off into a zillion reasons. We interpret facial expressions and bodily movements.

The First Reason We Must Interpret Scripture

A man can see a pretty girl moving her eye and think, "Oh, she's flirting with me; she's winking at me." Yet all she may have is an

eyelash, an eye affliction, or a nerve twitch. It is not flirting at all. I am simply saying that we interpret every time we turn around. That is why there are rules for the interpretation of Scripture. We want to interpret Scripture, but we must make sure that we interpret it accurately and stay within the bounds of Scripture.

I am going to give you probably five reasons why we must interpret Scripture. I think I said three, but I will probably add two. Here is the first one, and it is the only one we will cover today: We must interpret Scripture in order to explain seeming contradictions. The emphasis is on the word "seeming." A seeming contradiction occurs when you read one passage, turn over, and read another passage, and the two passages seemingly contradict each other. When that happens, you have to study, look, and interpret in order to reconcile those two seemingly different statements.

The First Reason to Interpret: Explaining Seeming Contradictions

I began this message by giving you certain Scriptures, and I want to reinforce them now. Over and over in the Bible, we are commanded to preach and teach the Word of God. In Ephesians 4, God gave pastor-teachers as ministry gifts to the church. In Jeremiah 3:15, God said, "I'll give you pastors according to my heart, which will feed you with knowledge and understanding." Multitudes of passages deal with men teaching and preaching the Word of God. In Acts 5:42, the Bible says, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." In 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul said, "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."

Paul said, "I teach everywhere and in every church." Then, in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2, he says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach."

Now listen carefully. If I took the time today, I could show you from the Bible where every one of these qualifications of a pastor is also required of every believer, with one exception. God does not

require every believer to be apt to teach. He does require every believer to be hospitable, sober, faithful, of good behaviour, and vigilant. But the one qualification required of pastors that He does not require of anyone else is that he must be apt to teach. Then, in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 11, Paul told Timothy, “These things command and teach.”

With all of these plain Scriptures, who could deny that God has commanded man to teach and that we need human instructors, even though we know the Holy Spirit of God is our instructor?

Believe it or not, I have run into people who said, “I need absolutely no man to teach me.” Really? I asked one individual why, and the response was, “The Holy Ghost is my teacher.” These individuals based that claim on 1 John chapter 2, verse 27: “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

Let me say up front: I know, and you know, and we know, that truly God is the greatest teacher. That is what is said in Job 36 and verse 22.

"Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?" Obviously, no one can teach like Him. But notice that verse 27 says, "And ye need not that any man teach you." Some people take this verse to mean, "We just don't need human teachers. We just need God."

Let me ask you a few questions. Did God use men to write His Word? Did He use prophets, priests, Levites, apostles, and pastors to communicate His truths? Why would God, in one verse, undo, confound, and destroy everything He had done for thousands of years? I wonder whether those who say we do not need human teachers would listen to the Apostle Paul. I wonder whether they would listen to Jesus Christ. He is the God-man.

Here is an important truth: context is everything. There is an immediate context, usually found in the paragraph or chapter, though sometimes it may go back another chapter. There is also a remote context, which may be found at the beginning of the book or

even throughout the entire Bible. When we look at 1 John 2:27, the paragraph begins with verse 18, where the apostle is dealing with seducers, deceivers, and Antichrist. So let us go back to verse 18 and read through verse 27:

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar?

"But he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

Now, note that the whole context is dealing with the Antichrist, deceivers, and seducers. If you are going to take verse 27 out of context, let me ask you about verse 20: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Who is going to be insane enough to claim that they know all things? If you tell me that you know all things, I have questions to ask you. When are you going to die? What will happen tomorrow? What will be the winning lottery number? I have never bought a lottery ticket in my life, but if you know absolutely, I might run out and buy one. No, I am teasing.

How many stars are there? What are their names? What in the world is he saying when he says, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”? You do not know all things knowable, but you know all things needful in the context to avoid these deceivers. That is what he is saying.

Look at verse 26: “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.” We are talking about deceivers and Antichrist; therefore, verse 27 says, “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you,” that is, the Holy Spirit, “and ye need not that any man teach you”—what? In light of the context of the deceivers and seducers. “But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things,” that is, that Jesus Christ is Lord, Jesus Christ is God, and Jesus Christ is the only Savior, “and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit has enlightened us, illuminated us, and taught us that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. We do not need any man to teach us that because we know it. The reason we know it is that we are abiding in Him, and He abides in us.

Remember, He is talking about deceivers, seducers, and Antichrist. There is an immediate context, which began with verse 18, but there is also a remote context. In 1 John chapter 1, the first four verses say: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Notice verse 1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."

John, the apostle, is refuting the heresy of Gnosticism. Gnosticism is from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge, or the verb ginosko, which means I know. The Gnostics were an intellectual elite who believed that they had the knowledge that would make you

spiritual, make you holy, make you saved. It was a secret knowledge, and you had to be in their club to have it. Thus, it was much like the cults, isms, and secret organizations of the day: you had to have their special secret knowledge in order to belong to their club.

There were two types of Gnostics: the Docetic Gnostics and the Cerinthian Gnostics. The Docetic Gnostics denied the humanity of Jesus Christ. They said that Jesus Christ did not have a real flesh-and-bone body because they believed that all matter was inherently evil in and of itself. My arm is flesh; they would point to this fleshly arm and say, "That's evil, that's matter." This table is matter, so this table is evil in and of itself. These Docetic Gnostics said that Jesus Christ could never have had a real physical body because that is matter and would be evil in and of itself.

The Greek verb dokeo means "I appear." The Docetic Gnostics therefore believed that Jesus Christ was a mirage, an apparition, or a ghost. He did not have a real body, because matter is inherently evil. That is why John wrote, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." He was real. He had a real body. They touched Him and felt Him.

John said, "I laid upon His breast." This was the same John the Apostle declaring that Christ was real. Docetic Gnosticism always led to asceticism, a withdrawal from the world because all matter was considered inherently evil. Therefore, there were cave dwellers, stylite dwellers, and those who inhabited monasteries and nunneries. What were they doing? They were ascetics, withdrawing from the world. Remember Martin Luther? Before he was converted, he was in a monastery, beating himself with whips, trying to drive evil out of his body because the body was evil, until God opened his eyes, saved him, and he saw justification by faith.

The Docetic Gnostics said that the body was evil and sinful because it was matter, not because of a sin principle. All matter was evil according to them. Then the Cerinthian Gnostics went to the opposite extreme. They said that Jesus Christ was a little god. He was an Aeon, which would be the Greek word. Although they also believed matter was evil, they explained it this way: If you can watch my finger and pretend I have a blackboard, imagine a huge circle

with God in it. Then draw a smaller circle and put God in it, and another smaller circle with God, and another smaller circle with God. These are aeons, emanations from God. God is up here. He is so holy that He cannot have anything to do with matter.

Therefore, He created a series of lesser gods, and finally one of those lesser gods created the world. The Cerinthians went the opposite way from the Docetics. Although they also believed that matter was inherently evil, they said—and, by the way, this shows the stupidity of their teaching—that the Christ Spirit came upon Jesus Christ at His baptism and left Him at His crucifixion. Thus they still taught that matter was evil, but they went into antinomianism.

In other words, their mantra was this: If the body wants it, do it. Eat it, drink it, make merry, for tomorrow you are going to die. The ascetic Gnostics, the Docetic Gnostics, wanted withdrawal. They said, "If your body wants it, if your body wants to do it, it is evil. Stay away from it." But the Cerinthians said, "No, no, no, no. It is evil. That is true, but it is going to die."

So you might as well indulge it while you can. What John is doing in chapter 1 and chapter 2 is demonstrating that these seducers are not going to seduce someone who is genuinely saved. Look back at 1 John 2:27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." What is it that any man does not need to teach a true believer? That Jesus Christ is God, that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior. He says, "but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things," that is, He interprets Scripture for us, "and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Clearly, then, He is talking about avoiding the seducers. We are not going to fall for them because we know the truth.

Now, let me point out something extremely obvious. Who wrote 1 John 2:27? I know the Holy Spirit inspired it, but the truth is, this is 1 John. That means this book was written by John the Apostle. John the Apostle has written, "ye need not any man teach you." So if someone says, "I do not need any man to teach me; all I need is the Holy Ghost," really? Where do you get that? 1 John 2:27. Did not a man write that? Of course a man wrote that. John wrote it. Thus, if

one rejects a human teacher based upon 1 John 2:27, he should also reject 1 John 2:27 because a man taught it.

The same heresies are alive today that were alive during the times of the apostles and John, specifically here in 1 John. There are isms and cults that deny the humanity of Jesus, and others that deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Some, like the Docetic Gnostics, want to go into asceticism. Others, like the Cerinthians, want to go into antinomianism. Some Cerinthians believed that, since there were so many little gods coming down, it was possible for man to become God.

All of that is absolutely heresy. Anytime an interpretation leads you into asceticism, it is heresy. If an interpretation leads you into antinomianism, it is heresy. An interpretation that leads you into an intellectually elite group saying, "We have the truth, and unless you are in our club, you do not have the truth," is heresy.

This is why we need to interpret Scripture: to be able to explain seeming contradiction. There is no contradiction between 1 John 2:27 and the rest of the Bible. It seems that way to people who know absolutely nothing about how to interpret Scripture.

We have to interpret Scripture to explain seeming contradictions—not a contradiction, just a seeming contradiction. In Genesis 22, beginning with verse 1, the Bible says, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." Then He said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Now look at James 1:13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Wait a minute. Did the Bible not just say, in Genesis 22:1, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham"? That is exactly what it said. Yet James says that God "neither tempteth he any man."

You have to understand the word tempt. In the Hebrew, in the King James Version, and in the Greek, in the Septuagint, I believe probably the word is maybe nasah, peirasmos. I do not know; I did

not check that in the Septuagint. But in Genesis 22, the word basically means to test, to try, to prove, to assay, or to put to the test. So when Genesis says that God tempted Abraham, it means that He tested him. You remember, Abraham passed the test, and God said, “Now I know that thou fearest God.”

When you look again at James 1:13, it says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” In Genesis 22:1, the word means to test, to try, and to prove. In James 1:13, it means to seduce someone to evil, to seduce someone into sin, or to entice someone into sin. Thus, when James says, “Let no man say when he is tempted,” he is speaking of being enticed to sin. God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man in that sense. God does not entice man to sin.

Where does man's temptation come from? Look in verse 14: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." We are tempted from our own flesh, from our own lust. To show you this, look back in James 1, verse 12. There is the same exact word, peirasmos. The word temptation here means a test, a trial. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried," when he is tested, "he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Now look at verse 13: "Let no man say when he is tempted." Now it is the same word, but used differently. "I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." So here is the same word that is used different ways in the scripture. You have to interpret it to avoid a seeming contradiction.

Let me give you the illustration, because we have the same thing in the English language. Suppose I ask Gary, "Gary, I would like you to stand up and give me the definition of this word. It is a small word. It is three letters. It is spelled R-O-W." What would he say? "Before I can give you the definition, I have to hear it in a sentence. Maybe a paragraph." Why? Because R-O-W could be a noun. It could be a row of corn. It could be a verb. Steve rowed the boat. And it could be a noun in another sense, R-O-W, but pronounced row, because row is a fight. So you have the same word, spelled exactly

the same, used three different ways. The context makes it clear. That is why I said earlier that context is everything.

Let me give you another quick one. I want you to look to John 10 and verse 30, and John 14 and verse 28. Jesus Christ said, "I and my Father are one." I and my Father are one. Now look in John 14 and verse 28.

He says, “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.” Yet John 10:30 says, “I and my Father are one.” How can that be? In John 10, our Lord is proclaiming His deity, His essential oneness in essence with the Father. He is God. In John 14:28, our Lord is speaking of His mediatorial office. He has come as the representative of and as a servant of the Father.

One of the phrases used of Jesus Christ repeatedly in the New Testament is “the sent one,” because He came to do the Father’s will. He came as a servant of the Father. In John 5:30, He said, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” Then, in John 6:38, He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

In His mediatorial office, He is the servant of the Father. Is the master greater than the servant? Of course. Jesus Christ has come as the Father’s servant. Thus, in John 10, He is proclaiming His deity, His essence, and His oneness with the Father. In John 14:28, He says that He is the servant of His Father and that the Father is greater, because He came in this official capacity to do His will.

Practical Applications

You have to interpret Scripture in order to explain seeming contradictions.

We must read and study our Bibles with understanding. Reading and studying is our responsibility, but it is God who must give us understanding. God does not give understanding apart from His Word. He is not going to give understanding apart from your

studying His Word. He said, "Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." The Lord is not going to give you understanding without your consideration. Moreover, you are not going to go to bed stupid and wake up smart. You are not going to put the Bible under your pillow and somehow absorb it through osmosis. It will not work. The only way you can get understanding is through considering and studying, while asking the Lord to give you understanding.

Remember this truth and apply it deeply in your mind: God is going to measure to you the amount of truth that you give and that you measure in seeking to learn the truth. If truth is really important to you, you are going to seek it, study it, consider it, meditate upon it, and chew it up over and over. If you are merely a casual reader of the Bible, you are not interested in truth, and God is not going to give you much truth, because you do not really want it.

You have no desire for it. The Bible says in Psalm 111:2, "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." In order to seek out the works of God, you have to have pleasure in them. If you have no pleasure in the works of God, you are not going to seek them out. If you have no pleasure in the Word of God, you are not going to seek out the truth. The casual reader of Scripture is not going to get hardly any truth at all. He might get some, but not much. He will get the skim milk instead of the whole milk.

If we want truth, we have to give ourselves to seeking, studying, and learning truth, and asking the Lord to open our eyes. The very first reason you must interpret Scripture is to explain seeming contradictions. There are no contradictions in the Bible. There are some that are seemingly contradictions, but once you begin to interpret and compare Scripture with Scripture, you find out that usually the contradiction is only in our mind because of our finite understanding.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. We pray, Father, that you would teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. Help us, Lord, to learn your word and to interpret it so that we may understand and

grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Two

Introduction and Review

In 2 Timothy 2 and verse 7, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." We began last week a series entitled "Three Reasons We Need to Consider Truth and Interpret Scripture." The interpretation of Scripture is not only necessary; it is also pivotal. Therefore, we must interpret Scripture in light of the rules of biblical interpretation, or biblical hermeneutics. I pointed out last week that context is absolutely everything, and everything must be taken in context.

It has often been said that you can use the Bible and prove just about anything as long as you take it out of context, and that is certainly true. I have had this given to me many years past: you will

remember that passage in Matthew 27 and verse 5, where the Bible says, “And Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went out and hanged himself.” Then you put that along with Luke 10 and verse 37, where Jesus said, “Go and do thou likewise.” Obviously, those two statements are not in context. If you took them out of context, you could do about anything with them.

It is often said that if you take a text out of context, then you have a pretext, and that pretext would be used to prove anything that you believe or anything that you have been taught. So many times, gross errors and even heresy have been communicated simply by taking something out of context. Since we meet in Waycross, Georgia, which is in Ware County, I told the people this morning I could prove from the Bible that everyone should be able to move to Ware County.

They said, “How in the world could you do that?” Look in 2 Timothy chapter 4, at verse 14. The Apostle Paul is warning of Alexander the coppersmith, and he says, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works.” Now what is this command? “Of whom be thou ware also.” Be thou ware—I’ll go to Ware County! You know that is taken out of context, but I could say, Here is a command: “Be thou ware also.” All the Apostle Paul is saying is to be aware of him, watch out for him, and do not let him deceive you by any stretch of the imagination.

Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture. Whenever you interpret a passage of Scripture and it contradicts other plain passages of Scripture, your interpretation is wrong, not the Scripture.

Last week, I covered one point: We must interpret Scripture in order to explain seeming contradictions. I went over some of those seeming contradictions and emphasized the word “seeming,” because they were not real contradictions. When you interpret them, they are cleared up and the truth is demonstrated. The reasons so many people do not catch seeming contradictions are probably manifold. Number one, they do not really read the Scripture. Number two, if they do read, they are not observant. And if they are observant, many times they do not think about what they have just read.

In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 2, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” It is to the glory of God that He conceals things, and it is our honor that we are able to search things out. If someone is uninterested in truth, obviously he is not going to seek or search. The result is that he will remain forever ignorant. You learn by studying, seeking, and searching. I pointed this out many years ago, and it is the absolute truth. I often said, I wish I had a $20 bill for every question I have ever been asked in all these years of preaching. I have had many questions asked of me, and I have answered them just as biblically as I possibly could.

But here is the difference between asking a question and getting an answer: I have had individuals ask me the same question a number of times. The same individual asked me the same question. In fact, I got on to one one time, and then he apologized to me. I said, “No, I should apologize to you,” and I did. I said, “Because I was supposed to teach you. And no matter how many times you ask me, I am going to answer that.” But here is the problem: If you ask me a question and I answer it biblically, would you remember my answer six months from now? The answer is probably no.

Interpreting Scripture by Context

There is a difference between simply asking and finding out an answer and doing the study and research for yourself. Easy come, easy go: if you forget, you can ask again. But if you sit down and search it out, seek it out, and study it out, it usually becomes yours, and you probably will not forget it. We are responsible and accountable to God to do our own searching and studying. That does not mean I am upset when you ask a question. Of course I am not. I am simply pointing out that the more we study and search, the more truth becomes ours.

Second Reason: Prevent Being Misled by the Sound of Words

The second point is this: We must interpret Scripture to prevent our being misled by the sound of words. Words have meaning, but words also have sounds. The fact that some words are spelled alike, sound

alike, and look alike does not mean they have the same meaning. One problem is that we put meanings on biblical words based on our understanding of what those words mean today. Although words may be spelled alike, sound alike, or be exactly the same word, the meaning of Scripture is not necessarily the meaning we place upon it today. Moreover, words in the Bible may be exactly the same while having different meanings based upon the context.

The Word 'Flesh' Has Multiple Meanings

Consider the words “flesh” and “world.” Everyone understands these words—or at least thinks he does—but we do not always understand that they are used differently in Scripture.

First, consider the word “flesh.” Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 40 and 1 Peter 1. The word “flesh” is first used to designate all humanity. Isaiah 40:5 says, “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” Verses 6–8 continue: “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Here he is talking about all humanity. We are simply as grass.

We are here today and gone tomorrow. If you look in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1:24, you will see that the apostle Peter quotes from Isaiah 40 and says the same thing: “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

First of all, “flesh” is used in the Bible to represent all humanity. Secondly, “flesh” is used in the Bible to designate the body. In Job 19:25–27, the word “flesh” designates the body. The word “flesh” is used for His body.

Then, in Romans 7, we see the same word. The Greek word is sarx, spelled S-A-R-X. It does not really matter whether the word is translated from the Hebrew or from the Greek; its meaning is based

upon the context. In Romans 7:18, the apostle says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”

Here we are not talking about all humanity, nor are we necessarily talking about the body. We are talking about an evil principle of sin. The word “flesh” can designate the evil principle of sin. Paul continues: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

He begins by saying, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing,” and ends by pointing out that it is sin within him. Thus, “flesh” can refer to all humanity, to your body, or to the evil principle of sin. In 1 Corinthians 15, you will understand that “flesh” can also simply designate what you and I would call meat.

I've had people say, "I need a piece of flesh to eat." They are simply talking about a steak. But notice in 1 Corinthians 15:39, the Apostle Paul says, "All flesh is not the same flesh. But there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." So "flesh" sometimes designates meat. I could say this skin hanging on my bones is flesh, and that is what it is. When you look at the word "flesh" in the Bible, there are at least four different ways that word is used.

Now let me come to the second word, because that is what I really want to emphasize today: the word "world." Here is the problem with placing modern-day conceptions and understandings on biblical words. Usually, when people hear the word "world," they think it includes every individual on the planet, or every individual who is alive. Sometimes they even think about every individual who has lived, is living, and shall live, because they are thinking about the word "world."

The Word 'World' (Kosmos) Has Multiple Meanings

The word "world" in the Bible is usually translated from the word kosmos. There are other words, and I am going to point a few of

them out, but kosmos actually occurs 187 times in the New Testament. Another English word we get from kosmos is cosmetics. It refers to an orderly arrangement. Sometimes I have seen something that was not so orderly arranged, but that is basically where the word comes from: the Greek word kosmos. Before long, I will give you a quote from Arthur W. Pink, where he gives us an understanding of the word kosmos.

I want to give you at least seven different ways the word is used in Scripture. First, kosmos is used to represent the universe as a whole. In Acts 17:24, the apostle is preaching on Mars Hill: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." God made the world—that is, He made the universe, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, and everything. Here the word kosmos refers to what you and I would call the universe.

Secondly, turn to John 13. There the word "world" refers simply to the earth. John 13:1 says, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Thus twice the word "world" is used in John 13:1, and each time it refers to the earth, not to the universe. The same truth appears in Ephesians 1:4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." There it refers to the foundation of the earth, or even the foundation of the universe. Yet God asked Job in Job 38:4, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

The word kosmos can be used not just as the universe, but also as the earth. Thirdly, kosmos can refer to the world system. In John 12:31, our Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He is not talking about the earth or the universe; He is talking about the world system. That is why 1 John 5:19 says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." It is the world system. We as Christians do not lie in the arms of the wicked one; we are in the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is also the meaning in 1 John 2:15–17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the

lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Sometimes the word world simply refers to the world system. Therefore, when he says, "Love not the world," he is not referring to the universe or the earth, but to the world system.

Fourthly, in Romans 3:19, the word world is used of the whole of humanity: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Who is guilty before God? All of humanity, because all humanity is not only totally depraved, but has also violated the law of God. Thus, sometimes world is used of all humanity.

Fifthly, sometimes world is used of humanity minus believers. In John 15:18, our Lord is speaking to His disciples. He says to them—go back to verse 16; He says to His disciples.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." Then, in verse 18, He says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Here, "the world" means humanity minus believers. He is speaking to His disciples, to those whom He loves. "If the world hate you," so there is a world of the ungodly.

We need to understand this and put it down in our minds. Romans 3:6 says, "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" When Scripture speaks of judging the world here, it is speaking of condemnation. Compare this with John 5:24: Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Sometimes, then, the word "world" refers to all the ungodly, minus believers. Clearly, the word "world" has different meanings.

Look at Romans 11. The context there concerns Israel. Paul says, "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also

am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,"

Now we are talking about Israel in this context. Paul continues: "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." Then, in verse 12: "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" When he says, "if the fall of them be the riches of the world," "the world" means the nations minus Israel. He is speaking of Israel as not being cast away. Thus, the word "world" also distinguishes, or contrasts, Israel and the nations.

Now, here is number seven, and I want you to think about this one. This one might challenge you. The word "world" is sometimes used of believers only. I will show you the verse in a little bit. Just as there is a world of the ungodly, there is a world of the godly. So, if you look in John 1 and verse 29—John 1, verse 29—watch carefully. Sometimes the word "world" refers only to believers. Look at verse 29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Now wait a minute. Did Jesus Christ take away the sin of every single individual? The answer is no. What did our Lord Himself say to those Pharisees in John chapter 8? He said, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come." And then He said, "Ye shall die in your sins." Wow. It has just said that He took away the sin of the whole world. Which world? It would have to be the world of believers. It certainly would not include the world of the ungodly—no, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Now look in John 3 and verses 16 and 17. I am going to come back and give you a quote on this passage just momentarily. Everybody can quote verse 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God so loved the world—which world did He love? He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Now

watch verse 17: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world. You have to determine whether this is the world of all humanity or simply the world of believers. I am going to show you before I close. It has to be the world of believers because of the context. But look in your Bibles.

John 6:33 says, “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” Does Jesus Christ give life to every single individual in the world? He may give them physical life, but certainly not eternal life. When you read the context of John chapter six, it is indeed referring to eternal life. Verse 35 makes this clear: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Clearly, then, He is talking about eternal life. He gave His life; He gave bread to the world. He giveth life unto the world. Therefore, it has to be the world of the godly, or the world of believers.

Look at John 12:47. Our Lord said, “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” Our Lord saves a world. What world does He save? It is the world of believers.

Now look at 2 Corinthians 5:19. We are talking about reconciliation in this chapter: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Consider the wording carefully. This is a passage that is plainly simple, yet so many overlook it. The issue is what is meant by “the world.” The passage does not say that God was in Christ reconciling every individual without exception; it immediately qualifies the statement by saying, “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” That qualification cannot be ignored. The question, then, is whether every individual has been reconciled, and the answer must be no. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Does that mean that God has reconciled every individual in the world? The answer has to be no, because the next phrase says, “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” If you take the word “world” to mean every individual, then

you have gone into universalism. You are simply saying that every individual is saved, which our Lord Himself in Matthew 25 said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Obviously, He has not reconciled every single individual. Look at the people who are fighting against Him today and those who are living in their sins. Clearly, when you look at verse 19, there is a world of believers, just as there is a world of unbelievers.

There have been at least seven different ways the word "world" is used just in the New Testament. Here is a quote from Arthur W. Pink concerning the word kosmos:

"Has then God used a word that thus to confuse and confound those who read Scripture? We answer no. Nor has He written His word for lazy people who are too dilatory or too busy with the things of the world or, like Martha, too much occupied with serving that they have no time and no heart to search and study Holy Writ. Should it be asked further, 'But how is a searcher of the Scriptures to know which of the above meanings of the term "world" has in any given passage?' The answer is, this may be ascertained by careful study of the context, by diligently noting what is predicated of the 'world' in each passage, and by prayerfully consulting other parallel passages to the one being studied."

John 3:16 and the World of Believers

Now consider the quote from John 3:16: "The principal subject of John 3:16 is Christ as the gift of God. The first clause tells us what moved God to give His only begotten Son, and that was His great love, for 'God so loved the world.' The second clause informs us whom God gave His Son, that is, for 'whosoever,' or better, for 'everyone that believeth.' While the last clause makes known why God gave His Son, that is, His purpose, and that is that 'everyone that believeth should not perish but have everlasting life.' Thus the 'world' in John 3:16 refers to the world of believers, God's elect, and in contradistinction from them, the world of the ungodly."

Look in 2 Peter 2:5, referring to Noah's flood: "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." So if there is a world of the ungodly, there is a world of the godly.

Arthur W. Pink is saying that there is a world of the believer, in contradistinction to the world of the unbeliever. This truth is unequivocally established by passages speaking of God's love: “God commendeth his love toward us” (the saints) (Romans 5:8); “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6); and, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Revelation 3:19). Thus, if you are not chastened by God, you are not loved by God. He chastens every son whom He receiveth. “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

Pink then says, “The wicked God pities” (Matthew 18:33); “the unthankful and the evil, to them God is kind” (Luke 6:35); and “the vessels of wrath He endures with much longsuffering” (Romans 9:22). But His own, God loves. The love of God is primarily for God's people. I have pointed out in times past the difference between a special, specific love and what we would call a beneficent love. I could say

I love all the women in this room, and I do. But I could then say I love my wife, but I do not love every woman in this room the way I love my wife, and I better not, and I should not. When I say I love all the women in this room, all that means is I do not wish to see them any harm. I want them to be blessed, happy, and safe. That is the love of beneficence. But the special redeeming love that God has for His own is different, although God is kind to the wicked, that is for sure.

In Colossians 1:6, Paul is talking about the hope and the truth of the gospel: “Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” I read that verse to explain a comment found in Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance. In a future message, I will explain the difference between Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance and Young’s Analytical Concordance. Here is what Strong says concerning the word kosmos: “world” 186 times, “adorning” one time, 187 times.

He says it means “an apt and harmonious arrangement, constitution, order, government. An ornament, decoration, adornment, the arrangement of the stars, the heavenly host as the ornament of the heaven. Then three, the world, the universe. Four,

the circle of the earth, the earth. Five, the inhabitants of the earth, men and human family. Six, the ungodly multitude, the whole mass of men alienated from God and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ. Number seven, world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly, 7A, the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God, and are obstacles to the cause of Christ. Eight, any aggregate or general collection of particulars of any sort, and in 8A, the Gentiles, as contrasted to Israel, or believers only."

Actually, when he gets through here, there are about eleven to twelve different ways the word "world" is used in Scripture. Let me show you what I am talking about. In John 1:10, we are referring to Jesus Christ.

In verses 1 through 9, you will see that He is the life and the light. So, He says in verse 9, "That was the true Light." We are talking about Jesus Christ. Now look in verse 10: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Here is the little Greek word kosmos. It is used three times in one sentence, and it has a different meaning each time it is placed there. "He was in the world," that is the created world, the earth. "And the world was made by him," that is the universe. "And the world knew him not," that is humanity or unbelievers. So the word "world" is used three times in that one verse and three different ways.

You have to be careful when you look at the words of Scripture and think, "Well, I know what that means." You may not. You may know what the word "world" means in one instance, but you may not know it in every instance. There are other words for the word "world" as well. In Matthew 24:3 is the Greek word aion, which refers to an age or a period of time: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Or literally, the end of the age, or the end of this period.

Other Greek Words for 'World'

They are not talking necessarily about the absolute last day of the world. They are talking about the day that everything comes to pass.

In verse 2, Jesus said, "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things?" The disciples had pointed to the temple. Verse 1 says, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple."

"Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." That is what they are asking: "And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" This refers to the end of this period, the end of this age. When is this going to happen, when all these buildings are going to be torn down?

Then, in Matthew 24:14, we find another word. The Greek word is oikoumene: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Oikoumene refers to a portion of the world, or at least what we would call the inhabited portion of the world. Clearly, then, he is talking about a specific portion of the world where everything will be preached. At that time, not the entire world was inhabited, or at least not that anybody in Rome knew about, and Israel knew about it at that particular time. It is a totally different Greek word.

The point is this: When you look at Scripture, everybody interprets. You will either interpret a word, passage, or verse based upon your perception—your perceived idea of what a word means—or you will interpret that passage based upon its context and the use of that word in the context. That is why so many people believe so many different things: they usually never take things in context. You can communicate gross error and heresy simply by taking something out of its context. Just because you are used to hearing a word and think you know its meaning does not mean that you know its meaning in the context.

We have to interpret Scripture not only to explain seeming contradictions, but also so we will not be misled by the sound of mere words. And number three, we must interpret Scripture to insert an explanatory word in some passages.

Third Reason: Insert Explanatory Words

Let me make a statement. Listen carefully. When I say we must insert an explanatory word in some passages, I am not talking about adding to Scripture. That is not what I'm saying at all. I'm going to show you exactly what I mean. I want you to turn in your Bibles to two passages: first, Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 13, and then Proverbs, chapter 15, verse 3. Look in Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 13. Right after the book of Nahum you have Habakkuk, and right before Zephaniah. Look what he says: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" Now look at verse 13 again, the first part: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."

Now, does this passage mean that God cannot in any way look upon iniquity? Does it mean that He cannot behold evil? Does it mean that He cannot see it? Does it mean that He cannot judge it because He does not see it and He does not know it? But if you look in Proverbs 15 and verse 3, look what the Bible says: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Now, you've got to come back to Habakkuk 1 in verse 13, and you have to deal with this because we just read, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." So look in verse 13 again. He says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."

Habakkuk 1:13 seemingly contradicts what he has just said: "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously," so he is looking at sin, "and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" How do you explain the first phrase of verse 13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"? Here is how: add an explanatory word in your mind, not in the Scripture. It means, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" condoningly or approvingly. God does not condone evil or approve of evil. He does see it to judge it; he does see it to pay it back for his wickedness. But he does not look upon it condoningly or approvingly. That is what I mean by inserting an explanatory word. You are not adding to

the Scripture; you are simply saying, This is what this means, and it is very easily explained like that.

Consider another example. Romans chapter 9 and verse 19, together with 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 3. In Romans chapter 9, the Apostle is arguing for the absolute sovereignty of God. Verse 19 asks, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" This clearly indicates that no one is capable of resisting God's will and cannot resist God's will.

Now look at 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." So here is the question: Has anyone ever committed fornication? Has anyone ever committed adultery? Has anyone ever coveted? Has anyone ever lusted? Has anyone ever transgressed God's law or broken God's law?

The answer is yes—millions upon millions of times. Romans 9:19 asks, "Who hath resisted his will?" Yet 1 Thessalonians 4:3 shows us that many people have violated His will. How are we to reconcile and explain the difference between Romans 9 and 1 Thessalonians 4? Deuteronomy 29:29 gives the answer. We must distinguish between the secretive will of God and the revealed will of God. Romans 9 is talking about the secretive will of God, while 1 Thessalonians 4 is talking about the revealed will of God. The Bible says very clearly, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

You have God's secretive will, and you have God's revealed will. When Romans 9:19 asks, "Who hath resisted his will?" the answer is really and truly no one, because that is God's secretive will. It is secretive; therefore, you cannot know it, and I do not know it. It really and truly is none of our business. But have men violated His revealed will? Yes. His revealed will is our business, and we should obey it. Thus, "Who hath resisted his will?" indicates that no one has resisted God's secretive will.

Now, let me give you one more. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." You say, "I believe that." So do I. But what does that mean? Is Christ still in the flesh? Is

Christ still humiliated, crucified, or buried? No. He has changed in that respect. He is no longer in the state of humiliation; He is in the state of glorification.

When it says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," it is not talking about the state of His humiliation. It is talking about His essence and His oneness with God: "I and the Father are one." It is talking about His essential being and His essential and official capacity as the mediator. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He always will be in that essence, because He is God in the flesh. Jesus Christ is unchanged in His essential person, in the exercises of a mediatorial office, and in relation and attitude to His church, but He is no longer in the state of humiliation.

So the point I'm just making is, you have to read, and you have to sometimes say, "Well, I know what that means." That's not talking about the state of humiliation. He is no longer in that, but He is always the same in His being and essence and official capacity.

Application: Knowledge Must Be Applied

Scripture is meant to be understood and applied. Unless you interpret Scripture, you cannot understand it; and unless you understand it, you cannot apply it. Without application, all of your studying, searching, and work are useless and worthless. I may know how to build a boat, even from scratch, but unless I actually build a boat, my knowledge, in one sense of the word, is useless. I've not applied it. Scripture is not just to be read; it is to be applied. If you're just getting knowledge for knowledge's sake, then you're getting knowledge for the wrong reason.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verses 1 and 2, he says, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge." Then he says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Once you think you know something, and your knowledge builds up your pride, you really know nothing as you ought to know. God gives us knowledge so that we may understand it, and we understand it so that we may apply it and use it.

I like what John Trapp, an old Puritan, said: "Wine is good when it goes to the heart to cheer it, but when it fumes all up in the head, it maketh it giddy, so doth knowledge." Everyone has met someone you frame and call a know-it-all. You can't get anything in; you can't tell him anything because he knows it all. That's what knowledge does without application. It simply puffs up.

Knowledge is not for show, pride, debate, or argumentation. It is for implementation. Unless your knowledge is implemented, unless it is applied, it is useless. You may know that you need to interpret the Scriptures, but if you do not, you will never understand them. You may know that you need to apply the Scriptures, but if you do not, they will never be real in your life. Scriptures come alive and principles live as we apply them.

to every area and every sphere of our lives. We must interpret Scripture, not only to explain seeming contradictions, not only to keep from being misled by the sound of mere words, but also sometimes to insert an explanatory word so that we can understand the passage as it relates to other passages in the Bible. We must seek Him for truth.

Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We pray that You will teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, enable us, Lord, to be able to interpret and interpret correctly. Enable us to understand, and enable us to apply. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Three

Introduction and Review

You'll remember that in the first two messages of this series, I dealt with three reasons we need to consider truth and interpret Scripture. Today we're going to continue that, but I've added something to the title: three reasons we need to consider truth and interpret Scripture and six things necessary to interpret. So, in 2 Timothy 2:7, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Consider what I say. And the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

I pointed out in the first message that everyone interprets what they read, what they see, or what they hear. We may interpret incorrectly, but at the same time, we still interpret. We often misunderstand and misinterpret. So I could ask two questions. First: How often has someone misinterpreted or misunderstood what you

said? Second: Likewise, how many times have you misinterpreted or misunderstood what someone else has said?

Usually, when there is a misinterpretation or misunderstanding, somehow, someway, anger, resentment, bitterness, hurt feelings, and sometimes even dissolution of friendship happen. Here is a simple but very often neglected truth: really and truly, the only way we will ever know what someone meant if we misunderstood or misinterpreted is simply to ask the individual what they did mean when they said such.

If Steve said something to me and I did not quite understand what he said—not that I necessarily did not hear it, but I thought, "Is he slamming me? Is he being ugly with me? Is he being unkind? I bet that rascal meant such and such."—the only way I can really find out is to ask him, because he is the one who said it. He knew exactly why he said it and what he meant. He may have meant to cut me and slam me.

If he did, he would probably tell me so, and then he would probably tell me why. But oftentimes we neglect listening to the one who said what we misinterpreted and misunderstood.

You have to understand this too: every time we hear something, read something, or think about something, we do so from our own perspective. Our perspective may be right, or it may be wrong, but it is still our perspective. I have often counseled husbands and wives who were having marital problems. They would sit in front of me, and the woman would say one thing while the man would say something totally and completely different. You might think, “Well, now you need to ask them which one is lying.” The truth of the matter was that neither one of them was lying. They were simply interpreting everything from their own perspective.

Biblical Examples of Asking for Understanding

That was the way they saw it, understood it, and heard it. One of them was obviously wrong. Sometimes both of them may have been wrong, but that was simply their own perspective. So the point I am trying to make is this: really and truly, the only way you are going to find out what someone really meant is to ask them.

I went through all of that to say this: since God is the One who gave us the Scripture, and since the Holy Spirit inspired the Scripture to be written, if you and I misunderstand or misinterpret it and truly want the truth, the way to find out the truth is to go to the One who said, wrote, and sent the truth. Therefore, we ask Him.

Look in your Bibles, if you would, to Mark, chapter 4. You can probably hold this passage, because we will come back here a little later. Our Lord has been teaching in parables, and the Bible says, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”

When the disciples did not understand what our Lord was teaching, even when He taught by parables, they got alone with Jesus Christ, asked Him, and He expounded everything to them. If you look in your Bibles at Luke, chapter 24, you remember those two men on the Emmaus road, without my going into all of that passage.

In Luke chapter 24, they were on the Emmaus road. Jesus drew near to them, and they assumed that He was a stranger. Their eyes were holden; the Bible says they did not know who He was. Until, of course, He prayed, and then the Bible tells us their eyes were open. The interesting thing is this: in Luke 24, and in fact, go back and read verse 26, He says to them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." They did not understand, see, or comprehend. So He began expounding from Moses and the prophets everything that pertained to Him.

He is the one to ask, very obviously. There was a passage in Acts chapter 11 and verse 4 concerning the apostle Peter. The Bible says, "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying." That verse deals with the vision God gave him in Acts chapter 10, when the sheet was let down from heaven with all manner of creeping things. The voice said, "Rise, Peter; slay, and eat." He said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." Then the Lord gave him the proper interpretation, showing him that men were not necessarily unclean just because they were not of the tribes of Israel.

He then went into the house of Cornelius, a Roman soldier and a centurion, who obviously had all of his families there. When Peter came back, some Jews at Jerusalem said, "You went into the house of someone who was unclean." Peter then began expounding and explaining the vision God had given him.

Peter was the only one who could expound it because God gave him the vision, the interpretation, and told him what it meant. Therefore, he could expound and explain it. If they wanted to know what the vision actually meant, they had to go to Peter, because he was the one to whom God had given it.

The Tools Necessary to Study and Learn

The Necessity of Seeking Truth from God

When you and I refuse to pray, study, meditate, and seek the answers from the Author of Scripture, we should understand that there are so many delusions around, so many heresies around, and so much ignorance around because we refuse to ask and seek the truth from the One who sent the Scripture. Today we begin considering some of the things needed and necessary to interpret Scripture. There are six, but today we will cover only two.

Six Things Necessary to Interpret Scripture: Introduction

Before I give you these, let me mention something I have heard for a multitude of years. Someone has said, “Brother Weaver, you should know more about the Bible because you went to the university and a Bible school.” Yes, I did go. But let me tell you something: you do not need a college degree or a Bible school diploma to understand the Word of God. You simply do not need that. Certainly, I approve of education; you understand that. But the truth of the matter is this: a college or a Bible school may teach you about the Bible, but the only way you can learn the Bible is to study it for yourself. Read it for yourself. I would rather know what is in the Bible than just simply know facts about the Bible.

So do not come around and say, “Some preachers have gone to Bible school; they should know more than others.” They may know

some things more than others, but the only way you can really know the Bible is to read it yourself.

First Necessity: Proper Tools for Study

Here are six things, of which I am giving you just two today, that are absolutely necessary for you to interpret and understand Scripture. The first one is this: you need the tools necessary to study and to learn. You need the tools necessary to study and learn. I think you can grasp this fact very simply. If you are going to build a house, obviously you have to have a hammer and a saw. You have to have a measuring stick and something to work with if you are going to be a carpenter or build a house. That is all there is to it. So if you are going to really study Scripture and really know the truth, the very first thing you need is a very good Bible.

I always recommend the King James Bible. That is what I have used all my life, and what I have learned and memorized all my Scripture with. But by a good Bible, I mean one that you can read and use. If you cannot read it because the print is too small, you are simply not going to use it. I have no idea how many Bibles I have, but I have a number of them, including some very compact Bibles. Their print is so small that I have to wear reading glasses. Obviously, I do not carry those around with me. I do not have a giant-print Bible, but the print is large enough that I can read it without glasses.

The point I am trying to make is this: if you do not have a Bible that you can use and in which you can find what you need, you are not going to use it. I think I told you this years ago, but I will never forget hearing—or perhaps reading—about a pastor who visited one of his members. After visiting with the lady for a while, he said, "Before I go, I would like to read some Scripture, but I left my Bible in the car. May I use your Bible?" She said yes.

Then she looked at her little girl and said, "Please go in Mommy's room and get that book that Mother loves so much." The little girl came back with a Sears and Roebuck catalog. Obviously, if you are going to find a Bible, you need to find one that you can and will use.

Here is the second thing. I have heard people say, "Well, Hebrew and Greek." The truth is, you do not really have to know Hebrew,

and you do not really have to know Greek. I will tell you that knowing them is an advantage, to be sure. I never had Hebrew, but I did take three years of Greek.

If you have an Internet connection, there are all kinds of Bible programs available. If you do not have Internet, there is Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Young's Analytical Concordance.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance lists every word in the Bible, including words such as “it,” “the,” and “and.” Years ago, I think it was 1894 when Strong's came out—it was in the 1890s anyhow—it took thirty-five years to complete. Of course, they did not have computers back then. Some theological students really understood Strong's Exhaustive Concordance because they said you had to be strong to carry it; it probably weighed three or four pounds. They said it was exhausting, especially if you carried it all day long. The word exhaustive simply means thorough.

If you take the word “world” and look it up in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, it will list that word in the Old Testament and the New Testament, giving you every Scripture in which “world” is found.

Young's Analytical Concordance does even more. It analyzes all of the Greek words for you. Strong's always assigns a number to a word, so you can look in the back of the concordance and find the original Hebrew word, the Greek word, and the definition. But if you take the word “world” in Young's Analytical Concordance, it will not only list the word “cosmos”; it will also list the other two or three Greek words from which “world” is translated, giving all of them under the word “world.”

Both of them are very usable and easy to use. If you are going to get an online Bible program, one of the best Bible programs I have ever seen is known as the Online Bible program, and you can get it for less than 50 bucks. I realize there are a lot of free Bible programs, such as the Blue Letter Bible program and all kinds of other Bible programs. But the reason I like the Online Bible program is that it gives you access not only to Greek and Hebrew, but also to definitions, maps, commentaries, dictionaries, devotionals, and a multitude of other helps.

I probably have in my library, if not close to or over, 15,000 books. I have amassed those books over 57 years of preaching. I have no idea of their value, though I know I paid a lot of money for them over the years. The point I am trying to make is this: for less than 50 bucks, you can buy the Online Bible program and have all the commentaries and dictionaries available at your fingertips. If you were to buy them as I did, you would spend thousands upon thousands of dollars. They are all right there—the old Puritans, four or five different Bible dictionaries, all the maps, and everything that you need.

If you are going to really study, you need the necessary tools to study. That means you need a good Bible, a Strong's or Young's, or at least a good Bible program.

I have heard people object all these years, saying, "But I don't know Hebrew, and I don't know Greek." You do not necessarily have to go to school for that. It is right there. Especially on the Online Bible program, all you have to do is click on the little button, and it appears. It will tell you what the Greek is, give you the definition, and tell you where to go to find more information. All these languages are at your fingertips; all you have to do is click on them.

A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit

Everything is basically spelled out for you. The objection people have to buying books or getting Bible programs is, in all probability, that they do not wish to take the time to learn to use these tools. Priorities do matter. If you are really interested in knowing the will of God and knowing the Word of God in your life, then you will invest not only money but also time to make sure that you know what the will of God is and what the Word of God is. If you are not really interested, this is a secondary and unimportant matter to you. Consequently, you will never acquire the proper tools; and if you did acquire them, you would never use them.

A carpenter who does not have a hammer and a saw is just as useless as a carpenter who has a hammer and a saw but does not know how to use them. If you are going to get the tools, you need to take the time to learn how to use them. Acquiring the proper tools in Bible study is the first step. You need a good Bible. You need to know

history, and you can have church history at your fingertips with the Online Bible program. You need to know what the original languages are, and you can have them at your fingertips with the Online Bible.

Second Necessity: A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit

The second thing you need, if you are going to interpret and study, is a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit. You need a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

Before getting into this, I will give you three definitions so I can expound and explain them. The first is the definition of inspiration. Inspiration is the strong, conscious in-breathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to the truth, so that the words they spoke and wrote were and are indeed the very words of God Himself. If you understand inspiration, you understand that the Bible is the Word of God.

I've preached before, and someone has said to me, "Well, Brother Weaver, that's just what you said. If I heard God say it, I'd believe it." The truth is, if I preached it from the Bible, God said it. If it's in the Bible, God said it. That's what inspiration is. Inspiration is a strong, conscious, in-breathing of God, qualifying them to give utterance to the truth. It's God speaking through men. The Bible is just as much the Word of God as if God spoke every single word Himself. That's why the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 3, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is God-breathed; it is God-exhaled. The Bible is indeed the Word of God. God inspired the men to write and breathed in them the very words that they wrote, so that the words are indeed the very Word of God.

Here's the second definition: revelation. Revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals truth that was never known before to the human mind. If I were to ask you who wrote the first five books of the Bible, you would respond, "Moses." But how did Moses know what happened at creation? He wasn't there. How did he know what happened at the fall of Adam and Eve, the Noahic flood, Genesis chapter 11, or Genesis 12, 13, 14, and 15? The answer is that God revealed it to him.

Revelation is when God reveals a truth. Inspiration is when God superintends the revelation of that truth to guarantee that we have His Word. So you have inspiration and revelation. There is no revelation going on today. How can I say that? Revelation is revealing truth that was never known before to the human mind.

People have asked me, "Are there prophets today?" The answer is yes and no. In one sense of the word, there are no prophets; in another sense, there are prophets. How can I say that?

The main Hebrew word for prophet was nabi. A prophet did two things: he foretold and he told forth. When a prophet foretold, God gave him a vision, trance, truth, or spoke to him in some way. He knew what was going to happen because God gave him that vision and understanding. Thus he could say, "In 722 BC, the northern tribe is going into captivity," or, "In 586, the southern kingdom is going into captivity." God prophesied and told all these things. The prophets foretold what was going to happen before it happened.

But they not only foretold; they told forth. Is there new revelation being given today? The answer is no. Are there prophets today in one sense? Yes. If I foretell, or "tell forth," what is going to happen based upon the finished revelation of God, then in that sense I would be a prophet. But I am not giving something that just came to me—some new or different truth. I am giving and telling forth the revelation that has already been revealed. My telling forth is based on what was already foretold when God gave us His Word. Therefore, in one sense there are no prophets, and in another sense there are prophets.

Now let me show you why there is no new truth or revelation today. Look in your Bibles at Hebrews 1:1-3: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,"

How did God speak? Read the Old Testament. Sometimes He spoke through visions, sometimes through dreams, and sometimes He spoke to them so that they understood. Sometimes He used pictures, as when Ezekiel portrayed the siege of Jerusalem. He spoke in different ways. But notice what has happened in Hebrews 1:2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past

unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Notice especially these words: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

When we say that new revelation is occurring today, we deny that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. We would also deny that the Bible is the full and final revelation of the written Word of God. You cannot have new revelation and have the fullness of Jesus Christ at the same time. That would be additional revelation. Jesus Christ Himself is the Revelator. Jesus Christ is revelation, and the Bible is the written revelation of God.

When someone says, "I can be a prophet, and I can tell you that the United States is going to fall in October of 2022," that is not revelation. That is speculation. There is no prophecy like that. People may tell you what they think, what they believe, or what they wish, but it is not prophecy. It is not revelation, because there cannot be new revelation without denying that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. The Bible tells us very clearly that God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son.

In the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation, one little book with one chapter, look at verse 3. Jude writes, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Notice that he said, "You must earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints."

The word "once" is the Greek word "hapax," and it means "just once." He is saying that the faith has been revealed just once. When you come up with new revelation, you are saying that the faith is being revealed more than once. Some of you may have read a word in theological books known as "hapax legomena." Do you know what "hapax legomena" are? They are words that occur just one time in the Bible. That is what this word means: the faith was delivered just once.

So you have to understand this: revelation is how God gave truth to men. Inspiration superintended the communication of that truth.

Now let me make a statement and then try to give you the understanding of it. I have had Christians call me, very excited, and say something like, “Pastor, let me just share with you what God just revealed to me.” I hate to burst their bubble, but I listen patiently. After I hear them, I rejoice with them and then correct them. I say, “May I correct you in one area?” When they agree, I tell them, “God did not reveal that to you. God illuminated your mind to understand what He had already revealed.” There is no revelation going on today.

I told you what revelation was, and I told you what inspiration was. Now here is the third one: illumination. Illumination is the ministry of the Holy Spirit common to all Christians, whereby He guides us to understand previously revealed truth. Illumination is when God turns the lights on for us. It is when God enlightens our minds so that we can understand, comprehend, and grasp His previously revealed truth.

I am all for memorizing Scripture, reading through the Bible as often as possible, and knowing as much of it as you can. But memory work is not necessarily illumination. Simply reading through the Bible repeatedly and having a good knowledge of what it contains does not mean that you have illumination. Illumination is when God the Holy Spirit opens your eyes, allowing you to see and understand what has been written in the Scripture.

Before Steve walked into this room, the room was dark. He flipped the light switch, the lights came on, and the room was illuminated, and you could see everything that was in the room. That is illumination.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, beginning with verse 9, the Word of God says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no

man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

That is true. Now, if you go back to verse 10, and verse 9 says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." God gave truth by His Spirit. The interesting thing is this: the word for "revealed" in verse 10 is the Greek word "apokalupto," which means to uncover, to lay open, to make bare, to make known, to make manifest, and to disclose that which was not known before.

So He illuminates this. We can read and memorize Scripture, but until God opens our eyes, we really do not know what the Scripture means. In other words, it is through the Holy Spirit that our eyes are opened.

Now, this is the same thing that I read to you when we began in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 7, where Paul said, "Consider what I say." That is your responsibility. "And the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Understanding is the gift of God. That is why I said in Proverbs 2 and verse 6, again, that wisdom and understanding come from the Lord.

I have heard people say, "I just can't understand the Bible. The Bible is a closed book to me. I don't read it because I can't understand it." If a man is unconverted, it should be understandable that he cannot understand the Bible. First Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." An unsaved man does not have the ability to discern or understand anything in the Word of God.

Romans 8:5–8 says, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Then, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Why? "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Clearly, an unsaved man cannot understand or comprehend the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:18 states it plainly: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." It is understandable that an unsaved man cannot understand the Bible.

But let me go a little further. Just because you are a Christian does not mean that you can understand the Bible either. Although God has given us a receptor so that we may understand the scriptures, oftentimes we are not in a position to understand the scriptures, or even receive them.

First Corinthians 3:1 says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Paul could not speak to them as spiritually mature individuals; he had to speak to them as fleshly, even babes in Christ. In verse 2 he says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Paul could not teach them the deep things of God or give them the meat because they were childish and immature.

You would not take a three-month-old baby and hand him a T-bone steak. He could not eat it. You have to give a three-month-old baby milk. And this is what Paul is saying: You are in no position to receive the truth of God.

Hebrews chapter 5 gives us the same truth. Speaking of Jesus Christ, and especially His priesthood, verse 10 says, "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec, of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing." That is, you are not willing to listen. You are not even able to listen. Why? Verse 12 says, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them

that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Wow. Exercised to discern both good and evil. In other words, a babe is not going to be able to receive anything that is deep, anything that is theological, because they are dull of hearing.

They do not know how to hear. They are unwilling to hear. They do not want to hear. A babe just wants to do what a babe wants to do. And so God is not going to give truth to someone who is immature. He is not. In Mark chapter 4, verse 33, the same truth is emphasized.

"And with many such parables spake he the word unto them." Notice this last phrase: "As they were able to hear it." Some people are not able to hear truth, and God gives us truth as we are able to hear it. Just because someone is a Christian does not necessarily mean that he is going to understand God's truth.

You are not able to hear or receive more truth if you are unwilling to obey the truth that you already have. You are never going to learn to chew on meat until you give up the milk. Why would God give anyone more truth if they are not going to obey the truth He has already given them? If we want to continue to be carnal and fleshly, to fuss and fight and feud, divide, and have strife, why would God give us more truth?

This may surprise you. In Jeremiah chapter 5, God refers to people who do not have understanding. He is talking about His people, Judah and Israel. God tells Jeremiah, "Declare ye this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not." God calls them fools. He calls them foolish.

The Holy Spirit as Teacher and the Danger of Carnality

Do you remember what our Lord said to those disciples on the Emmaus road in Luke chapter 24? He said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." God calls the people foolish who live without understanding. Just because

someone is a Christian does not necessarily mean that he understands everything.

Remember, the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ lived with Him, worked with Him, ate with Him, and were with Him more than anyone else. Yet in Matthew 15:16 He asked them, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" He asked the same thing again in Mark 7:18. And in Luke chapter 24, before our Lord ascended into heaven, the Bible says, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." He opened their understanding.

Psalm 119:18 records a wonderful prayer that David prayed: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” This is a wonderful prayer request. We should pray this prayer as well: “Lord, let me see. Open my eyes.” David cried out many times for the Lord to teach him, lead him, and guide him. We need the Lord to open our eyes so that we may behold wondrous things out of His law.

Our Lord has given us the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:15–17, He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Notice that the Holy Spirit in verse 17 is called the Spirit of truth. The Lord said, “I’ll give you another Comforter.”

The Comforter is the word “parakletos,” from the Greek verb “parakaleo,” meaning, “I call alongside to help.” In verse 16, He said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.” Interestingly, there are two Greek words for “another”: “allos” and “heteros.” “Heteros” means different, as when we speak of a heterosexual marriage, a man and a woman. “Allos” means one of the same kind. Thus, our Lord is saying, “I’m a Comforter and I’m going to send you another Comforter like me.” He is not sending a different kind of Comforter, but one of the same kind. Just as our Lord taught His disciples, the Holy Spirit teaches His disciples as well.

In John 14:25–26, He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.” In other words, “I taught you.” Then He said, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” In John 15:26–27, He again said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”

"And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Note, if you would, he is again called the Spirit of truth. So let me give you a word of warning. It is true that the Holy Spirit of God is the one who turns the lights on for us. It is true that the Holy Spirit of God grants us enlightenment and illumination so that we may comprehend, understand, and apply the Word of God. But this illumination is not some secret knowledge. It is not considering the Bible some code book, suddenly having the real allegory and truth, and being in an exclusive club. No. When the Holy Spirit of God illuminates our minds to understanding, He does not turn us into Gnostics or a secret club. He simply gives us understanding. Any Christian reading the same text, the same passage of Scripture, may be granted illumination by the Holy Spirit just as you were.

J.I. Packer Quote and Summary

It is not a secret knowledge. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He guides us, leads us, directs us, and turns the lights on for us, that we may actually see what is being taught. We are not just seeing words; we are understanding those words so that we may apply them in our lives.

J. I. Packer summarizes it this way: “The knowledge of divine things to which Christians are called is more than a formal acquaintance with biblical words and Christian ideas. It is a realizing of the reality and relevance of those activities of the triune God to which Scripture testifies. Such awareness is natural to none familiar with Christian ideas, though they may be, like the man without the Spirit, or the one who cannot receive what Christians tell him, or the

blind leader of the blind of whom Jesus spoke, or like Paul said before Christ met him on the Damascus Road."

"Only the Holy Spirit, searcher of the deep things of God, can bring about this realization in our sinned, darkened minds and hearts. That is why it is called spiritual understanding. Spiritual means Spirit-given. Those who, along with sound verbal instruction, who have the anointing from the Holy One, know the truth. The work of the Spirit in imparting this knowledge is called illumination or enlightenment."

"It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard, read, and as explained by teachers and writers. Sin in our mental and moral system clouds our minds and wills so that we miss and resist the force of Scripture. Oftentimes God seems to be remote to the point of unreality, and in the face of God's truth we are dull and apathetic. The Spirit, however, opens and unveils our minds and attunes our hearts so that we understand. As by inspiration He provided Scripture truth for us, so now by illumination He interprets it for us. Illumination is thus the applying of God's revealed truth to our hearts, so that we may grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth."

Illumination is a lifelong ministry of the Holy Spirit to Christians. It even starts before His conversion, when He begins to convict us.

He begins to open our eyes to our sins and to who the Lord Jesus Christ really is. He concludes with this: "There is a threefold conviction according to Luther that is absolutely necessary for you and I to understand life." Martin Luther said there are three things that make a theologian: number one, prayer; number two, meditation, which includes thinking and churning truth over and over in the mind; and then trial. He talked about trial in the sense that once we have truth, there will usually be a trial to shake us from that truth and turn us from it. Once we know the truth, we stick to it, and the trial demonstrates that we really and truly understand and have this truth. So three things make a theologian: prayer, meditation, and trial or testing.

Conclusion: Buy the Truth

Look in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 23. I can quote it, but I want you to see it. Think with me, please. This verse summarizes everything that I have said today. The Word of God says, “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.” Did you hear what I just read? “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” In other words, truth may be expensive, but get it. When you get truth, you get wisdom, understanding, and instruction. Buy the truth, and buy the tools necessary to understand the truth.

I have heard people say, “I would like to go to church, but I do not like to drive two hours one way just to get to a good church to hear truth.” I have news for you: it would be worth it if the truth is being taught. I would rather drive two hours one way to get truth than walk across the street in fifteen steps to get error and heresy. Buy the truth, and sell it not. God is saying that whatever truth costs, it is worth it.

So, if you and I are going to interpret the Scripture, the very first thing we need is the proper tools. The second thing we need is a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, mercy, and divine help. We pray also, Father, for wisdom and understanding. We ask You, Father, to be pleased to illuminate our minds, that we may understand, grasp, and apply Your Word to our lives. Give us, Father, Your grace and mercy. Help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask. Amen.

It would be worth it if the truth is being taught. I would rather drive two hours one way to get truth than walk fifteen steps across the street to get error and heresy. “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” Whatever truth costs, God is saying, it is worth it. Therefore, if we are going to interpret Scripture, the very first thing we need is the proper tools, and the second is a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, mercy, and divine help. We pray for wisdom and understanding. We ask, Father, that You would be pleased to illuminate our minds, that

we may understand, grasp, and apply Your Word to our lives. Give us Your grace and mercy. Help us, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Four

2 Timothy 2:7 has been the theme verse for what we have been studying: “Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Today we are on the fourth message on three reasons we need to consider truth and interpret Scripture, and six things needed to do so.

Review of Previous Messages

I want to review the last three messages in order that we might keep those principles fresh in our minds. In the first message, I pointed out that one of the first rules of hermeneutics is that, in order to interpret Scripture, we must compare Scripture with Scripture. In other words, Scripture basically interprets itself. If your interpretation of a passage of Scripture contradicts another plain passage, then your interpretation is wrong, not the Scripture.

The first reason we need to interpret Scripture is to explain seeming contradictions. I emphasized the word seeming and told you that context is everything. There is an immediate context, which could be the chapter, the paragraph, or even a chapter before. When you get to Romans 8, Paul's argument actually started back in Romans 5. You have the immediate context, and you also have a remote context. Sometimes that remote context may even be back to the first of the book.

The Bible says in Psalm 111:2, “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” From that verse we can deduce this simple principle: if we do not have pleasure in the truth and seek it out, we are going to remain childish and ignorant as well. The first reason we need to interpret Scripture, then, is to explain seeming contradictions. The Bible may say very clearly, on the one hand, one thing, and in another area, something that appears different. They are not contradictory; we simply have to take them into context, and then we can see very easily how those things agree.

The second reason we need to interpret Scripture is to prevent ourselves from being misled by the sound of mere words. Words have meanings, but meanings change. Oftentimes we try to put meanings on words of Scripture that are prevalent in our minds today. That is not necessarily the way things work in the Bible, nor is it even necessarily the way things work in our world today.

For instance, when Alice and I were young, if someone was gay, that meant they were happy, joyful, and carefree. You cannot use that word today in that sense because now it simply refers basically to sodomites and that kind of thing. I have also pointed out that the word flesh, the Greek word sarx, is used four different ways in Scripture. Every time you see the word flesh, it does not mean the flesh hanging from the arm or the flesh of an animal. I also pointed out the use of the word world, and I think I gave you seven or eight distinctive ways in which the same word, cosmos, is used in Scripture. We looked at John 1:10, where the word cosmos for world occurs three times in one simple verse, and each time it has a totally different meaning.

You have to understand that we must interpret in order not to be misled by the sound of mere words. Sometimes we need to insert an explanatory word in order to understand the passage. That is not adding to Scripture. One illustration is found in Habakkuk 1:13, where the Bible says that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity. Yet Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Clearly, God does see evil, and God does indeed judge evil. How, then, do you explain Habakkuk 1:13? You would have to add a word in the sense of explaining it: God has purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity condoningly or approvingly. He never approves of evil, and He never condones sin. He does see it, and He does judge it, but He certainly does not condone it.

I also pointed out that if you are really serious about learning the Word of God, you need the proper tools, one of them being a good Bible—one that you can use, read, and become familiar with, and that is very, very usable. You might also need a good Strong's Exhaustive Concordance or Young's Analytical Concordance. I distinguished between those two and explained how they are used. You could also get an excellent Bible for your computer, the Online Bible, probably for less than fifty dollars.

And it has thousands upon thousands of dollars of commentaries and all kinds of things in it as well. The second truth was this: not only do we need the proper tools to interpret and understand Scripture, but we need a mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God. The word illuminated simply means to turn the lights on, where God enlightens us.

There are three definitions: inspiration, revelation, and illumination. Inspiration was a strong, conscious in-breathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to the truth, so that the words they wrote and spoke were and are indeed the very words of God Himself. When you look at the Bible, it is indeed the Word of God, just as if God spoke every single word of it. That is inspiration.

Revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals truth never known before to the human mind. For instance, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. How did Moses know what happened in creation? He was not there. How did he know what happened at the

fall? He was not there. How did he know what happened during the flood? He was not there. How did he know what happened at the Tower of Babel? He was not there. The answer is that God revealed those things to him. Revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals truth never known before to the human mind.

Inspiration superintends that truth so that the very truth of God, the very words of God, are spoken, written, and recorded by men. The third definition is illumination. Illumination is the act of God, the Holy Spirit, whereby He illuminates our minds to God's revealed truth so that we may understand and comprehend.

When you are reading the Bible and suddenly see something, people often say very excitedly, as they call me or someone else, "Let me show you or tell you what God just revealed to me." God did not reveal anything to you. Revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals truth never known before to the human mind. What God did was illuminate your mind to understand His already previously revealed truth. God just turned the lights on for you. He enlightened you; He illuminated you. When people try to say that there is revelation over and above and beyond the Word of God, what they are doing is this.

An Impartial Spirit

They are denying, number one, Hebrews 1:1–3, where the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. They are also denying that the Bible is the completed Word of God. There is no new revelation going on today, because we have the completed Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. The Scripture says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things.” Jesus Christ is our full and final revelation.

The Need for an Impartial Spirit

The two things mentioned so far that are needed to interpret Scripture are the tools and, number two, an illuminated mind. Number three, you need an impartial spirit.

In Luke chapter 8, our Lord speaks on the parable of the sower. The same parable is also found in Mark 4 and Matthew 13. Notice how our Lord explains the good-ground hearer. He says, “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Here is an interesting thing.

Once you read Matthew 13, Luke 8, and Mark 4 and compare these passages, the good-ground hearer is the only one that ever produced any fruit. Our Lord says the reason is that he had an honest and good heart. Only an individual who has an honest and good heart is going to really, truly learn the Word of God. Let me say this another way: only an individual with an impartial spirit is going to truly learn the Word of God.

Now you are going to ask me, why is an impartial spirit needed? Here is the good answer. Practically everyone comes to the Bible with a set of preconceived ideas. For instance, from childhood we have heard preachers, our parents, and friends share with us what they thought, what they believed, and what their interpretation was. By nature, we have a tendency to trust our preacher. We have a tendency to trust our parents. We have a tendency to trust our friends. Consequently, we end up relying upon what they said and believing what they said, because we simply trust in them.

Heresy and deception are easily handed down from generation to generation. Consider how the Roman Catholic Church for years forbade the reading of the Scriptures. No Scriptures were to be read because they did not want people to think for themselves or contradict what they were teaching. Consider, too, all the isms and cults. They either have their own Bible, quote-unquote, or books that they use to replace the Bible. They certainly do not want anyone reading the Bible because it would contradict what they are teaching.

It is very easy to control an ignorant man, and more difficult to control someone with knowledge and understanding. The more ignorant a person is, the easier he is to control. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that when you and I approach the Word of God, we do so with a good and honest heart, with an impartial spirit. We must grasp the fact that what we have heard and been taught all our lives may not be true. Our parents may have been wrong. The

preachers we heard as children may have been wrong. Our friends may have been wrong. When you begin studying Scripture and see that it contradicts what you have been taught all your life, it is not the Scripture that is wrong; it is you who are wrong.

I remember that as a young man, and certainly as a young preacher, I had several pastors who took me under their wing and tried to teach me many things. These men were people I respected and loved, and they were a great help to me. Yet many of the things they taught me were wrong. I did not realize that until I really began studying and reading the Scripture.

I loved them, respected them, and believed them. When I went to the university—and, in fact, the reason I went to that particular university was that they had gone there—I encountered a teacher in Pauline Epistles whom I will never forget. He was teaching the doctrines of grace, while my friends were Arminians. By the way, everybody is an Arminian by nature; you only believe the doctrines of grace by grace. As my teacher taught, it hit me right between the eyes: if what he was saying was true, then not only was I wrong, but my friends were wrong—men I loved and respected. It hit me so hard that I was incensed.

I was angry. I stood up, called his name, and said, “You know that what you’re teaching is not true. You’re just saying those things because you want to be intellectually accepted by the elite.” He looked at me. The class was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. He said, “Mr. Weaver, sit down and shut up. I’ll see you after class.” I remained angry and upset. After class, I eagerly went to his desk.

This was almost April, because we were out of school in May. When I went to his desk, he said, "John, you do know that I could have you turned over to the discipline committee, or I could have you kicked out of this university." I said, "Yes, sir, I know that." And I did. What he just said was true; he could have done that.

He said, "But I'm not going to do that. I do know that you study, and I do know that you read. Here's what I'm going to propose: We do not discuss this subject anymore until you come back in the fall." Before I left, he said, "Here's one thing I want you to understand.

You always allow the Bible to interpret your experiences. You never allow your experiences to interpret the Bible."

I said, "Thank you," and walked out. That summer, God opened my eyes to truth. When I came back, the first thing I did was look him up and profusely apologize to him. He was right, and I was wrong. What really struck me was not even the fact that I was wrong. I didn't want my friends to be wrong. But when I read the Scripture, I had to confess that not only was I wrong, but they were wrong as well. I was incensed and insulted by the thought that everything I'd been taught was wrong. That's a hard pill to swallow. Martin Luther said it like this: "We must not make God's Word mean what we wish. We must not bend it, but allow it to bend us and give it the honor of being better than we can make it."

That's true. We must not bend the Scripture; we must allow the Scripture to bend us. When we approach the Word of God to read, study, and interpret, we must discern the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. Ex means "out of," and eis means "into." In exegesis, you draw out of the Scripture what is there. In eisegesis, you read into the Scripture your preconceived ideas, what you think, what you've been taught, or what you've heard all of your life. Exegesis will make you honest and submissive. Eisegesis will confirm you in your preconceived ideas, errors, and beliefs. Exegesis is to draw out; eisegesis is to read into. Let me give you another illustration or two, because I'm talking about a good and honest heart.

I'm talking about an impartial spirit. Years ago, when I was pastoring another church, we had a Bible institute, and I trained many people, including young men who were studying for the ministry. I preached twice on Sunday and taught for four hours on Tuesday and Thursday, so many churches in the area knew that I had young preacher boys in the church.

When churches did not have a preacher, they would call and ask me to send someone to fill their pulpit. One church about thirty miles away called, and I told them I had someone I would be glad to ask. The young man went to preach that Sunday. When he arrived, their pastor had resigned, and there was no one there but him. However, a visiting pastor who was looking for a church was also

present. Since they had already asked my man to preach, they asked the visiting pastor to teach Sunday school.

It was an independent church. They did not use quarterlies or anything like that; they just used the Bible. They went through it book by book and chapter by chapter. That Sunday, the Sunday school lesson was on 1 Thessalonians 1. There are only ten verses in that chapter, and verse 4 says, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

The young man I was teaching sat through the Sunday school lesson, preached that morning, and preached that night. The next morning he came to see me. He said, “Pastor, you will never believe what happened.” I asked him what had happened. He named the visiting pastor and said, “He read verse 1 and commented on it. He read verse 2 and commented on it. He read verse 3 and commented on it. He read verse 5 and commented on it,” and continued all the way down to verse 10. “He not only would not comment on verse 4; he would not even read it.”

May I point out something? That's dishonesty. You may not understand something. You may not be able to explain it. You may not like it, but if it's there, at least be honest with the scripture.

Some of you probably have known and have heard in time past Dr. Lester Roloff. Lester Roloff was a friend of mine, and I've listened to him preach a number of times. I've driven him back and forth from motel to church where he was preaching, and I love to hear him preach. But Lester Roloff was not a scholar. He was not a real theologian, but he believed the Bible. Moreover, he was not a professional singer, but he could sing. A lot of times when he was preaching, he'd just break out singing. He couldn't sing professionally, but the way he sang, he would really bless your heart.

I was listening to Lester Roloff's Family Altar program on the radio as I was traveling one day. Believe it or not, he was on Ephesians chapter 1. I was so excited. I said, "I can't wait to see or to hear what Lester Roloff says on Ephesians 1 and verse 4, where the Bible says, 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before him in love.'" When Lester Roloff got to verse 4, you know what he said?

He said, "Folks, I do not understand the doctrine of election. I don't think I'm capable of explaining the doctrine of election, but here it is in the Bible and I believe it and I bow to it." Now isn't that something? That was just as simple, but he was honest. He said, "It's here." He did not ignore it. Not at all.

This happened to me years ago. I was preaching in Alabama from 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. As I said earlier, there are only ten verses, and verse 4 says, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” My message that morning was on verse 3 and verses 7 through 10, as they explained verse 3. My message was not on election, but since there are only ten verses, I read the entire chapter.

After the Sunday morning service, an older man came up to me and told me that I should not have read verse 4. I said, “What do you mean I should not have read verse 4? It’s in the Bible.” He said, “The reason you shouldn’t read verse 4 is because a lot of people don’t understand the doctrine of election, and it upsets them.” I looked at him and said, “What you’re telling me is that you don’t understand the doctrine of election and you are upset.” He said, “That’s right.” I said, “Well, I’ll tell you something, sir. The word elect, or its equivalent, occurs 73 times in the New Testament. If you’ll meet me at my motel room at two o’clock this afternoon, I will sit down with you and take you through all 73 passages in the New Testament—not counting the Old Testament—and try to give you an understanding of the doctrine of election, so you will not be upset the next time you read it in the Bible or hear someone say it.” He said, “Okay.”

I hurried through my meal, rushed to the motel room, and sat there making sure I had all 73 passages when the phone rang. It was this elderly man. I have never forgotten the conversation, or his exact words. He said, “Pastor Weaver, I will not be coming to your room for our discussion.” This was about fifteen minutes before he was supposed to be there. I asked, “May I ask why you’re not going to come to this room?” Here were his exact words: “Because my mind is made up and I do not want you confusing me with a bunch of scriptures.” I said, “Sir, why don’t you stay where you are, I’ll stay where I am, and I’ll take a nap, and we’ll both be better off.”

A Humble Mind

That is just plain dishonest. How in the world can you expect God to teach you anything if you are not willing to say, "I'm wrong"? The truth of the matter is that each of us must be willing to say that, usually on a daily basis, as we read the Scripture. As God gives us more and more light, we should see where we have been wrong in a lot of places and a lot of times. I am not talking about major doctrines or major principles, but I am saying that as we grow in grace and knowledge, we need to confess that there have been many times when we were wrong.

The Need for a Humble Mind

I have the original message that I first preached fifty-seven years ago. Anytime I get to thinking proudly, I go back and look at that message and say, "Oh God, don't tell me I said that. Don't tell me I preached that." It is a good humbling experience to think, "Lord, look what I've said and look what I've believed all these years. Then, all of a sudden, You turn the lights on, and I see something differently where I was wrong."

We need an impartial spirit and a good and honest heart if we are going to study the Scripture. The fourth thing you are going to need is a humble mind. In Matthew 11:25, our Lord says, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Isn't that interesting? He has hidden some things from the wise and prudent, but revealed them unto babes. Why?

In 1 Corinthians 8:1–2, the apostle says, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up." It makes you arrogant, proud, haughty, heady, and high-minded, but charity, or love, edifieth. "And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." When you think you have arrived and have a handle on everything, you know absolutely nothing, because knowledge by itself just puffeth up.

And pride is a root sin. Conceit, arrogance, pride, self-confidence, and reliance upon the arm of the flesh are all opposed to God. You remember He said He had hidden those things from the wise and prudent, but He showed them unto babes. Have you ever noticed how believing and receptive little children are?

I've teased little children ever since I've had little children. I'd see a pretty little girl about four or five years old and say, "My, you're pretty." I said that to one little girl. She said, "I'm not pretty, I'm beautiful." And arrogant too, you know. I would say, "Boy, you're a pretty little girl. You're probably getting married soon, won't you?" "Yes," shaking her head, yeah, right.

I remember years ago, when our girls were small, we were invited to a meal at the home of a professional fisherman. That's what he did all his life. He lived in Gulf Shores, Alabama. I already knew we were going to have smoked mullet for supper, smoked fish. I told the girls, and they asked, "Daddy, how do you smoke mullet?" I said, "Well, girls, you have to get a very sharp knife and chop them up in teeny tiny little pieces. Then they have to be dry so you can put them in your pipe, light them, and smoke them." They just sat there silently, as if to say, "Wow." When we got to the house, they saw the smoker and the man taking the fish out of it.

Children are trusting, believing, and receptive. You can tell a little child, “The moon is made of green cheese,” and they will believe you until they learn better. I am simply saying that children are so trusting, so believing, and so receptive. A humble mind is like the mind Lester Roloff had when he came to the doctrine of election. It is willing to submit to truth even when the truth is not understood. You may not be able to explain it, but you are willing to say, “It is here in the Scripture, and I bow to it. I believe it. God said it.” That is a humble mind.

Pride will never make us obedient; humility will. In order to learn the truth and interpret Scripture, we need a humble mind. Let me give you some Scriptures. I want you to think about these. Proverbs 8:13 says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate,” saith the Lord. Thus, the fear of the Lord includes hating evil, pride, and arrogancy. Most of us can quote Proverbs 16:18, which says, “Pride goeth before

destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Along with that, I like to quote 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Pride will always precede a downfall.

Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." That is why one qualification for a pastor, in 1 Timothy 3:6, is that he must be "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is easy for young men to be lifted up in pride, and it is easy for anyone to be lifted up in pride. Pride is indeed a root sin. First John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Look with me at two passages: Isaiah 57 and James chapter 4. In Isaiah 57, verse 15, a very important verse, the Scripture says, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." What did He say? "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God is not going to be anywhere around pride, arrogance, haughtiness, headiness, or high-mindedness.

Now look in the book of James, chapter 4 and verse 6. The Bible says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." The word resisteth actually means fights against. Wherefore, God fights against the proud, but He gives more grace to the humble.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? If God wanted to destroy us, all He has to do is to leave us to ourselves, and we will destroy ourselves. But can you imagine how awful it must be for the man whom God appears up in arms against, whom God actually fights against? He says He gives more grace to the humble, but He resists the proud.

I am afraid that the average professing Christian scholar has so much knowledge and yet such a small heart. Pride inflames him,

knowledge puffs him up, and arrogance motivates him. When you reach the place of a humble mind, you have come to the right place. When you are willing to bow and accept what the Scripture tells you, whether you understand it or not, you have reached the place where God can teach you.

There is a fifth thing that you need, and that is a praying heart.

The Need for a Praying Heart

We need a heart that prays, a heart that seeks, a heart that asks, a heart that knocks, and a heart that cries for truth, understanding, and righteousness. If you truly want to understand the Word of God, you must seek Him with a very prayerful heart.

In Proverbs 2, beginning with verse 1, he says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words." Think about that word, receive:

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

"For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Notice the reception, the hiding, the inclining, the applying, the crying and lifting up of the voice, the seeking as silver, and the searching for hid treasures. Then, he says, "shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord."

If Steve knew that a chest full of treasure, buried by pirates 150 or 200 years ago, was somewhere in his yard—full of silver, gold, and jewels—would he dig a few spades full of dirt and say, "Well, it's kind of hot today and this ground's kind of hard. I think I'll wait till a better day"? He knows there are millions and millions of dollars' worth of gold, silver, and precious jewels there. What is he going to do?

He is going to be out there twelve hours digging. When he gets tired, he is going to have Lorraine digging for another twelve hours. If he offers any of us a portion of it, we are going to come over and dig too. We are not going to give up until we find that chest full of treasure. That is what he is talking about: seeking it as silver and searching for it as hid treasure.

Let me point something out. If you are seeking and searching, if you are digging, that is work, and work requires time. So what he is telling us here is this: if we really want knowledge, if we really want understanding, we must put in the work and we must put in the time. Priorities do matter. I know how busy everybody is, and I understand that, but not one of us has more than twenty-four hours in each day. Not one. It all has to do with priorities.

I want to show you just three of David's prayer requests in Psalm 119. I believe that we should pray these same prayers. You remember God told us in Proverbs 2 that we need to incline our hearts. Here is David's prayer request in verse 36: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." In other words, let me have your truth more than anything else in the world.

In verse 73 he says, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." Give me understanding. Incline mine heart to thy testimonies.

In verse 133 he says, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Order my steps in thy word. You remember that passage in James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. God said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask."

I emphasized this in the other three messages, and I am going to emphasize it again: We need to grasp the fact that all of our studying, all of our praying, all of our reading, and all of our research are in vain unless He grants us understanding.

A Holy Design

That is why the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:7, Paul told Timothy, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Our Lord tells us that He gives to those who ask, seek, and knock. When is the last time you asked God for understanding? When is the last time you asked God to incline your heart to His Word? When is the last time you asked the Lord to order your steps in His Word? When is the last time you asked the Lord to lead, guide, and direct you, and give you a seeking and praying heart?

We can make a reasonable deduction from this: if Christians are not seeking, knocking, asking, praying, and searching for wisdom and understanding, it is probably because they really do not want it. They do not see the need for it. They have no interest in it. It is not their silver and their hidden treasure. If we are going to understand Scripture, we need a praying heart.

The Need for a Holy Design

Let me urge you to ask yourself several questions. Do I desire to learn the Word of God? Why do I desire to learn the Word of God? What is my motive in reading and studying? Is my motive simply to increase knowledge? Is my motive simply to be able to argue? Is my motive simply to defend my position, put other people down, and destroy those who oppose my views?

Motives are important. The answer to each of those questions can be found in pride, arrogance, and even humanistic and spiritual haughtiness. I know people who read and study seemingly just for those purposes. They love to argue. They love to demonstrate their knowledge. They delight in elevating themselves and putting others down. They delight in their pharisaical pride. They delight in thinking that they have a corner on truth. If you do not agree with them, if you do not see what they see, then you are castigated, despised, and ridiculed. None of these attitudes are biblical, and certainly none are Christian in any sense of the word.

I can give you a good illustration. Within the last two weeks, I was called on the phone while I was busy shopping for Alice in the grocery store. Someone called whom I did not know, had never

known, and had never met. He began to question me, and he was ugly, hateful, haughty, arrogant, demanding, obnoxious, and disrespectful.

He had embraced the position of a friend of mine. My friend and I disagree, but we are still civil. We respect each other, and we can still talk with each other. But this man, to be honest, I hung up on him. He called back, and I refused to answer. I was not going to listen to somebody who had no desire to listen to what Scripture said. All he wanted to do was pontificate.

Here is the conclusion I came up with, and I am going to relay it to my friend as well: If this is the kind of Christian or believer that his position produces, I do not want any part of his position. I think his position is wrong and unscriptural, but this man was a horrible representative of it. In fact, I do not know that my friend even believes what this man believed.

How in the world do you expect God to teach you if you do not have a holy design? If you just want to argue, pontificate, show off your knowledge, put others down, or win a debate, all of that is pride and arrogance. God is not going to be teaching you anything.

The reason we must study, read, search the Scripture, and seek understanding is so that we may become more humble, obedient, and submissive, bringing our lives into greater conformity to the Word of God. Our motives and desires are important, especially when it comes to the Word of God. We must seek a holy design in all our studies.

Dwight L. Moody said it like this, and I agree with him: “The scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.” The Scriptures were given so that we may bring our lives into conformity to the Word of God.

Applications and Conclusion

We may have all the proper tools for study. I could have the latest commentaries, every online Bible program available, every concordance, and every dictionary, but having proper tools alone will not make me a biblical scholar any more than having proper carpentry tools will make me a carpenter. I can have all the tools of

the mechanic, but if I do not have the ability to fix things, the tools are absolutely worthless. We should have proper tools, but must also have the other five things that go along with them.

We must have an illuminated mind, an impartial spirit, a humble mind, a praying heart, and a holy design. Without those things, you are never going to be a heavenly scholar. You might be a worldly scholar, but you will not be a heavenly scholar. There is a vast difference between the wisdom of this world and heavenly wisdom, or the wisdom of God.

Isaiah 57:15 declares, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." If we want God to teach us, we must have a humble spirit. God is not going to feed our pride or build us up in arrogance and haughtiness, because those are sins.

We have to come to Scripture with this attitude: "Lord, wherever I'm wrong, straighten me out. Show me. Give me light. Give me truth. Give me understanding. And Lord, I'm willing to turn. I'm willing to repent. I'm willing to change. I'm willing, Lord. Just open mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Teach me, and I shall be taught." We need these six things if we are ever going to study, interpret, and learn the Word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth. We pray that You would give us what we need: an illuminated mind, a praying heart, a humble mind, and a holy desire. We need everything in our lives that Your Word demands. Help us. Make us holy, godly, and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Five

How to Study and Learn Biblical Truth

Introduction and Review of Previous Principles

This is our fifth message in this series. Lord willing, I can finish this particular part in at least two more Sundays. I am only going to be able to cover one point today, although I am actually going to give you thirteen ways to consider the Scripture.

Look, if you would, in II Timothy chapter 2 and verse 7, where the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Then skip down to verse 15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It is true that Solomon said in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and verse 12, "And further,

by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

Those who have really studied in time past know that you can get very tired simply by sitting, reading, and researching. It is sometimes very difficult. When I am studying, I will often have to get up, walk around, go out to the barn, do something, come back, and start studying again.

John Owen, that prince of the Puritans who died in 1683, talked about preaching and teaching. He said it is very easy to preach and teach that which you think of—your notions and the notions of other men. All you have to do is grasp them, enunciate them, and proclaim them, even with great oratory. What is difficult, he said, is when you study the Scriptures to have the truth grasp you. Once the truth grasps you, then you can preach and proclaim it with power.

He went on to say that one cause of a lack of power in our churches today is that most pastors and preachers have never been grasped by the truth they are communicating. I believe that is certainly so. As Christians and preachers of the gospel, we want to make sure that the truth grasps us. We must not only grasp it; it must get hold of us and change our lives, so that we may preach and teach effectively to other folks. I want to take a little while today and review the first four messages, not because I have nothing to preach—I have plenty to preach.

These principles are so important that they need to be re-impressed and refreshed in our minds. We need to keep them in the forefront as we read and study Scripture. Consider Mark chapter three, verses 13 and 14, where the Bible tells us about our Lord choosing His own disciples: “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.”

The next verse says, “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” Note that He ordained twelve, first of all, that they might be with Him, and secondly, that He might send them forth to preach. In reality, especially for preachers, but for every Christian, the first and foremost responsibility is to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. As we

read and study, one of our goals should be to fellowship and communicate with Him.

The first truth is this: the only way you can really learn the Bible is to study it for yourself. You can go to a Bible college and learn about the Bible, but you cannot learn the Bible in a Bible college. They can teach you certain things out of the Bible, from the Bible, and about the Bible, but the only way you will ever really understand the Bible is to read it for yourself. I would much rather know what is in the Bible than simply know about the Bible.

The second truth is that no matter how hard or how long you study, you are never going to conquer the Word of God or have it fully, completely, and totally mastered. I preached for fifty-seven years, nearly fifty-eight, and there is still much of the Bible I do not know, though I have read and studied for years. As we age and continue to study, we continue to learn. If we ever stop learning, that should mean that we are dead.

Or number two, that we have so much sin in our lives that we don't think that we need it. Or number three, we're so full of our pride that we already think that we know it. And of course, no one knows it. No one can conquer it. We have to understand that we will never ever be able to master the Bible in this life.

The third one is this: all of our reading, all of our study is useless apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit of God does not open our eyes and teach us the truth, we're never ever going to see truth. That's why he said, "Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." That's why in Proverbs 2 and verse 6 he says, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." That is why in John 16 and verse 13, our Lord said it is the Holy Spirit who shall teach us and bring all things to our remembrance that he has said and that he has taught us. So the wise man in his studies seeks to be taught of God.

It's not just that we read, and it's not just that we study. At the same time, we're seeking him for illumination and understanding; certainly, when God teaches us something, we do not forget it. Job chapter 36 and verse 22 says, "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?" No one teaches like God.

Deuteronomy 33 and verse 3 says, "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words." So if a person is a true saint of God, ultimately, He's going to sit down at our Lord's feet and receive of His words. In John 17, the high priestly prayer of our Lord, He said to His Father, "I have given them the words which thou gavest me." So one of the marks of a saint is that he indeed listens to the Word of God.

Fourth, there is another truth, and that is this: we must see the overall picture presented in the Bible, the overarching theme, in order to properly exegete passages. If you are really going to study and be able to interpret, you have to have basically a working knowledge of the Bible. The only way you can get a working knowledge of the Bible, the only way you can see the whole picture, is simply to read it over and over and over.

When the Lord saved me and called me to preach, I had a hunger to know the Word of God. So I put myself on a Bible-reading schedule. I read through the Old Testament every month and the New Testament every week. Thus, I was reading the New Testament three and four times as I read the Old Testament one time. I did that over and over and over until I had a grasp of the entirety of the Word of God.

That does not mean that I knew everything, but it does mean that I could see the whole picture. I could see the forest, and then I could start singling out the trees. Even today, after 57 years of preaching, I read through the Bible, finish, and go back and start all over. Most of the messages that I preach and teach come not from my study, although I do study, but they originate from my Bible reading, just for my pleasure and edification. It is just that simple. There are topics and passages from time to time that people have asked me to preach and teach on, but I would say 99% of my messages come from my own personal reading, not merely from research. I do a lot of research after I do the reading. I am saying that you have to read the Bible over and over.

When I read the Bible, whether I am reading a book or a passage, and I have a question about that passage, that verse, or that chapter, I assume that everyone else who reads it will probably have the same

question. So I try to answer that question for myself. If I can answer the question satisfactorily for myself after comparing Scripture with Scripture, I also assume that I can satisfactorily answer that same question for others who are asking it. If you are reading a passage and have a question that you cannot answer, you need to keep on that passage and study it until the answer comes to you.

Working outside jobs does indeed stifle your ability to study. I am thankful the Lord has allowed me to read and study mostly undisturbed for many years, and I do not necessarily have to have an outside job. I have worked occasionally on the outside, but very infrequently. My biggest hindrance and chore is keeping Alice straight and keeping her working; I have to oversee everything for her. I give her a list of forty things to do during the day, and if she does not get them done, we simply add to it tomorrow. I am teasing. I am simply saying that if someone is working forty or fifty hours a week, obviously they are not usually going to have time to sit down and study hour after hour.

If you are pushed for time when it comes to reading and studying the Bible, you must go for quality rather than quantity. I like quality and quantity, but if I have to choose between the two, I want quality. I would rather read two chapters and understand them than twenty chapters and not understand a thing that I have read. If I only have thirty minutes to study, I will take one chapter, one paragraph, or two or three verses. I would rather master those than read thirty or forty passages and not understand them at all.

This brings me to the fifth point: you must remember that you are going to have truth measured to you to the same degree that you measure in understanding that truth. That is what Mark chapter 4, verses 23 through 25, states.

The Measure and Reception of Truth

God said, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.”

God is going to measure everything back to us to the same degree that we give in studying the truth. If we are able to study truth for two hours, we are going to get two hours' worth of truth; we are not going to get two weeks' worth of truth. That is why, as we read in Proverbs chapter two, we are to cry, seek, search, and beg for this. In other words, if we give a proper measure in studying the truth, God is going to give a proper measure of truth back to us.

Obedience as a Prerequisite for Receiving More Truth

Here is the sixth principle: God is only going to give us truth as we are able to receive it. Mark 4:33 says, "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it." You are not able to hear more truth until you obey the truth that you have already been given. Unto you that hear shall more be given, but he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. You are not able to receive more truth until you obey the truth you have already been given.

You remember that passage in 1 Samuel chapter 15. God had sent Saul to slay the Amalekites, but Saul disobeyed God. He spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen, while destroying everything worthless. When Samuel came, Saul claimed to have obeyed God. Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul blamed the people, saying they had spared the animals to sacrifice them to God. In verse 21, he placed the blame upon the people: "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal."

Samuel answered, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The Lord has greater delight in obedience than in any sacrifice we can give Him. Notice especially the latter part of verse 22: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." When you consider that to obey is better than sacrifice, and then that to hearken is better than the fat of rams, remember that the fat of the rams was the chief part of the sacrifice that was always given to God.

In actuality, obedience and hearkening here are synonymous. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the chief part of the sacrifice given to God.

You never really hear the word of God until you heed the word of God. You never really hear the Word of God until you obey the Word of God. That is why Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Here is the principle again from Mark chapter 4 and verse 25: If you hear the truth, you obey the truth. If you tell me you hear the truth and do not obey it, then you end up losing it. That is why Hebrews chapter 2, verse 1, tells us very clearly, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Now the Greek word there is pararheo, and it means literally to glide by, to pass by, to escape, to forget, or to let slip from the mind. If you took a wooden bucket, filled it full of water, and found a little teeny tiny hole right in the bottom, the water would slip out. It might be ever so slowly, but eventually it would all slip out.

This is what he is saying: You better make sure that you do not let any of these truths slip from your mind. You need the proper tools—a concordance, a Strong's or Young's analytical, and a good Bible program—so you can understand the use of each of these words.

Introduction to the 13 Ways and the First: Consider Linguistically

There are thirteen ways to consider the Word of God, but we are only going to cover one today: We must consider the Word of God linguistically. We have to know what each word really means, because words have meanings and words convey knowledge. I am going to call out a few words and ask you to think of their definitions: All, A-L-L; love; friend; temple; euthus; Selah; Tirshatha. Every one of those words occurs in the Bible.

Let us begin looking at some of these words and consider them linguistically. I will take the word love first, because it is easy and simple. One of our problems is that when we read Scripture and see

a word, we automatically and instinctively impose our definition and perception upon it. The words of Scripture do not necessarily mean what we often think they mean.

The Word 'Love': Agape, Phileo, and Eros

There is a difference between Hebrew, Greek, and English. One problem in English is that we do not necessarily have the words we need. Consider the word love: I can say, “I love my dog. I love ice cream. I love my wife. I love my children.” It is the same word, but obviously I do not love my dog the way I love my wife, and I do not love ice cream the way I love my children. It is simply the word love. Everyone knows that there are basically three Greek words for love. The first is agape, which is the highest form of love. It is a spiritual love.

It is used both of God and of man. Second, there is the word phileo, “I love,” and the Greek word philos, the noun, which means love, family, or friend. It is where we get our English word phileo and our English word family from, from the Greek word philos. Third, there is the word eros. It is where we get our English word erotic from. The word eros does not occur in the Greek New Testament, but it does occur in classical Greek and in Koine Greek, which is what the New Testament was written in. When you see the word love in Scripture, you need to know whether it is the word agape or the word philos.

Agape is the love that gives and expects nothing in return. That is where the Bible says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave.”

Phileo, or philos, is the love that gives and receives; that is family love. Eros simply takes, because it is more lust than love.

Before I move on and begin showing you some things I want to show you, I want to show you how we have turned everything upside down. This is the way things work, not only in our politically correct world, but also according to our depraved human nature. I know it is true in Scripture, and I know it has been true in times past, but let me ask this question: How many people do you know, men and women, who pursued their future mates based upon their mate’s spirituality, godliness, holiness, and obedience?

That is agape love, the love that gives and the love likened to the Lord's. But what we normally do is this: The young man sees the pretty girl and thinks, "I like her. She's pretty. She's got a good figure. I want to meet that girl." He knows nothing about her. What he sees is what his flesh likes.

The point is that we have turned everything upside down. Most of our relationships today are really based upon lust. If they last any time at all, they then come to phileo, or philos. If they last any time at all there, and God in grace and mercy saves them, they finally become agape. In reality, we should start with agape and work our way down. These words are important. No matter how small and seemingly insignificant they are, they are important.

Let us consider the little word all, A-L-L. Here is a good question: Does all always mean all? Obviously, there are people who say, "All means all; all means everybody." No. Although the word all occurs frequently in Scripture, it does not always mean all. Every one of these passages has the word all in it. For instance, let me show you.

The Word 'All': Does Not Always Mean All

In Matthew chapter 2 and verse 3, the word had been spread that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, the King of the Jews. Matthew 2:1 says, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Was everyone in Jerusalem troubled? No, because when Jesus was taken to the temple after He was born, Simeon blessed the Lord and praised the Lord for Him. Simeon blessed the Lord and praised the Lord. Probably a lot of people were not upset that Jesus Christ was born. The statement, therefore, cannot mean that every individual in Jerusalem was troubled.

When it says, "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him," the word all there would refer particularly to the Herodians, which was a political party. It

may also refer to the Pharisees, the scribes, and the Sadducees. In other words, it would be talking about the ruling parties; it would not be referring to the people at all. So the word all does not necessarily always mean all.

In Matthew 10:22, our Lord says to His disciples, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” “Ye shall be hated of all men.” Really? Did they hate each other? Well, of course not. What does it mean when He said, “Ye shall be hated of all men”? All of the ungodly, not every single individual. So all does not always mean all. Look in your Bibles to Mark chapter 1 and verse 37.

Consider Mark 1:37, where they were talking about the Lord Jesus Christ: “And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.” Was everyone in Judah, everyone in that whole area, seeking for Christ? No. But there were certain men who were seeking for Him. Why were they seeking? Verse 34 says, “And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.”

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” That is when they found Him and said, “All men seek for thee.” Not everybody in the country was seeking for Him. Those who wanted to be healed were seeking for Him. The context identifies the particular people who were seeking Him; it does not say that every person in the country was seeking Him.

Luke 21:38 says, “And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.” Did everyone in Judah and Jerusalem, and the tribes of the Judahites, the Benjamites, and the Simeonites, because they were all in Judea, come into the temple that early in the morning? No. Not all of them could have even fit into the temple. “All the people” means all the people who were there; it was a good crowd. It does not necessarily mean everyone. The expression refers to the people present at the temple, not every person in Judah and Jerusalem.

John 12:32 should be self-explanatory. Our Lord said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Has every

man that has ever lived been drawn to Jesus Christ? Has every man who has lived after Christ was crucified been drawn to Him? The answer is no. “All” does not mean everyone who has ever lived. What does He mean when He says He will draw all men? Men in all classes, all kinds, but not every single individual. Many of us, in fact, most of us, have unsaved, lost members in our families. We have unsaved friends. It does not necessarily mean every single individual.

Look in Acts chapter 18 and verse 17. Some people always say that all means all, but they have a problem with many Scriptures if they say that. The Bible says, “Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.” Did every Greek person stand before the judge, and did every Greek man beat Sosthenes? If so, Sosthenes would have been dead long ago, because there were probably a million or more Greeks. “All the Greeks” means all the Greeks who were there; they beat him. Not every Greek could have come before the judgment seat. Clearly, then, all does not necessarily mean all without exception. We use words this way all the time. At a family reunion, for instance, we may say, “All the family was there.”

What about Aunt Jane, ninety-five years old and too sick to come? What about Uncle Bill, who died two years ago? How about Aunt Mary, who happens to live two thousand miles away and could not come? Yet we say, “All the family was there.” What we mean is that most of the family was there, even though we used the word all. Moreover, we may say, “We’ll go to a party.” Was it a good party? “Yes, everyone was there.” No, not everyone—I was not there. That is why I am asking. We use words like that all the time, so you have to pay attention and see exactly how things work out. Consider every little word. You have to consider the words in their context.

The Word 'Friend': Philos vs. Hetairos

The next word I want to cover is friend. The word friend occurs throughout the Bible, and there are many verses concerning friends. A number of years ago, I began a series of messages on biblical friendship, but I produced only a couple of messages. Scripture says, “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not.” The Bible

says, “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” “A friend showeth mercy and lendeth.” There are all kinds of Scriptures on friends.

When you think about a friend, you usually think about an intimate, close friend. But there are two distinct words in the Bible concerning a friend. The first is philos, which I mentioned earlier. It is where we get friend and family, or phileo. Think of Philadelphia: philos, the noun for love, and adelphos, the Greek word for brother. Philadelphia means the city of brotherly love, but I would not expect that today. Go to Philadelphia today and you may be mugged, raped, robbed, or even murdered. It is not the city of brotherly love. The word philos means family, filial, or someone held as a close and dear friend. We all know friends whom we treat like family, and sometimes those friends are even closer to us than family.

Then, secondly, there is the word hetairos. Hetairos refers to an acquaintance—someone you know, but whom you do not necessarily count as a family member or a friend.

You may be cordial with them, civil with them, and kind to them, but they are not a friend in the strictest sense of the word. The word philos refers to a family member or a dear, close friend. In John 15, beginning with verse 13, our Lord shows us how He uses the word friend: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," which would be from the word philos. "Ye are my friends," which would also be from philos, "if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Do you tell detailed, intimate secrets to an acquaintance? The answer is no. You would only tell detailed, intimate secrets to a close friend. Our Lord says, "You're my friends," because He has shared with them everything that His Father has told Him. That is why He said in John 17, in that high priestly prayer, "I have given them the words which thou gavest me." So He counts us as His dear friend.

Now secondly, let us consider how the word hetairos is used. It is indeed a Greek word, and it was used to identify and speak of the

prostitutes in Greece. They were certainly not philos; they were not filial, but they were acquaintances, and the prostitutes were called the hetairai.

In Matthew 20, notice verse 13. Our Lord had gone out and hired people to work in His vineyard. He went out early in the morning and hired some; He went out at noon and hired some; He kept going until almost the last hour, and some went in. The word hetairos is used in this account to identify an acquaintance, not a dear, close friend.

When they came out, He gave them each one a penny. But in verse 11, those who had borne the burden and heat of the day murmured against the goodman of the house: "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us." He answered one of them, saying, "Friend, hetairos, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" Here was a man hired off the street, a day laborer, and he was referred to not as a dear, intimate, close individual, but simply as an acquaintance.

In Matthew 22, the king was putting on a wedding feast. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." Evidently, the man was an intruder, or he could care less about the king. He was not really interested; he just maybe came in for a meal. The king said unto him, "Friend, hetairos, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The man was speechless. To demonstrate that he was not a friend, the king said, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He simply called him a hetairos.

In Matthew 26, Judas gave the officers a sign: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast." He came to Jesus and said, "Hail, master," and kissed Him. "And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Then they laid hands on Jesus and took Him. When Judas came to betray Him, our Lord said, "Hetairos, you're not an intimate, dear beloved friend." Judas had worked with Him for three years, but he was nothing more than an acquaintance.

It is interesting that in Luke 7, when the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to smear our Lord, He was called the friend of sinners.

He says, “For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” The word friend is philos. They were saying that Jesus Christ was a special friend of publicans and sinners. I think the word was used there to try to smear Jesus Christ, because He was indeed the friend of publicans and sinners.

So you need to consider every simple word, whether it is all or friend. Let me give you another one very quickly: the word temple. Again, there are two Greek words for temple. The first is hieron, and the second is naos. The word hieron refers basically to the structure itself. If we see a church building, we can point to it and say, “There is a church building.” It is the building, the structure. We are the church, but it is the church building.

The Word 'Temple': Hieron vs. Naos

In Matthew 12:6, our Lord said, “But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.” In other words, His body, His person, is greater than the structure. That is what He said.

Matthew 21:12 uses the word again: “And Jesus went into the temple of God,” the structure, the hieron, “and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple,” in the hieron, “and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.” So we are talking about the structure.

In Matthew 21:14-15, again referring to the hieron, the structure, “And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple,” the hieron, the building, “and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple,” that is, the structure, “and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased.” The hieron, then, refers to the structure. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, you will see the word naos.

The word naos, of course, refers to the most holy place. You remember that the chief priests only went into the most holy place once a year, and then without the shedding of blood. That was where the Shekinah glory dwelled. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, beginning

with verse 16, the apostle says, “Know ye not that ye are the naos of God, the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

Now, wait a minute. You are the naos of God. Why? Because the Shekinah glory, the Spirit of God, dwelleth in you. “If any man defile the naos of God, him shall God destroy; for the naos of God is holy, which naos ye are.” He is very clearly saying that we are the temple of God. We are the most holy place where God dwells.

In 1 Corinthians 6, verse 19, he says, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple,” or the naos, “of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Why is it important that we pay attention to words? In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and again in 1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20, he tells you plainly that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. But see the implication in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 13: “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.” Now we are getting to the principle. “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.” Just as God the Father raised up God the Son, He raises us up, and our bodies are for the Lord.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” Remember, He is our head, and we are His body. His body has many members, but if we are saved, we are the members of Christ. Here is His argument: “Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid!” That is, perish the thought. Do not even think that. He explains it: “What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

Then he says, “What? know ye not that your body is the naos of God? The Holy Ghost dwelleth in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.” If we understand that our bodies are the most holy place, where God the Holy Spirit dwells, it will prevent us from

sinning against Him, especially in relation to fornication, adultery, and all kinds of uncleanness.

Words are important. This is not the structure; this is not the hieron. This is the most holy place, because we are indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God. If we understand that, we will understand that our bodies belong to Him as well as our spirits.

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, he asks, "And what agreement hath the naos of God, the temple of God, with idols?" The answer is none: "for ye are the naos of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." God is indwelling us. Our bodies are the naos of God.

The Bible says, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy naos in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Our bodies are the holy temple of God because we are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. God does not have a single temple, as he did in the Old Testament, which Solomon built, or a single tabernacle, which Moses built. He now has our bodies as his abode. We are the naos of God because the Holy Spirit of God indwells us.

Other Words: Euthus, Selah, Tirshatha

It is important that we understand these words because words do not only have meanings; they have implications. The word euthus appears frequently in the book of Mark. Euthus simply means immediately, straightway. When it says, "Euthus, they went," it means that immediately, straightway, they went.

Next time you read through the book of Psalms, notice how many times you see the word Selah. S-E-L-A-H. It means: Stop. Pause. Think about what you just read. When he gives you that verse and says Selah, wait. Back up. Go over that again and rehash it in your mind because it is important.

The word Tirshatha is found in the book of Nehemiah and simply means governor. The Bible speaks of Nehemiah the Tirshatha, who was governor. While the temple and Jerusalem were being rebuilt,

the governors were called Tirshathas, and the word appears several times in Nehemiah.

Conclusion: Every Word of God is Pure

We must pay attention to the words that we read. Words have meanings. In order to interpret the Word of God correctly, we must have the true meaning of the Word. In other words, the words must be correctly understood, and they must be taken in the context in which they were given. Each word is important. God does not waste His breath, and God does not give us anything that is valueless. Proverbs 13:5 says, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." Notice that he said every word of God is pure. Then, in Matthew 4:4, our Lord said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

So every word is important, even those long names in 2 Chronicles that we cannot pronounce. We have to understand something about those names that are difficult to pronounce. Back then, they did not name people Mary, Dick, and John simply because the names sounded good. Those names usually indicated the character of the individual; they revealed something about that person. The word Nabal means a fool, and that is what Abigail said: "Is not his name Nabal? He is a fool." Therefore, when we look at Scripture, we need to consider everything linguistically. We have to pay attention to every word.

What do those words mean? What was their meaning when they were written, and what is their meaning even now? Consider all truth, first of all, linguistically.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your truth. Lord, we thank you that every word of God is pure, and that we are not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of thy mouth. Give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Grant us understanding. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Six

Introduction and the Problem of Lack of Study

This is the sixth message in the series on how to study and learn biblical truth. In 2 Timothy 2:7, the apostle Paul tells Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Then, in verse 15, he says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

One of the problems that has emerged over the last number of years is a lack of study of the Word of God. This lack of study is even true among pastors. While not excusing that lack of study—which, by the way, is a sin—the truth is that most pastors and preachers have allowed things to slip in that steal their time of study. Many pastors oftentimes visit, in fact, beyond what they actually need to. They

fellowship, attend ministerial meetings, coach ball, teach, and perform a host of other duties that could actually be laid aside.

It should be emphasized as well that the original deacons were selected by the people and presented to the apostles for one purpose: to relieve the apostles so that they could attend to the Word of God. Acts 6:1-4 says, "In those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, and there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration," that is, they were not getting the food they were supposed to be getting. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men full of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word." The apostles said it was not meet that they should leave the Word of God and serve tables.

There is nothing wrong with serving tables, but obviously you could not take care of all those duties and do the studying and praying that needed to be done. The deacons originally were chosen to relieve the pastors of extraneous duties so that they might give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. If deacons today were biblical and fulfilled their official functions and duties as they should, it would certainly give the pastor the needed time to study. Deacons are not to run the church or the pastor. They are servants.

The word deacon is transliterated from the Greek; that is, it is brought down letter for letter. But the word translated actually means servant. So obviously, they were to serve not only the people, but the pastor as well. When Christians and pastors are working anywhere from 40 to 60 hours a week, that also cuts into study time. That is true not only concerning pastors, but concerning Christians.

The second problem is not simply a lack of study. It is the fact that most pastors and most Christians have never been taught to study. They do not know how to study. And if you do not know how to study, then you obviously cannot study. No pastor and no teacher should be struggling just to find something to preach or teach.

There is so much in the Word of God. Yet I have seen and known pastors who were unprepared. I know one whom I observed personally: it was midnight on Saturday night, and he was still trying to find something to preach on Sunday morning. To me, that is absolutely insane. He should have been studying. No teacher or preacher should ever run out of material. The Bible is simply full of material. So, if you really want to learn how to study, that is what I am trying to teach. If you do not want to learn how to study, then do not pay attention, and you really will not.

The Historical Principle

Review of Linguistic Consideration

You will end up paying the price later, especially at the judgment seat of Christ. Last week, when I began giving you the thirteen principles you need to use when considering truth, the first was linguistics: you must understand what the word actually means. You cannot superimpose upon that word your definition or what you think it means. You need to find out exactly what the word means, since words have meaning, and you need to know the meaning intended by the One in Scripture.

Today I want to give you the second thing we need to consider when looking at a text, passage, chapter, or even a book. We need to consider it not only linguistically, but historically. The Bible was not written in a vacuum. Each book of the Bible was written for some reason, for some purpose, and to some people, especially the epistles.

Therefore, ask these questions: To whom was this book written? Why was it written? When was it written? What was the author's need or purpose in writing? How was this epistle or book to be applied when the people to whom it was written received it? Our first goal, then, when we look at Scripture, is to consider not only linguistic matters, but also the original intent, original purpose, and original meaning of the passage.

Historical Consideration

In other words, what was the author's meaning when he wrote that book or passage? This principle recognizes again that the Bible was written in history, to a specific people or person, and for a specific reason. Once we understand that specific purpose or reason, we also need to understand how it applies to us today.

When you look at Scripture, there are several things you need to understand. First, observation: What does the Bible say? Secondly, interpretation: What does the Bible mean? Thirdly, what did this passage, chapter, or book mean to those persons to whom it was written? Fourthly, how is this passage applied to us today? I will get into this more next time, but we need to ask these questions. Each book in the Bible should be considered historically.

Now, if you do not have the time, if you do not have the knowledge, or if you do not have the know-how to look up the history of each book—its date, its purpose, its time, its writing, and its theme—there is a wonderful help. I purchased the book many, many years ago. It is written by J. Sidlow Baxter and is entitled Explore the Book. It is about three or four inches thick, and it gives you the historical background on every book in the Bible. It gives you a lot of different information as well. So, if you do not have Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter, I would encourage you to get that book. That way, you could read concerning the book before you begin to go through it in the Bible, and you would already basically have the history laid out for you.

We need to consider truth not only linguistically; we need to consider truth historically. Now, here is the third one today: we need to consider truth judicially, or legally. The Bible is a book of law. It is the revelation of God's law, and therefore there are many judicial or legal principles in the Bible. Without my going into depth on many of these, I want you to stop and think with me for just a moment of all the laws that are there in the Bible. There are the laws of sacrifice, the laws of cleansing, the law of the leprosy, of the leper, the law of the lever, and the law of the kinsman redeemer. There are many, many passages that you cannot even understand unless you begin to grasp the fact that here is a legal or judicial principle.

Judicial/Legal Consideration

Now, let me show you how many times the Pharisees perverted this truth. I want you to turn in your Bibles, first of all, to Deuteronomy chapter 19. We are going to look at several passages. I want to point something out, and then we are going to go to the book of Matthew when we get through with the Old Testament. I want you to see this in context because, again, this is a legal or judicial principle. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 19, and let us begin reading there with verse 16. God says, "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then both the men between whom the controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the priest."

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 19:16-21; Exodus 21:22-25; Leviticus 24:19-22 (KJV)

> "And the judges which shall be in those days, and the judges shall make diligent inquisition. Behold if the witness be a false witness and have testified falsely against his brother, then shall you do unto him as he thought to have done unto his brother. So shalt thou put the evil away from among you and those which remain shall hear and fear and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you and thine eyes shall not pity. But life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."
>
> To whom was this passage written? It is a legal judicial principle, and it was written for those who stood before the judges and the priests, and consequently the Lord, whom the judges and the priests represented.
>
> "If men strive and hurt a woman with child so that her fruit depart from her and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished according as the woman's husband will lay upon him and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then shalt thou give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, and stripe for stripe." In the context, it is to the judges.
>
> "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor, as he hath done, so shall it be done to him. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth

> for tooth, as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it. And he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death."
>
> "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, and as for your own country, for I am the LORD your God." In all these other passages, it was before the judges. Now he is saying this is to be a matter of law.

In Matthew chapter 5, beginning with verse 38, our Lord says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn him the other also."

What is He talking about? "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." What our Lord is doing in Matthew chapter 5 is correcting the misinterpretation and misapplication of the law by the Pharisees.

The Pharisees had taken this legal judicial principle—a principle of the law given to the judges, where they were to make the punishment fit the crime: an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for life, foot for foot, hand for hand, burning for burning, stripe for stripe—and had turned it to mean and teach personal vindictiveness and personal vengeance. That is what He is correcting here.

They were saying, "Well, if Steve hit me, I can hit him back. If he cursed me, I can curse him back. If he slapped me, I can slap him back." Note what He said in verse 39: "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn him the other also."

This is not a self-defense situation. If Gary and I are facing each other and I ball up my fist, swing at him, and hit him as hard as I could, which cheek would my fist land on if he is facing me? His left, not his right. So if I smite him on the right cheek, that means this: it is a back fist, a slap, an insult. It is like back in the 1700s when a Frenchman would take his glove and say, "I challenge you to a duel," and slap him on the cheek.

It was not anything hurtful; it was just an insult. What our Lord is doing in this passage is teaching how to deal with the petty annoyances of life. If somebody smites you on the right cheek—that

is, insults you—turn to him the left cheek. If a man will sue you at law for your coat, give him your cloak also.

If someone compels you to go a mile, go with him twain, because any Roman soldier could compel a citizen to carry his armor and equipment for a mile. If we were in a hurry and a soldier compelled us to take his armor a mile out of the way, it would be an annoyance. Our Lord is teaching us how to respond. But the Pharisees had taken a legal judicial principle and turned it into a personal vendetta, although it was not applied to them in that matter.

The Bible is full of legal and judicial terminology as well as principles. The doctrine of justification is indeed a legal, judicial term and concept. Deuteronomy 25:1 says, "If there be a controversy between men and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." The judges are to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. Both justification and condemnation are legal concepts. Justification is a declaration before the law that a man is righteous and innocent; condemnation is a declaration before the law that the man is guilty and has violated the law. Now, turn to Proverbs chapter 17.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that justification is an infusion of righteousness, which is not true. Justification is a declaration of righteousness from the judge. Proverbs 17:15 says, “He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.” If justification is an infusion of righteousness into someone, how could justifying the wicked be an abomination to God? You would be making the wicked righteous. But no, justification is a declaration. The judge is declaring the wicked just or righteous when he is not, and declaring the just condemned and wicked when he is not. Both, he says, are an abomination to the Lord: to justify a wicked man or condemn a just man.

Luke 7:29 says, “And all the people that heard him, that is John the Baptist, and all the people that heard him and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.” If justification is an infusing of righteousness, how do you make God righteous? How do you make Him more righteous? It is impossible

because He is perfectly righteous. He cannot be made more righteous, and He cannot be made less righteous. How, then, did the people justify God? Remember, justification is a legal, judicial declaration. They were saying, "God is right. I am wrong. God is holy. I'm unholy. God is just. I'm a sinner." They justified God by saying that the sentence declared against them was right.

The next verse says, "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." The Pharisees were justifying themselves. They were not pronouncing God righteous; they were pronouncing themselves righteous. In Luke 16:15, our Lord said concerning these Pharisees, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." So the Pharisees were justifying themselves.

They were saying, "We're not that kind of sinner. We're not wicked. We're not vile. We're not condemned." They were justifying themselves. The publicans and sinners said, "Yes, Lord, You're right. We're wicked. We're wrong. We deserve punishment." You have to understand that justification is the antithesis, or opposite, of condemnation. Just as hot is the opposite of cold and big is the opposite of small, justification is the opposite of condemnation. You are either justified or condemned.

Romans 8:33 says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is God who justifies, and it is God who condemns. Verse 1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You are either justified or condemned.

To justify means that you are pronounced righteous in light of the law. Condemnation means that you are pronounced guilty in light of the law. Justification and condemnation are legal, forensic terms and acts. Justification is the passing of a sentence in favor of a person, while condemnation is passing a sentence against the person.

Herman Witsius said, “We thus define the gospel justification of a sinner. It is a judicial and but gracious act of God, whereby the elect and believing sinner is absolved from all the guilt of his sins and hath a right to eternal life, adjudged to him on account of the obedience of Christ received by faith.” Jonathan Edwards said, “A person is said to be justified when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles him to the reward of life.” Justification is indeed a grand and glorious doctrine. It is a judicial, legal doctrine.

Therefore, you have to look at Scripture not only linguistically and historically, but also judicially and legally. Now, let me give you number four today: You must also consider Scripture experientially. What do I mean by experientially? When we look at a passage of Scripture, we must ask ourselves, is there something in this passage that I must experience in my life?

Experiential Consideration

There is a vast difference between something that is judicial and something that is experiential. When something is judicial, it is done for you. When something is done experientially, it is done in you. Consider justification and sanctification. Justification deals with the guilt of sin; sanctification deals with the pollution of sin. Justification is a legal, judicial act done for you. Sanctification is moral, experiential, and internal, done in you.

Justification is judicial, while sanctification is experiential. When you consider sanctification, there are two concepts that you must consider. There is what we would call positional sanctification, which we have in Jesus Christ. That positional sanctification is absolutely perfect. But I am not talking about positional sanctification. Today I am talking about what we would call practical sanctification. Our practical sanctification is what we are in this life.

Sanctification results from the operation of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification is based upon what Jesus Christ has done for us. Practical sanctification is gradual and progressive. Justification is instantaneous and immutable. When sanctification admits degrees and is gradual and progressive, it means that we should be going, as

the Bible says, from strength to strength. We should be gaining in holiness every day and progressing in our sanctification.

When you consider that justification is instantaneous and immutable, this follows: sanctification admits degrees, but justification does not. Even the apostle Paul is not any more justified than I am. The apostle Peter is not any more justified than Steve. Justification is perfect, instantaneous, and immutable. But when you talk about sanctification, you remember that our Lord said some fell on good ground.

Some brought forth thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. In other words, there are degrees in sanctification. That is why some men are more holy than others, some women are more holy than others, and some are less holy than others. We are to go from strength to strength and progress in our sanctification. Here is another difference: sanctification deals with the state of the sinner, while justification deals with the standing of the sinner.

We're justified as we stand before God. That's our standing in Jesus Christ. But our sanctification is our state before God. I don't think anyone in this room would say that you are as holy as you should be or would want to be in this life. Sanctification is always experiential. While there are differences between justification and sanctification, there is no such thing as a justified unsanctified person. Whomever God justifies, he sanctifies. The word sanctify means to be set apart for a holy use.

You may not be bringing forth but thirtyfold while some are bringing forth sixty, some eighty and ninety, and some a hundred. But the truth is, if you've been justified, you will be sanctified. You will be set apart. For individuals who say, “I was saved when I was seven years old, I've just lived for the devil the last 50 years, but I'm saved”—no, no, no.

The Bible said they went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us, for had they been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us. 1 John 2, verse 19. The proof that we have ever been justified by faith is that we're being sanctified in our lives. You cannot confuse the doctrine of justification and the

doctrine of sanctification without perverting the gospel and without confounding the saints.

Expositional/Contextual Consideration

We have to consider truth linguistically, historically, judicially, legally, and experientially. Not all the Bible was written to you. Not all the Bible was written about you. But all the Bible's written for you. So you need to ask, is there something in this passage that I am to experience in my life? We must consider truth expositionally or contextually. Every passage, every verse, has to be taken in its context. You can prove anything that you want to prove if you take a verse out of context. For instance, I could prove from the Bible that thieves prosper.

That it pays to be a thief. He said, “Where would you find something like that?” Well, I’ll show you. Look in your Bibles to Job, chapter 12, right before Psalms. Job is speaking; look at verse 6: “The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.” Why? It pays to be a thief, if you take that verse like that. But when you take it in context, you must know that Job, in this chapter, is answering and refuting Zophar’s argument in chapter 11. Look at verse 1: “And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you.”

Job says, “I am not inferior to you. Yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbor, who calleth upon God and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn.” He says, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” Then he asks, concerning “the tabernacles of robbers,” what he is talking about.

Remember that Job had three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Eliphaz based all his arguments on tradition. Bildad based his on his own experience. Zophar was the dogmatist. In Job chapter 11, Zophar simply says, “Job, you are a sinner. You have sinned against God. If you would repent of your sins, God would bless you, give you all this money, and give you prosperity.”

Job's answer is, “You are not helping me. Do you understand that God oftentimes curses His enemies with riches? Yes, the tabernacles of robbers prosper temporarily until God judges them.” Job is not saying that robbers ultimately prosper; he is answering Zophar's dogmatism in Job chapter 11. When the passage is taken in context, this becomes clear. Zophar is trying to tell Job that he is a great sinner and simply needs to repent, while Job is refuting his argument.

You have to take things in context. Turn to Luke chapter 15. In that chapter you read about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. Look in verse 1: “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Then He continued, "A certain man had two sons." I am not going to read it all; you know it. "And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." Now you know the rest of the story.

How many parables are there in Luke chapter 15? The average Christian and the average preacher says there are three. Well, that is not true. Although you read the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, if you will go back to verse 3, it says, "And he spake this parable unto them." One parable. There is only one, but this one parable is divided into three parts.

The lost sheep demonstrates the work of the Savior. He came to seek and save the lost. The lost coin illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit. And the prodigal son returning to the father pictures the result—the Son seeking and the Spirit working and the sinner therefore comes back to the father. The prodigal is the lost sheep that the Son sought, and the woman illuminating the picture is the work of the Holy Spirit.

So we know there is one parable in Luke 15. To whom was this parable spoken? There were two groups. Therefore, there has to be something in this parable for both groups.

If you look back at verse 1, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and the sinners to hear him.” There were publicans, tax collectors, and sinners. Verse 2 says, “And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” Thus, there were publicans and sinners, and the scribes and Pharisees. We must look in this parable and find something for each group.

In the first part, the shepherd goes looking for the lost sheep. Where were the ninety-nine sheep left? In the wilderness. What is the wilderness a picture of? It is a picture of sin and rebellion. Where was the lost sheep taken? Home. Verse 4 says, “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

“And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Then comes this amazing statement: “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that

repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

Where were the ninety-nine? In the wilderness. Who were they? The scribes and Pharisees. They did not think they needed to be saved; they did not think they were lost. Very clearly, then, the ninety-nine speak of the Pharisees, while the one speaks of the publicans and sinners.

In the last section of the parable, the prodigal son comes home. But there is another brother—the older brother. I preached a message years ago entitled "The Other Brother." When he heard the rejoicing, he did not know what was happening. He asked a servant, "Well, what is this?" The servant answered, "Well, your brother who's lost is now back home and your father slain the fatted calf and we're having a party." What did the other brother do? He became angry and upset. He said, "All these years have I served thee?"

"And I haven't done what this boy has done. And you've never given me a fatted calf." There are the ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The point is very clear. This parable pictures what transpired in Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14, when the Pharisee and the publican went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee said, "I thank thee, Lord, that I'm not as other men. I'm not even as this publican over here. I fast twice in the week. I pay tithe of all that I own, and I do this and I do that." But the publican would not even lift his eyes toward heaven. He smote himself on the breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Lord said, "Verily, that man, the publican, went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Our Lord takes one parable and shows us the work of the Son, the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Father. The Son sought the lost sheep. The woman with the candle sweeping indicated the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction. Then we see the prodigal son running to the father, the father receiving him, giving him the ring of sonship, and putting the best coat on him.

Arthur W. Pink wrote: "The parable recorded in Luke chapter 15 cannot possibly be interpreted aright if its context is ignored. What needless perplexity has been occasioned and diversity among

commentators concerning the identity of the 99 sheep left in the wilderness, defined as just persons who need no repentance, and the elder son, who complained of the generous treatment accorded to his brother, through failure to use the key to observe this one parable in three parts, was not spoken by Christ to the disciples, but addressed to his enemies. It was given in reply to the Pharisees and the scribes who had murmured because our Lord received sinners and ate with them."

His design was to expose the condition of their hearts and vindicate his gracious actions. He portrayed the lost condition of his carping critics, made known the ground on which he received sinners into fellowship with himself, and revealed the divine operations that issue in that blessed result. Once these broad facts are apprehended, there is no difficulty in understanding the details of the two distinct and sharply contrasted classes set forth in Luke 15, 1 and 2.

The despised publicans and sinners who, from a deep sense of need, were attracted to Christ and the proud and self-satisfied Pharisees and scribes. In each of the three parts of this parable, the same two classes are in view and in that order.

Matthew Henry said, "Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in quest of it. The woman lights a candle to look behind the door, under the table and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house and seeks diligently till she finds it. This represents the various means and methods God uses to bring lost souls home to himself. He has lighted the candle of the gospel, not to show himself the way to us, but to show us the way to him, to discover ourselves. He has swept the house by the convictions of the word. He seeks diligently. His heart is upon it to bring lost souls to himself."

So when you look at Luke chapter 15, if you do not take this expositionally, if you do not take it contextually, there's no way in the world that it can be properly interpreted. There's no way that it could be properly understood.

Application and Conclusion

In order to interpret a passage, we must not only have the tools, we must not only have the spiritual necessities that have already been addressed. When it comes to the consideration of a passage, we need to look at that passage linguistically. We need to look at it historically. We need to look at it legally and judicially. We need to look at it experientially. We also need to look at it contextually and expositionally. When you begin to analyze the passage in these ways, all of a sudden the passage begins to come out, and you see exactly what is taught in Scripture.

Paul did indeed command Timothy, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." There is not going to be any understanding given unless we actually begin to consider. Without real studious consideration, no understanding is going to be given. That means this: it does not matter if you have two hours of study or fifteen minutes of study. Whatever verse or passage you are looking at, you need to ask, "How am I to consider this passage?" You begin to look at the passage in the way that I have described, and you will be absolutely astounded at the truths that you will see as God gives you understanding.

You always have to consider truth in these ways that I have given you so far. Lord willing, next time I will finish up to number thirteen and let you see what it means to consider things and the thirteen ways that God gives us to consider Scripture.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for your grace and for your mercy, for your goodness and kindness. Help us, Lord, to love thee, to live for thee, to honor thee, to consider your Word, and, Lord, to consider it linguistically, to consider it historically, to consider it legally and judicially, to consider it experientially, and to consider it contextually. Our Lord, we ask that you would indeed teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Seven

Introduction and Review

After today, there will be two more messages in this series, Lord willing. We are continuing with lesson number seven on how to study and learn biblical truth. We finished number six the last time, and so there is a continuation. Actually, I was covering thirteen ways to consider truth, and we have covered a number of these ways. I hope that you have written them down. If you have not, I trust that you will go back and listen to the messages and write them down. Each time you read a passage, each time you look at a verse, it would certainly be wise to consider that in the ways we have covered so far.

We have covered the fact that we need to consider truth linguistically, historically, judicially or legally, experientially, and then we ended when I was talking about considering truth

expositorily or contextually. Actually, I did not get to finish that last point, and I certainly want to continue it with one more illustration in this message.

Contextual Consideration: 1 Corinthians 3

I want you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Timothy. Let us read chapter 2, verse 7, where Paul says, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Then, in verse 15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." When the apostle Paul said, "Consider what I say," certainly we should consider what he has written under the inspiration of Scripture and under the inspiration of the Spirit. We should also consider all that God has written and given to us. Now turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

I think this is a very important passage, and it is one that really needs to be understood in light of common-day teaching. Usually, when you read this chapter, most people apply it particularly to Christians. For instance, in verse 15 of 1 Corinthians chapter 3, he said, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." He continues, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." They say that this means each one of us is going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The fact is that, yes, other passages do teach that truth.

Romans 14:10 asks, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." It is written, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Very clearly, we will, as Christians, stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

That truth is stated plainly again in 2 Corinthians 5:9–10: "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The word

for bad is the Greek word kakos, which literally means that which is bad, harmful, evil, foul, worthless and troublesome. Thus, all of the worthlessness and the foul deeds that we have done in serving him, we will give an account for.

These are warnings, basically, to every Christian. But when you get to 1 Corinthians 3, I agree it is a very severe warning, but it is a warning more to preachers and pastors particularly.

Paul writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry.”

"Ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

Now, let me stop there. We're going to consider this entire chapter very quickly, but I want you to look back, please, at verse 1. Paul said, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."

There is in this world today that which is known as the carnal Christian theory, which is absolutely totally unbiblical as far as I'm concerned, absolutely totally heretical. The carnal Christian theory simply says that you can be a Christian and yet your life be a life of adultery, whoremongering, or drunkenness, but you're still saved; you're just carnal. Well, I want you to pay close attention to our text.

The carnality of these Corinthians had nothing to do with fornication, theft, or idolatry. Look what he said: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal." Now watch: "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" What were they doing?

They were arguing over preachers and being divided over preachers. Someone says, "I like the Apostle Paul. He's very intelligent." Someone says, "No, I like Peter. He's so fervent. He's so fiery." Another says, "I like Apollos. Apollos is very rational." Their carnality was demonstrated by strife and division over preachers. It was not being drunk; it was not being a fornicator. They were fighting over preachers and walking as men.

In verse 5, Paul asks, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”—or to every minister? Not every preacher has the same talents. God gives different talents to different men. So he asks, “Who then is Paul? Who is Apollos? But ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man.” Now watch verse 6: “I have planted”—that is Paul—“Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

Now, “he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man”—or every minister—“shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.” Then he says it like this in verse 9: “For we”—that is, all the ministers he is talking about—“for we are laborers together with God.”

“Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” He is dividing between the ministers and those who are being ministered unto. Therefore, in verse 10: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another”—that is, another minister—“buildeth thereon. But let every man”—or every minister—“take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man”—or no minister—“lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

“Now if any man”—or any minister—“build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he”—the minister—“shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

In the context, he is talking about preachers.

When he talks about building upon this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble, suppose I asked Steve to take his truck and get me a truckload of gold, silver, and precious stones, while I asked Gary to get me a truckload of wood, hay, and stubble. Who would be back first? Gary. Wood, hay, and stubble are everywhere, but gold, silver, and precious stones are not. He is talking about building a work, and whether you build with gold, silver, and precious stones or with wood, hay, and stubble. In other words, if the minister does not take care, he is going to lose everything that he worked for because he is building with the wrong materials.

Now look at verse 16. He makes his distinction again, just as he did in verse 9: "Know ye not that ye"—that is, the Christians—"are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man"—if any minister—"defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man"—or no minister—"deceive himself. If any man"—or minister—"among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

Then he concludes in verse 22: "...whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." In this context, however, he is talking about ministers and giving a warning to ministers. The Christians are God's husbandry and building; those doing the work are God's preachers; and the temple of God is

Christians. He says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." How do you defile a temple? How do you defile a building?

Suppose we had before us a statue of Buddha, and I were going to defile it. How could I do so? I could break off an arm, chop off its head, take from it, vandalize it, or paint all over it and make it something that it is not. That is one way to defile it. But I can defile it another way.

Truth Must Be Considered Applicatorily

I can add to it. I could add an extra arm, an extra leg, or an extra head. The point is this: building with wood, hay, and stubble is getting all kinds of people into the church who are unconverted. It is easy to get wood, hay, and stubble. All you have to do is provide entertainment and food. It is difficult to get gold, silver, and precious stones. That is accomplished more slowly. You have to remember that in Acts chapter 2 the Bible tells us, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” The truth is, when we add as ministers, we are destroying, defacing, and defiling.

Everything that you consider in the Bible must not only be considered linguistically, historically, experientially, legally, and judicially; it must also be considered expositorily and in context. When you look at 1 Corinthians chapter 3, that is a severe warning to pastors and preachers.

Considering Truth Applicatorily

We must consider truth applicatorily. All of the Scriptures are applicable; that is, they apply to us. They will apply to us either individually, familially, societally, culturally, or even governmentally. Not all of the Scriptures were written to you, and not all of the Scriptures were written about you, but all the Scriptures were written for you. Since we are in 1 Corinthians, consider 1 Corinthians chapter 10 as an illustration.

I want you to note especially the first thirteen verses. Paul writes these Corinthian Christians, and he says, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were

under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." He is talking about Old Testament Israel and the crossing of the Red Sea. Now watch verse three: "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Now he is talking about the wilderness wanderings. He has Israel crossing the Red Sea and the wilderness wanderings.

Look what he says in verse 5: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Actually, God overthrew all of them except two, Joshua and Caleb. But watch what he says next in verse 6: "Now these things" — all these things that happened to Israel in the Old Testament — "were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." Then he says, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." You can read about this in Numbers 21, 22, and 23. "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." You can read about that. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

Now watch verse 11: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

So the Apostle Paul is taking everything that happened to Old Testament Israel and applying it to the Corinthian church. We have to consider truth applicatorily. Not all the Bible is written to us, not all the Bible is written about us, but it was all written for us. So there is always an application.

Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." When he says, "whatsoever

things were written aforetime," he is referring to the Old Testament. Everything that happened in the Old Testament happened for our learning and for our admonition.

Considering Truth Heavenly and Humanly

Therefore, we must consider truth not only expositionally and contextually, but we must consider it applicatorily, because it is going to apply in some manner. These two go together. We not only need to consider truth applicatorily; we need to consider truth heavenly and humanly. In other words, we need to consider truth heavenly—that is, the divine side—and then we need to consider truth humanly—that is, the human side.

Let me say this another way. We need to consider truth heavenly, that is, the divine side, and then we need to consider truth humanly, that is, the human side. Our Lord says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." That is the heavenly side. We were given to Jesus Christ in eternity past. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." You can read about that in Hebrews 13:20–21, concerning that eternal covenant between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. So he says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." That is heavenly.

"And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." That is humanly. There is the human side. In other words, just because God has divinely foreordained and gave us to Jesus Christ does not mean that we must not come to Him savingly. We must come to Him. Thus, there is a divine side and there is a human side. These two belong together: God's divine foreordination does not remove the necessity of coming to Christ. We must consider truth both heavenly and humanly.

Titus chapter 1, verse 1, shows both the heavenly side and the human side: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." So you have to ask yourself, to whom did God promise eternal life before the world began? He promised it to us. How did He promise it to us? In Jesus Christ.

Again, in verse 2, we have “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” Here is the human side. Look in verse 3: “but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.” How do we know about the divine side? The answer is that God ordained it to be revealed on the human side—to declare it, preach it, and manifest it. So you have a heavenly side, and you have a human side.

Here is another illustration, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning with verse 18, we read: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world,”—that is heavenly—“but was manifest in these last times for you,”—that would be humanly.

You are going to have to consider truth from the heavenly standpoint and also from the human standpoint. A lot of these things run together, yet there is indeed a difference. We need to consider truth eternally; that is God's purpose. And we must consider truth temporally; that is God's revelation in time. You can almost see these two, especially in 1 Peter and in Titus as well.

Considering Truth Eternally and Temporally

In Ephesians 3:11, Paul says, “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” I want you to note that the word purpose is singular: “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is an eternal truth. Only God can purpose one thing and have it include everything. We are talking about an eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus. This is what I mean by considering truth eternally—that is, considering God's purpose.

Acts 2:22–24 says, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked

hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." The passage begins with Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in their midst. But note, here again is that eternal purpose: "him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

Acts 4:26–29 says, "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." In fact, this is part of a quote from Psalm 2. This shows that Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Here again is that eternal purpose. Not one thing happened to Jesus Christ that was not eternally purposed by God the Father before the world ever began.

Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8–9, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Now here is the eternal purpose: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." It is impossible to consider these verses without considering the eternal purpose of God. God purposed something before the foundation of the world. He says it plainly and clearly, so we have to consider His eternal purpose.

Deuteronomy 29:29 shows how we should now consider truth also temporally. There are many passages in the New Testament as well, but notice this passage in the Old Testament: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." That is His eternal counsel, His eternal purpose. We have no business sneaking a peek into those things; that is His business. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed" in His Word "belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of

this law." There is that eternal purpose, and the only way we know it is either when it is revealed in Scripture or when it comes to pass in time and history. What is being said is that we do not concern ourselves with that which has not been revealed. We concern ourselves with that which has been revealed temporally, in time and in history.

Romans 8:18 shows again how truth is given to us here temporally: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time" — there it is, temporal — "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" — that is eternal. You have a temporal aspect and an eternal aspect. Look also at 2 Corinthians 4:17–18. Watch this carefully. Verse 17.

The Apostle says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." So there are distinctions in the Bible between the temporal and the eternal.

We must consider truth from both aspects. We have looked at the fact that we must consider truth eternally and temporally. Let me give you two more that go together: we must consider truth negatively and positively. Wherever you find a negative in the Bible, you should always ask what the positive is. "Thou shalt not kill." The positive would be, "Thou shalt preserve life." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The positive is, "Thou shalt live a sanctified, pure, and holy life." Anytime you find a positive in the Bible, you should also ask, What is the negative? You cannot have one without the other.

Considering Truth Negatively and Positively

Consider Proverbs 18:22: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Did Ahab find a good thing in Jezebel? The answer is no. How about Solomon? Did he find a good thing in all of his hundreds of wives? The answer is no. When I look at this verse, I know plenty of men that have found a wife that didn't find a good thing, and plenty of women that found a husband that didn't find a good thing.

How do we understand this? We have to understand it in the sense that the Bible says in Proverbs 19:14 that a prudent wife is from the Lord. When you read Proverbs chapter 31, what he is saying is that, with God's blessing and God's appointment, he that finds a wife who is prudent, godly, and from the Lord finds a very good thing. When you consider this, you have to consider it negatively as well as positively.

Look in your Bible at Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 13. You have to understand what he is not saying as well as what he is saying. God says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

What is being said is important, but what is not being said is just as important. When you read this verse, does that mean that every child who has ever been disciplined with a rod is going to heaven? Of course not. If you took this verse literally, then one of the best means of evangelism would be to grab a rod, go out on the street, and start beating people, especially children. Obviously, that is not what it means.

What it does mean is very simple. I know people who have disciplined their children, and those children turned out to be hellions. What he is saying is this: a man who disciplines his child consistently and regularly, with the blessings of God upon that discipline, will eventually see that child not only turned around, but, in all probability, converted.

My father was very consistent in his discipline. I can assure you. I usually laugh and say we had a peach tree behind our house, and it never did bloom until after I left home. But simply beating someone with a rod does not mean that the child is going to heaven.

Here is another example in Proverbs. You have to consider truth negatively, not only what is being said, but what is not being said. In Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 29, God says, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” Does that mean that every man who is ever diligent in his business is going to stand before a king? The answer is no. But it does mean that some men, with the blessings of God

because of their diligence, will be promoted either before a king, a president, or someone like that, some magistrate. All I am trying to say is that you have to consider what is not being said as well as what is being said.

Consider also Matthew 7 and verse 1. In Matthew chapter 7, beginning there, God says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?” Then He says, “Thou hypocrite,” and He goes on. I have so many people tell me, “This verse says, ‘Judge not,’ and you are judging.” But when you look at this context, He is talking about judging motives, judging wickedly, and judging hypocritically. When you look at John 7 and verse 24, He says, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” There is an unbiblical judgment, and there is also a biblical judgment.

If I see someone stealing and say, “He is a thief,” that is not my being judgmental. That is what the Bible calls him. That is judging a righteous judgment. If I say that people who live in sin, wickedness, and rebellion cannot please God, I am not judging their sins. God has already done that. I am declaring His judgment, because the Bible says, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” There is a difference between an unbiblical and ungodly judgment and a righteous judgment.

You have to consider truth negatively and positively. Since we are in the book of John, consider John 7:24: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” Now look at John 6:27. Here we see a negative first and then a positive, so you have to consider what our Lord is saying and what He is not saying. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”

Here is the negative: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth.” Does that mean that I am to quit work? If I quit work, the Bible says, “if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Yet He has just said,

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth.” That is the negative. But verse 27 continues, “but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” He is not saying to quit working. He is saying that most of your time and energy should be devoted to the spiritual, not the physical. You have to have the physical to live, which is obvious. When you look at these passages, you have to consider both the negative and the positive.

Consider John 1:17: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Was there no grace in the Old Testament? Was there no truth in the Old Testament? Of course there were. Everything God has ever done was grace. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Everything God said in the Old Testament is truth. The statement means that the epitome, the apex, of truth and grace came in the presence of Jesus Christ. You have to consider what is being said and what is not being said as well.

Considering Truth Doctrinally

One last one, number thirteen: You have to consider truth doctrinally. Turn to the little book of Philemon, right before Hebrews. I wish everyone had time to read this one little book. It has one chapter and only twenty-five verses. Philemon was a pastor, a preacher.

Philemon had a servant, a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus stole from Philemon, ran away to Rome, and was thrown into a dungeon. It just so happened that he was thrown into a dungeon with the Apostle Paul, and he was converted under Paul's teaching and preaching. Paul therefore sent Onesimus back to Philemon. In verse 10 he says, “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels.”

He continues: “Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to

me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself."

Let me ask you a question. We are not going to read all of this little book; it contains only twenty-five verses. But if I consider it doctrinally, I want to see what doctrine can be found in it. Verse 1 says, "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer." Here we already have the doctrine of suffering. In verse 9 Paul says, "Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Again, we have the doctrine of suffering, because Paul has been arrested and thrown into a dungeon. Verse 2 says, "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house." Here we have the doctrine of the church. Verse 3 says, "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now you can study the doctrine of grace, the doctrine of peace, and their source from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 4: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers." There is the biblical doctrine of prayer. You can also have the biblical doctrine of love and hospitality. Verse 5 says, "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."

In verses 8 through 11, you have the doctrine of interposition. Paul says, "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." Paul is interposing himself between Philemon and Onesimus, saying, "I want you to be reconciled."

Verse 12 presents the doctrine of reconciliation: "Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels." There is the doctrine of reconciliation. In verses 18 and 19, you have the doctrine of imputation: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest

unto me even thine own self besides." In other words, Philemon, you were converted under my ministry. Whatever Onesimus owes you, I will pay. I am taking his debt as my debt.

There is another very important doctrine here: the doctrine of biblical slavery. Onesimus was a slave, a runaway slave, and when he was converted, Paul sent him back. But there is a special connection in verses 15 and 16: "For perhaps he"—that is, Onesimus—"therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant"—or a slave; that is what the word doulos is—"but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me," meaning that he was converted under Paul's ministry.

"But how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" So Onesimus was Philemon's fleshly brother. Now you are going to ask, how could a man hold his own brother as a slave? The answer is very easily and very readily when you understand biblical slavery.

When you get to Deuteronomy 15, those Hebrew men and women who were slaves could be slaves for six years, and in the seventh year they were to be set free, but they were not to be sent away empty. Everything that they had, everything that they could take with them, had to be supplied to them.

There were many ways that you could be a slave in the Bible. You could be captured in war and enslaved. If I got captured in a war, I'd rather be a slave than be killed. Also, if you take the time to read Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 23 and 24, you will find out that when a man was incompetent, when he was not frugal, when he did not know exactly what

Oftentimes, when a man got in debt over his head, he would sell himself into slavery. That is why the Bible also gives us the kinsman redeemer, who would come and redeem, if necessary and possible, the one who had sold himself into slavery. When someone sold himself into slavery, he remained for six years under the tutelage and training of the man who was successful. At the end of six years, in the seventh year, the slave was to be released.

So Onesimus evidently was one of those rotten apples, because he had to be, to steal from his own brother and run away when his

brother was trying to help him. The point is that there is a vast difference between human slavery, or humanistic slavery, and biblical slavery. When we stop and think about slavery, everybody says, "Oh, slavery is so awful." Did you know that most people were slaves themselves?

Remember Proverbs 22:7: "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." Look how many people are in debt, in debt up to their eyeballs. There is a young couple who lives near us. They have fancy cars, boats, side-by-sides, and four-wheelers. How do you get all that when you are in your twenties and thirties? Either you have plenty of money, or you are in debt. What we do not realize is that when we are in debt, we are actually working for someone else. We are their slaves.

So, in the book of Philemon, you have the biblical doctrine of slavery. I certainly have not fleshed it out; there is a lot in the Bible concerning it. But I am simply pointing out that, when you consider truth, consider it doctrinally. In twenty-five verses, I have pointed out a number of doctrines, and there are probably more. We need to consider truth like that.

Practical Application and Conclusion

Let me give you a little application and offer a suggestion for studying and reading your Bible. Take a small book, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament—something six chapters or less, seven or eight at the most—and read that book all the way through every day for thirty days. Whenever I preach through a book, I never even begin to attempt preaching until I have read through that book at least thirty times straight.

If you take that book and read through it every day for thirty days, several things will happen. Your Bible will automatically open to that book every time you open it. You will see the author, the theme, the characters, and the purpose of the book. You will see all kinds of details that you have never imagined. Also, if you pay attention while reading, noticing the verses and chapters, you will automatically memorize Scripture without even trying. Once you read it over and over for thirty days and pay attention, you will memorize Scripture.

I can quote Scripture today from reading through Galatians thirty years ago, reading it every day for thirty days. I did not necessarily try to memorize it; it simply stuck with me as I kept reading it over and over. We need to consider truth, but we need to make sure that we are reading something we can pay attention to and comprehend as well.

By way of application, understand this: the Bible has been given to us not only to read and study, but also to enjoy and obey. It is impossible to obey something concerning which you are totally ignorant. You have to know in order to obey. If you and I are going to walk pleasing to the Lord, we must know what pleases Him.

Here is the great part: when we are reading and considering truth, and the Lord illuminates our mind and opens our eyes, the Scripture suddenly becomes alive to us. We say, "Would you look at that? I've never seen that before. I never understood that before. But here it is as plain as day." Then we begin to praise Him, worship Him, and thank Him for truth. It is like the man who was born blind in John chapter 9, whom our Lord healed.

And the Pharisee said, “Tell us how you did this.” He said, “I've told you one time and you didn't believe. If I told you again, you probably wouldn't listen to me. But one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”

When God opens our eyes and we see, everything comes alive, and we can say with him, “Now I see, now I understand.” We need to learn to consider truth in each of these thirteen ways as we read through Scripture—contemplating, meditating, chewing the cud, so to speak—so that we can digest everything from the Word of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Lord, we pray that You would teach us. Help us, Lord, to study, and may it be so enjoyable and rich to us that we would not only glory in Thee, but in Thy truth as well. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Eight

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 17:1-13 (KJV)

Introduction and Context

Let's open our Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 17. I want to take the time to read the first 13 verses, although we will not be dealing with all 13 today. But I want you to see the context. I'm bringing a message again on how to learn biblical truth. This is actually the eighth message in this series, and there's going to be one more, and then I'll be ending it. So look in Acts chapter 17, beginning with verse one.

Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening

> and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. And whom Jason hath received, and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.
>
> And they troubled the people, and the ruler of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason and the other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night into Berea, who coming thither into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.
>
> Therefore, many of them believed; also of honorable women, which were Greeks, and of men not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached to Paul at Berea, they came thither also and stirred up the people. Let me just point out the fact that in this series I've covered, number one, three reasons why we must interpret Scripture. Then I gave several messages on six prerequisites for interpreting the Scripture. And then I gave several messages which included 13 ways to consider scripture each time we're reading through the Bible.

The Importance of Bible Doctrine

I am finishing this week and next week on how to teach and how to learn biblical truth. One of the greatest weaknesses of modern day Christianity is that most Christians are absolutely totally ignorant of

Bible doctrine. They may know a lot about many things, but they know very little about Bible doctrine. Very few Christians can explain the doctrine of justification by faith, or the doctrine of sanctification, or even the doctrine of election, or any major doctrine. Not only can they not discuss them or explain them, they could not even do so in an intelligent manner. So we have lost a lot in this day and time. Our conduct is supposed to be based upon the Word of God. If our understanding is wrong, our conduct is going to be wrong. If our doctrine is wrong, then our lives are going to be wrong as well.

Anyone who believes wrongly, you can mark it down, is going to act wrongly. It is impossible for you and I to be obedient in that of which we're ignorant. That's why the Bible says in Proverbs 23 and verse 7, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our conduct is based upon our thinking. We actually act out what we believe. David said in Psalm 116 and verse 10, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." So we not only end up speaking that which we believe, we actually end up acting out doing that which we believe.

We can talk about holy and godly living. Many pastors encourage their people to live holily and to live godly, and I certainly commend them for that. However, it is impossible to live a holy life or a godly life if you don't even know what holiness is or godliness, if you cannot explain it, if there is no basis for it, if there is no foundation for it in your life. So it's really and truly useless in one sense of the word for a pastor or a preacher to encourage people to do something that they do not understand.

Duty is based upon our doctrine. In 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58, that's a verse that a lot of people can quote, the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you always steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." So now listen to that again. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." So here's my question. What's going to make someone steadfast? What's going to make them unmovable? What's going to make them always abounding in the work of the Lord? Is it games, gadgets, gimmicks,

promotions, praise, awards, contests? And the answer is no, it's none of those things. It is Bible doctrine.

Doctrine as the Foundation for Steadfastness

Now listen, let me quote again, 1 Corinthians 15, verse 58. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you always steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Now let's stop. When the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore," that is a conclusion, that is an application drawn from everything that he is teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. What is he teaching in 1 Corinthians 15? The answer is he's teaching the bodily resurrection of the dead. He taught in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead. He was the first fruits of those that sleep. And then he said that our resurrection is based upon his resurrection. In other words, his resurrection guarantees our resurrection. So I want you to think about this. How then can Paul say, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"? Here's how he could say it. "For as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord." How do we know it's not in vain?

I've preached for 57 years. I've never been written up in Time Magazine as the pastor of the year. I've never even been written up in a paper that says everybody ought to hear John Weaver. No. I've been attacked a lot, but I've never been praised hardly any. But I don't need the praise, and I don't care about the condemnation. The point I'm trying to make is this. It doesn't matter what people say. It doesn't matter what people think. Because the Lord knows not only the heart, He knows the conduct, He knows the action, He knows everything. Then He said, you be steadfast and unmovable regardless whether people praise you, regardless of whether there's awards and contests, because you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord. How do I know that? Because of Bible doctrine, because of biblical doctrine, the resurrection of the dead. My duty is based upon my doctrine. Bible doctrine.

The Command to Teach No Other Doctrine

Now, I want you to turn to 1st Timothy chapter 1. The Apostle Paul is teaching and he makes a tremendous statement to Timothy beginning with verse 3: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than the godly edifying which is in the faith so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of good conscience and a faith unfeigned."

Now let me ask you a question. He says in verse 5, "Now the end of the commandment is," where's the commandment? What commandment is he talking about? Go back to verse 3: "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." The word "charge" is paraggello, which is also translated as "commandment." So the commandment in verse 5 is the word "charge" or "command" in verse 3, where he said, "I besought thee to command or charge some that they teach no other doctrine." In other words, you are to be orthodox and not heterodox. Here's what he's talking about teaching Bible doctrine.

"Now the end of the commandment," what commandment? The end of the commandment that you preach no other doctrine than Bible doctrine. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and a faith unfeigned."

Now to understand verse 5, you have to turn it upside down. Why? Because he gives the end first. He says the end of the commandment is. So what comes first in verse 5 is faith unfeigned—an unhypocritical faith, a real genuine faith. That real faith then produces a pure heart, and then that pure heart produces what he calls charity or love out of a pure heart or of a good conscience. The good conscience is next. So it's a good conscience then that produces the love out of a pure heart. So you have to have an unhypocritical faith, you have to have a good conscience, and that produces then love out of a pure heart. So, note if you would please, that is the end of the commandment.

Everything in our lives is to be based upon Bible doctrine. It does no good to tell people to live a holy life if they do not know what holiness is, or if they have no foundation for holiness. Likewise, it does no good to tell people to study the Bible if they do not know how to study. We have to have a biblical foundation. Hopefully this will be a two-part message: today I will teach you how to teach biblical truth, and next week how to learn biblical truth, and you will see how intimately tied together these things are.

Paul's Method: Reasoning out of the Scriptures

Let me explain Acts 17 very quickly. In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul is on his second missionary journey, and he makes three stops. First, he stops at Thessalonica in verses 1 through 9. Secondly, he stops at Berea in verses 10 through 13. Thirdly, he stops at Athens in verses 17 through 34. Then in chapter 18, he moves on to Corinth and stays there for 18 months.

Acts chapter 17 can be divided very easily into three simple thoughts: opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica, interest in the gospel in Berea, and indifference to the gospel in Athens. If you look in Acts chapter 17 beginning with verse 18, you will see that their indifference was based upon not only unbelief but bad philosophy. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him, that is the Apostle Paul, and some said, "What will this babbler say?" That is an interesting word, actually, a seed picker. Others said he seemed to be a setter forth of strange gods because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?"

Clearly these people were indifferent; all they wanted was simply to pick. Verse 32 shows the indifference: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again concerning this matter." With this outline in mind, I want to teach you today from the scripture how to teach biblical truth. Hold on to this, because next week you will see a very clear parallel in how to learn biblical truth. How did Paul teach? Acts 17:2 says, "And Paul, as his manner was." The Lord said he did this everywhere. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and

three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." First, the Bible says he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The only way we will ever teach the truth is to reason out of the scriptures.

Now the word "reason" there is the Greek word dialegomai, made up of dia, a preposition meaning through, and lego, to say. So it literally means to say through. It is translated in our Bibles as reasoned, dispute, and to reason with, and literally it means to mingle thought with thought, to converse, to discourse, to argue, to discuss. One important meaning is to mingle thought with thought: in a presentation of truth, your thoughts must be logically connected, one thought consistently following the previous thought. So it refutes what I would call a helter-skelter presentation of the scripture.

Let me ask you a question. Most of us have been in church all our lives. Have you ever heard a preacher or teacher speak for an hour, and after the hour was over, you wondered what he said, why he said it, what was the point? You were just as ignorant when you came out as when you went in. You had no idea what he was even saying. You can teach and preach and say a lot of good things, even a lot of true things, but if the thoughts are not logically connected, no one understands exactly what you're saying. A good illustration is modern day politicians. Anybody understand what Nancy Pelosi says? Or Joe Biden? If it is not presented in a logical, consistent manner, no one can understand it.

So it should be a fundamental fact and obviously understood that the Bible said He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. If you and I are going to teach the Scriptures, we have to reason out of the Scriptures. Notice the Apostle Paul was not teaching his pet peeves, not what he learned as a Pharisee, not what he was raised up with as a family member, not what grandpa believed or what grandma believed. He was teaching out of the scriptures.

If you are in a debate or just talking with someone and you express your opinion and your friend expresses his, one opinion is as good as another. It is just an opinion, and you may safely disagree

with an opinion. But you cannot safely disagree with Scripture. This is what Paul is doing in Acts chapter 17, which we shall see later: he is endeavoring to shut these people up to the Word of God, so that they can see that if they disagree with him, they are disagreeing with God and with Scripture. One of the principles of the Reformation was sola scriptura, the Scriptures alone, which are our sole authority for faith and practice. So Paul reasoned with them out of the Scripture.

Reasoning with Scripture and Disputing

Let me go a little further with this word dialegomai. He not only reasoned with them out of the Scripture; he reasoned with Scripture. That is not another way of saying exactly what I have just said. The Apostle Paul used Scripture as he reasoned out of the Scripture, and he did so in a logical, consistent way. You remember that one of the meanings of reasoned is to mingle thought with thought. In simple terms, it means to argue logically and completely in a thorough manner.

Now look in Acts 17 and verse 17: "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." Notice the word "disputed." When you and I hear the word disputed, we think of an argument. We can say, wow, Gary and Steve had a disputation. When you hear that word, you think they got in an argument, and it was very heated.

Maybe it was even a knock-down-drag-out. That's what we think. Would you be surprised if I told you that the word "disputed" in Acts 17:17 is the exact same Greek word found in Acts 17:3, dialegomai? So it is translated disputed and it's also translated reasoned. Now look in Acts 18:4: "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greek." There it is translated as reasoned again. In Acts 18:19, "And he came to Ephesus and left them there, but he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews." There it is again. Now look in Acts 19:8: "And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing"—it's the same word—"disputing and persuading things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were

hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." Note if you would, it is translated in verse 8 and verse 9 as disputing. So the word disputing and the word reasoning are exactly the same word in the Greek.

Now the word "persuade" here is the Greek word peitho, and it means to persuade. It means to induce someone to believe by words. It means to move someone to do something, to have faith, to believe, and or to be persuaded of a person and to trust and to have confidence.

Now, let me ask you a question. What would be an implication then, based upon what we've just looked at in Acts 17, 18, and 19, what would be an implication of learning to reason scripturally? Well, I want you to look at verse 8. Acts 19, verse 8. "And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." Now watch verse nine. Here's what happened. "But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." Now watch.

So when he reasoned biblically, some got mad, some got glad. Watch verse 10: "And this continued by the space of two years." Here it is. "So that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." They all heard. What is it we try to do when we communicate truth? We want to communicate the truth of God's word. We want to communicate the Lord Jesus Christ.

Opening the Scriptures

Whether people believe or disbelieve the consequences of God, that's not our business. Our business is to teach and proclaim the whole Word of God. Consequently, Paul's reasoning, disputing, arguing, mingling thought with thought, meant that when everyone heard, regardless whether they believed or not, the whole of Asia heard the Word of God.

Now, let me just tell you that the problem with most preaching today is that there is no logical, scriptural connection in the thoughts. Many messages convey some truth. They may convey a half-truth, but listen carefully. A half-truth presented as the whole truth becomes an untruth. We have to learn to present the whole truth in a logical, consistent manner.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose I told you today that I'm going to teach on Acts chapter 17 verses 2 and 3 and I'm going to teach you from the scripture how to teach truth. And when I started teaching, I started mentioning sanctification. I may mention election. I may mention justification. I may say a lot of good things. I may say a lot of true things. But wait a minute. When you left, would you understand anything about Acts 17, 2 and 3?

And the answer is no. Because I really didn't teach that, I just used that as a text and I just said some things. And like I said, they may have been true, they may have been good, but that was not a logical, consistent explanation of this particular passage.

Let me give you one of my favorite illustrations. I read this years ago and have never forgotten it, and I've gotten so tickled at it because it is so true. There was a time when it was mandatory that if you preached a sermon, you had to have three points. When I was a young preacher, it was still kind of a joke—you've got to have three points and a poem. I was reading about one preacher who was preaching through the Bible expositionally, and he came to Numbers 2:21, where the Bible says, "And Balaam arose early and saddled his ass and went with the princes of Moab." His points were: number one, a good trait in a bad man—Balaam arose early; number two, the ancient art of saddlery—he saddled his ass; and number three, some concluding remarks about the woman at the well. What connection does the woman at the well have with Balaam and saddling an ass? That's exactly how many sermons are presented today—there's just absolutely nothing there consistently and logically. So if truth is not presented logically, if we do not reason out of the Scripture and with the Scripture in a logical, consistent manner, we cannot communicate truth.

Now go back to Acts 17 and look at verse 3. Paul in verse 2 has reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Verse 3 says, "opening and

alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." So not only did Paul reason out of the Scripture and with the Scripture, look at verse 3, "opening." What does it mean to open the Scriptures? Most Christians think to open the Scripture means you sit down with someone, open the Bible to a certain passage, and say, "There it is, read it for yourself." That is not opening scripture. The word for opening here is dianoigo. It literally means to open by dividing asunder, to draw asunder, to open thoroughly that which has been closed, such as opening the eyes of the blind or the ears of the deaf. It means to rouse someone to the understanding of doctrine.

Let me show you something. I want you to look in your Bibles very quickly to the book of Luke chapter 2 because this same word is used in Luke 2 and verse 23 and interestingly enough when you look at this word it's actually a word that refers to the firstborn or the first in birth. Because in birth the womb is opened thoroughly. So look in Luke 2 and verse 23. "As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth," it's the same word, "the womb shall be called holy unto the Lord." Now, go back to Acts chapter 17 and look at verse 3. So the word opening here means to open thoroughly in the sense of scripture. Hence it means to cause one to understand. It means to cause one to grasp the truth. So when one expounds something thoroughly, when he expounds it with reason, and when he expounds it completely, he's giving the sense of the scripture. Let me show you. Look back in your Bibles to Luke chapter 24 very quickly. Luke 24. Because Jesus Christ is on the Emmaus Road with two believers and you remember how he joins himself to them and they're discouraged because it was the third day and he joins them. "What's wrong with you?" Well, they said we thought Jesus Christ was the Messiah, but he was crucified. Besides all this, it's the third day. And I want you to note something, look if you would in Luke chapter 24 beginning there with verse, oh, let's see, verse 25. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written, or have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Now watch what he did. "And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scripture the things concerning himself."

Now the word "expounded" is a different word than dianoigo, but it literally means the same thing: to unfold the meaning of that which is said. In other words, he explained, he interpreted, he expounded what the scripture said. "He said, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets?" He expounded—He began with Genesis and went all the way through everything concerning Himself, explaining it in detail. Now look at verse 32, what the result was. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us? While He talked with us by the way, and while He did what?" He opened to us the Scripture. What is opening the Scripture? It means that you open it thoroughly, that you expound it, that you explain it.

Look in your Bibles to Mark 7. Here is the same word, dianoigo. Beginning at verse 32: "And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." Same word, dianoigo, be opened. What happened when our Lord opened his ears? He heard as he'd never heard before, and he spoke as he'd never spoken before. So the word open does not mean simply to put someone in front of the Bible and say, "Read it for yourself." It means that you are expounding, explaining, interpreting the scripture, showing them what the scripture actually means.

Look at Nehemiah 8, beginning in the middle of verse 7 with the phrase "and the Levites." "And the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly," that's exposition, "and gave the sense," that's explanation or interpretation, "and caused them to understand the reading," that's application. So what is preaching? Preaching is exposition, explanation, and application. And no one opens a scripture unless he expounds and explains the scripture. Opening, therefore, means to give the sense and the understanding thereof. So Paul not only reasoned out of the scripture and with the scripture, he opened it. He explained it.

Alleging: Setting Teaching Beside Scripture

Now go back to Acts 17 and look at verse 3. Paul, as his manner was, went into the synagogue and began to teach. In verse 2 he reasoned out of the scripture and with the scripture. In verse 3 he opens, but now he does something else: "Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

Most of us have never really grasped what this word "allege" means. If I say, "I'm alleging that Steve stole one of my pistols," I'm not really accusing him outright; I'm just alleging it. We think of alleging as something not necessarily true, but that is not what this word means.

Paul opened and alleged. The word "alleged" is from the Greek paratithemi. Para is a preposition meaning alongside of; tithemi is a verb meaning to cause to stand. So paratithemi means to cause to stand beside of, or in the place of, or to set it near, or to set before in teaching. I'm going to show it to you from scripture in just a moment.

Here's what Paul is doing. He's reasoning out of the scripture, reasoning with the scripture. He's opened the scripture, explained it, interpreted it. And now he is alleging. Look at verse 3 again: "Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead. And that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." He's preaching that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the only salvation, the Son of God. So he reasons out of the scripture, reasons with the scripture, explains, interprets. Then he takes what he says and sets it right down beside the scripture and says, "You compare what I just said with what the scripture says and you will find that what I said is what the Bible says and therefore what I'm saying is biblical and right."

Now let me show you the same word. Turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 8. Here's one of the instances where our Lord fed a large number of people. Look at Mark 8, beginning with verse 6: "And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and gave thanks and break and gave to his disciples to set before them." Paratithemi. "And they did set them before them,"

Paratithemi. "And they had a few small fishes, and he blessed and commanded to set them before them," Paratithemi.

He had the fish and the bread, and he broke it, blessed it, multiplied it, and set it alongside the people. Why did he set it alongside them? So that they could assimilate it, eat it, possess it, so it would be theirs. This is exactly what Paul is doing in Acts chapter 17. He's setting everything he says right beside the Word of God. "Look, what I'm teaching you about Jesus Christ is exactly what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. So what I'm saying and what the Bible says are one and the same." You can teach any doctrine just like the Apostle Paul. Your major premise would be: the Bible teaches. Then you can insert what other doctrine you want to insert. The minor premise is: the Bible is opened, expounded, explained, interpreted to demonstrate the truth, and the conclusion is, what I've just said is what the Bible says. So what I'm saying and what the Bible says are one and the same. That's exactly what Paul is doing. Paul goes in, he reasons out of the scripture, he reasons with the scripture, he opens, explains, interprets, applies, and then he sets what he just said right by the Scriptures, as look for yourself. It's one and the same.

Mixed Responses to Faithful Teaching

Now, let me very quickly dispel a myth. Some might tend to think, well, if I can learn to preach like Paul and teach like Paul, if I can reason out of the Scripture and with the Scripture, if I can open, if I can allege, then wow, folks are going to just flock to me, and folks are going to be saved by the thousands. I'm going to have 100% success. That's not true.

I want you to look in Acts chapter 17. Look again at verse 4. Paul, listen to me, Paul was one of the greatest teachers that ever lived. I would say, with the exception of Jesus Christ, He was one of the best. God used Him to write most of the New Testament. But if you look in Acts 17 verses 4 and 5, when He preached, "some of them believed," which is wonderful, "and consorted with Paul and Silas, of the devout Greeks, a great multitude, and of the chief women, not a few. But watch this, but the Jews who believed not moved with envy."

In Acts 17, certain lewd fellows of the baser sort gathered a company and set the whole city on an uproar. Later, when Paul

preached in Athens and they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, "We'll hear thee again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them, albeit certain men claimed unto him and believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Most rejected, but just a few did indeed believe.

Turn to John chapter 6. The Apostle Paul was probably the second greatest teacher in the world; the Lord Jesus Christ himself would be the greatest, for he not only knew truth, he was truth personified. In John 6, Jesus is teaching that he is the bread of life. Beginning in verse 60: "Many therefore of his disciples when they heard this said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said to them, doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him. And he said, therefore, said unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given him of my father. From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you go away also? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Can you believe that? Jesus Christ gave one of the greatest expositions on the bread of life in John chapter six, and what did they say? "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" And many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. Let me tell you something. I've already said it. I'll say it again.

Duty is ours and the consequences are God's. Our responsibility is to teach the whole Word of God. What people do with it is between them and the Lord. We can't make anyone believe or cram truth down their throats, but we are responsible to teach the whole Word of God. If we learn to reason out of the Bible, to open and allege as the Apostle Paul, one thing we can know for sure is they heard the Word of God. That means they are shut up to that Word and will give

an account to God for what they heard and how they responded. The whole object of preaching is to shut people up to the Word of God.

Conclusion: The Seriousness of Preaching

I want to end with a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "If we play at preaching, we have chosen an awful game. To shuffle texts like cards and to make literary essays out of themes which move all heaven and hell is shameful. We must be serious as death in this solemn work. An earnest brother may make a mistake in grammar, and at this they observe it with a sneer." In other words, people mock at him. "Other devout believers err in a classical allusion, and this also affords the mockers pleasure. The earnestness and the devotion go for nothing. Or rather, these are the secret reasons for the contempt of these superfine and superficial critics. The gospel is nothing to them. Cleverness is their idol. As for themselves, these gentlemen are mainly concerned to find out what will bring them the most honor in the philosophical school to which they belong. They have neither convictions nor beliefs, but only tastes and opinions, and the whole matter is a sport from the first to the last to them." Wow! I pray you, above all things, to keep clear of the scorner's chair and the trifler's campstool. Be seriously earnest. So when it comes to teaching and preaching we cannot shuffle texts like cards, and we cannot make a game out of it, and it cannot be just our own cleverness.

It has to be reasoning out of Scripture, reasoning with Scripture, opening it, explaining it, applying it, and then placing it side by side with the Word of God so that people can see this is truth. And once that has happened, they have been shut up to the Word of God. You must remember this, the Word of God is going to do one of two things. It's either going to draw them savagely to Jesus Christ, or it's going to drive them away from Him in condemnation. But the Word of God will have been taught. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for your truth. Thank you, Lord, for teaching us how to teach, how to convey truth. And, Lord, I pray that you also help us to learn truth and to have real doctrinal convictions of the truth. Help us, Lord, to be careful to honor thee in all that we say and do, to live for thee, to be holy, to be godly, to be obedient. And Father, thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is salvation.

May we repent of our sins and trust only in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Part Nine

Introduction: The Question of Berean Receptivity

Acts 17 records Paul's method of teaching biblical truth. In Thessalonica, "when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ."

Concerning the Bereans, Scripture says, "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily,

whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people."

We have been looking at this truth—how to study and learn biblical truth—for a number of weeks. This is the final message in which I am coming down to how to learn biblical truth. There has been very little preaching in the pulpits of America today, especially using Paul's methodology in verses 2 and 3. When he reasoned out of the Scripture, or reasoned with the Scripture, he opened the Scripture; that is, he explained as well as expounded it. Then he alleged: he took what he said and placed it alongside the Word of God so that they could see that what he was saying was exactly what the Bible also said.

Let me remind you of the outline of Acts 17. Paul was on his second missionary journey, and he made three stops. There was opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica, interest in the gospel in Berea, and indifference to the gospel at Athens.

Why, humanly speaking, was there interest in the gospel in Berea when there was opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica and indifference to the gospel in Athens? Another way to ask that question would be this.

Why did the Bereans respond positively while the other groups responded negatively? The answer usually given very quickly is that it is because of the sovereignty of God. Certainly, I believe in the sovereignty of God. The Bible teaches in Proverbs 16 and verse 1 that the preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord. I certainly know that God must work in our hearts. He must prepare our hearts. I know that God is sovereign, but let me ask this question again: Why, humanly speaking, was there interest in the gospel in Acts chapter 17 at Berea and not in all of these other places?

It is true that God is sovereign. It is true that God must work in our hearts. But before I actually get to Acts 17, I want to point something out. Look in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, beginning with

verse 13. Notice what the Word of God says. The apostle Paul writes this: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Now watch verse 14: “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Election and the Means of Salvation

Obviously, when you look at verse 13, we have the biblical doctrine of election. He says, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”

The word elect, election, or its equivalent occurs 73 times in the New Testament. Therefore, you must believe something about the doctrine of election, or you must tear 73 passages out of the Bible. I want you to note something: Election is the foundation of salvation, but it is not salvation in and of itself. Moreover, election does not negate the means of salvation; rather, it guarantees those means.

In verse 13, he says, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Now watch verse 14: “Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is true that no one will ever be converted apart from the sovereignty of God. It is true that no one will ever be converted apart from God’s eternal election. It is also true that no one will ever be converted apart from the Holy Spirit of God. But it is also true that no one will ever be converted apart from belief of the truth. The Bible tells us in verse 14 that He called them by the gospel. These people who were chosen were sanctified by the Spirit. They believed the truth. They were actually called by the gospel.

First Reason: A Noble Character

Why, humanly speaking, did the people in Berea respond positively when the other people did not? Acts chapter 17, verse 11, says, “These

were more noble than those in Thessalonica." The Bible is telling us that there is a certain thing required to actually believe the truth, receive the truth, and learn the truth, and that is that we must have a noble character.

The Greek word for noble is eugenes. It is translated in our Bibles as noble or nobleman. It means that someone is of a noble family or a noble birth, but it also equally means someone with a noble mind. The interesting thing about the word noble is that its root word is eugenes; that is where we get our English name Eugene. The name Eugene actually means noble. The word eugenes occurs only three times in the New Testament.

The first occurrence is found in Luke chapter 19, verse 12. In this passage, our Lord is represented as a nobleman, and he is going to receive a kingdom. Luke 19:12 says, "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

This indeed is a picture of Christ, but you must remember that there were plenty of noble persons in the Bible—people who were well born and well bred—who certainly did not receive a kingdom. Our Lord, then, is pictured as a nobleman who goes and stands before a king, is interrogated, and is found to be honest, righteous, and full of integrity. He is given a kingdom, and consequently he is to go back and rule for the king. This is the first time the word is used; it was translated as "a nobleman."

The second time you will find it is in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Look at verse 26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." He goes on to say, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Thus, he says, not many noble are called. When the word noble is used here, it means someone who is well bred. If we were in England, we would say to the manor bred or to the manor born.

Today, we would simply say someone in high society. He is clearly talking about someone of aristocratic birth, someone who was born

with a silver spoon in his mouth. He says, not many of those are called. Some may be, but not many.

The third time this word occurs is in Acts chapter 17 and verse 11. Clearly, then, it does not mean that these people were noblemen, each and every one of them. It does not mean that they were high born, high bred, and aristocrats in and of themselves. What it does mean is that these individuals were noble minded: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica." We will see this word explained as we proceed into this verse. Clearly, then, we are talking about someone of a noble character.

In this passage, they are hearing the Apostle Paul preach, probably hearing things they had never heard or even considered before. They hear the Word of God. Remember, Paul was reasoning out of the Scriptures and with the Scriptures; he was opening them—that is, explaining and interpreting them—and then alleging, putting what he said right beside the Bible so they could see it.

When they heard what Paul was saying, they had the character to say, "Wait a minute. If what Paul is saying is right, then I am wrong. I have just never heard it explained like this. I am going to have to stop and think this thing through. I have just never heard it like this." In other words, these people had a noble character. The old Puritans had a saying which I really like: "How many would be wise if they did not already think themselves so?" And that is true.

What the Bible is telling us here is that a noble character is someone who is honest with the Scripture. We have to have integrity, character, and honesty. You remember our Lord said in the parable in Matthew chapter 13 that it was the good-ground hearer who received the word in a good and honest heart.

We may not ever understand every Scripture. We may not even agree with every Scripture at first, but at least we would have to have the integrity to say, "That is what Scripture says."

Years ago, I heard Lester Roloff preaching on the radio on his Family Altar program. He was dealing with Ephesians chapter 1. I knew that Lester Roloff was not a scholar, but he was a dear, dear saint of God. I knew that he was not a theologian, and that he probably did not understand the doctrine of election. When he read

Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4, that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, Lester Roloff said, “Folks, I do not understand the doctrine of election. I do not have the ability to teach the doctrine of election. The Bible says that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and I believe it.”

He was absolutely honest with Scripture. He could not explain it, understand it, or teach it, but he knew that was exactly what the Bible says. If you have a noble character, then you are at least willing to be honest with Scripture. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 2, “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

Go back to that old Puritan quote: How many would be wise if they did not already think themselves so? Unhappily, most Christians are like those Jews in Thessalonica. They did not like what the Apostle Paul was preaching, and they did not agree with what he was saying. Look back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17 and verse 5. These people did not have a noble character: “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”

That is what they did in Thessalonica. In verse 13: “But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.” Here were people from one city traveling to another city just to stir up trouble because they did not like what the Apostle Paul was preaching. They did not agree with it. They did not believe it. Unhappily, even most Christians are not willing to listen to the Word of God. They are not willing to be taught the truth. They are not willing to hear anything that opposes that which they have been raised with.

The truth of the matter is, if we are ever going to learn truth, we must have an honest heart. We must have integrity. We must be willing to submit to the Word of God, not fight against it and not resist it.

I understand that God does not give the same amount of light to everyone. Neither does He give light at the same time. When there is a disagreement concerning a passage, if we are Christians, then we can agree to disagree as Christians. We do not have to fuss and fight and maul each other. I never will forget seeing a cartoon one time, and I thought how appropriate it was.

The pastor was showing a man around the church building, and they passed a room where two men were fighting. They had black eyes, scratches, torn clothes, pulled hair, and the pastor said, “Oh, never mind them; they’re just having their weekly discussion over the doctrine of election.” That is unhappily the way a lot of people discuss things. They do not discuss them as gentlemen at all. They do not even understand the biblical doctrine of illumination, which means that God must open our eyes and teach us. These Jews were willing to cause trouble not only in their hometown, but also to travel to Berea to stir up trouble.

In other words, wrong, wicked thinking always leads to wrong, wicked conduct. Wrong, wicked, heretical, erroneous doctrine always leads to wicked and wrong conduct. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles, hold in Acts 17, but look to Isaiah chapter 1. Let us begin reading with verse 16. Look at what God says.

Many people quote only part of Isaiah 1 without using all of it. God says, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Then, in verse 18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Do you understand that one cannot reason with God until he ceases to do evil and learns to do well? Put away the evil of your doing. Learn to do well. Follow God's commandments and do what He tells you.

David said in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” If we merely regard it, God will not hear us. If we are actually doing it and committing it, then very clearly we are not in any position to reason with God.

Amos 5:14-15 says, “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” Notice that it says, “Hate the evil, and love the good.” You cannot love the good until you hate the evil. You cannot seek the good until you cease seeking that which is evil.

That is why Proverbs 21:30 says that there is no wisdom nor understanding against the counsel of the Lord. It is useless to argue with God, debate with Him, or resist Him. Where are those Jews from Thessalonica? They are dead, gone, and condemned because they resisted God and resisted the Gospel. It takes honesty, integrity, and character to say, “God is right, I am wrong.”

It is absolutely hypocritical, and sheer blasphemy, for one to cry to God for truth while refusing to relinquish that which is erroneous, wicked, and wrong. God is never going to give us truth until we realize, “Look, Lord, I'm wrong. You're right. Your word is right.”

A Ready Mind

I want to bow to the Word of God. I want to submit to it. I am going to say, “You are right. I will justify You rather than justify myself.” When you look back in Acts chapter 17, you understand that the very first reason these people received the Word of God was that they had a noble character.

Let us consider the second reason. Acts 17:11 says, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that”—this phrase explains their nobility, which obviously was not noble birth. It had to be noble character—“they received the word with all readiness of mind.”

Second Reason: A Ready Mind

Here is a second thing that we must have in order to learn the truth. We must not only have a noble character to say, “God is right and I am wrong”; we must have a ready mind.

When the Bible speaks of “readiness of mind,” it uses the Greek word prothumia, translated in our Bibles as “forwardness of mind,”

"readiness of mind," "a ready mind," and "a willing mind." It also speaks of zeal, eagerness, and passion. The word prothumia is made up of two Greek words: pro is a preposition meaning "to" or "toward," and thumos is the Greek word for passion. Literally, readiness means having a passion toward something. Therefore, the second characteristic we need in order to learn truth is a passion toward the Word of God.

This is how the word is used. In Romans chapter 1 and verse 15, Paul said, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." The word "ready" there is prothumia. He is saying, "So as much as in me is, I have a passion to preach the Word of God to you which are at Rome also."

In 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 1, Peter writes, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Then he tells these elders, these pastors: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

So he says, you have to feed the flock of God and take the oversight thereof. No one has to force you to do it. You must do it willingly and not just for money, but for a ready mind. The word ready is the same word translated as readiness in Acts chapter 17. It means a mind that has a passion toward the Word of God—someone who is excited and zealous toward the Word of God.

I do not know if you have ever noticed this, but it is politically and socially correct to have a passion about anything and everything except the Word of God and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. People spend money, hours, and effort just to attend a ball game. They will sit for hours on hard benches, cheer until their throats are absolutely sore, and endure all kinds of weather. There is no air conditioning, the benches are not padded, and it does not upset them how long the game goes on. If the game goes into overtime, they are happy. Yet other folks cannot sit in church one hour without complaining. Let a preacher preach ten or fifteen minutes longer than most folks think he is supposed to, and there are problems.

I never will forget, years ago, preaching in a little South Georgia town. The pastor was not there that day, and I was filling in for him. He normally stopped at twelve o'clock. He had arranged for me to have dinner with a family in his church, because I was to preach there that night and was going to spend the afternoon at their home. I preached until I got through. It was, I do not know, fifteen minutes to one, something like that. When I got home with this lady and her husband, she let me know very quickly that I was going to eat burned roast beef because she had cooked it to be ready at twelve, and I had gone way past twelve.

The point I am trying to make is that she actually came to get out; she did not come to get in. But you know, this is the same thing with hunters and fishermen.

It is not just ball games. I have known hunters and fishermen who would get up long before daylight, endure all kinds of weather, hunt all day through pain, mosquitoes, and bugs, and come home empty-handed. They still never complain. But let people sit in church longer than they think the pastor ought to preach, and there is usually a problem. Why? Because people simply do not have a passion for the Word of God. Anytime someone really gets a passion for the Word of God, everyone else thinks he has gone off on the deep end. He is a lunatic; he is crazy. Vance Havner said it like this: “Christians have been subnormal for so long that when one gets normal, everyone else thinks he’s abnormal.” That is about the truth. That is the way it goes.

To show you someone who had a passion to preach, consider the Apostle Paul. In Acts chapter 20, the Apostle Paul preached until midnight. The only thing that stopped him was Eutychus falling out of a window and killing himself. Paul quit preaching, went down, raised Eutychus from the dead, then went back and, the Bible says, preached until the break of day. The only reason I do not preach all night is that I cannot raise folks from the dead. It is hard enough to keep them awake while I am preaching.

How would most people respond today if the pastor preached three or four hours? I hear people say, “What I’d like to do is go back to horse and buggy days. Just one sermon.” I would like that, because here is what they did. They got up before daylight, fed all

their animals, got in the horse and buggy with a picnic dinner, and came to church. The preacher preached several hours. Then they had a picnic dinner, and he preached again. He let them go just in time to get home, do the chores, and feed all the animals. At night, the family sat around and catechized their children. They meditated and asked questions about everything the preacher said.

We do not have anything like that today, I can assure you. No.

Ezra was already a scribe in the Law of Moses. David said it like this in Psalm 119:97: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." If you and I are to love the truth and learn the truth, we have to have a ready mind toward it. We have to have a passion toward the Word of God, and toward the preached Word of God as well.

Have you ever stopped to think that Christians who have been faithful to church and faithful to preaching all their lives should be theologians? They should be able to be scholars. But the truth is, most of them let everything slip and let everything go. If we are going to learn truth, we have to have a mind that is eager and passionate toward the Word of God.

Now you are going to say, "Pastor, that's just not normal." Really? Normal according to whom?

Look in Acts chapter 13. Paul and his company came to Antioch in Pisidia, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience."

I have always said I am going to preach on this, but I never have. I was going to preach on the mistake of a great rabbi. Can you imagine asking the apostle Paul if he had anything to say? He only had something to say. In verse 17, he begins: "The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them..."

He starts giving the people a history lesson which they should already know. Then, in verse 39, he comes to Jesus Christ: “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

Now watch verse 42: “And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.” In other words, “Paul, you have got to promise that you are going to come back and preach again.” When the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas.

They had just gotten out of the synagogue and received a promise that he was coming back, but that was not sufficient. They followed him, asking questions and wanting more. He turned around and taught them about preservation: “You got to continue in the faith.” These people were serious. In verse 44, “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” These people had a ready mind. They wanted truth and were eagerly seeking truth. First Thessalonians chapter two and verse 13 tells us what an eager and ready mind really is: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

As long as I am expounding, explaining, and applying Scripture, that is the Word of God. If I am giving my own opinion and my pet peeves, that is not the Word of God. When the apostle Paul reasoned out of the Scriptures, reasoned with the Scriptures, opened the Scriptures, and alleged with the Scriptures, they were not sitting back saying, “That’s just what Paul thinks. That’s Paul’s opinion.” They received it as it is in truth, the word of God, because that is exactly what it was.

Third Reason: Searching the Scriptures Daily

Now go back to Acts chapter 17. Look again at verse 11: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,” and “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” They not only had a noble character; they had a ready mind and a heart to search the Scriptures. Here is the practice: they searched the Scriptures.

Searching the Scriptures is not opening a concordance and saying, “Let me see how many times this word appears.” You might need to know that, but that is not searching the Scriptures. When the Bible says they searched the Scriptures, the Greek word is anakrino. The word ana is a preposition usually translated as unto, up, or upwards. Krino means to judge. Literally, the word means to judge into, to judge upward, or to discern. In other words, this word is a forensic word.

The word used for searching is a term of the law courts. It means to examine a witness thoroughly. You find it in 1 Corinthians 9:3, when the Apostle Paul said, “Mine answer to them that do examine me is this.” They were trying to find something wrong with him. They were scrutinizing him, going into detail, and tearing him apart. The same word appears in Luke 23:14, when Pilate said concerning Christ, “I have examined him, and find no fault in this man.” He had thoroughly gone over Him. It means a close examination.

In light of this, searching the Scriptures is not simply running references with a concordance. You are discerning the intent and truth of the passage. The Bereans searched the Scripture daily. They were not off and on, up and down, or occasional in their practice. They searched the Scriptures daily.

I am all for reading the Scripture through in a year. If you can read the Bible all the way through in a year, wonderful. I am for reading the Bible however you can read it. But I would rather read one verse and be able to discern and understand it than read forty chapters without having any idea what I had read.

This is what it means to search the Scripture. Consider Proverbs chapter 2: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto

wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Understanding and finding result from receiving, hiding, inclining, applying, crying, lifting up your voice, seeking, and searching.

This is what it means when it says they searched the Scriptures daily. Have you ever considered that one reason we do not retain so much is because it never really cost us anything? If I spend twenty hours working on a message and you hear it within an hour, you have not put anything into it. You can say, "That was a good message," but then it is gone.

When you do the digging and the searching, you do not let it go. It is not an easy come, easy go. You have dug through the Scriptures, discerned, and done the work. It now has value to you. I remember as a teenager, when I was at home and my dad bought a brand-new 1958 Ford. That thing was fast.

I could peel rubber, and I did. I laid some of it down, and it did not bother me; I thought it was fun. But when I got older and had to buy the tires, I did not peel off anymore. I wanted that rubber right on the tire, not left on the road somewhere. In other words, once you do the searching and the work, all of a sudden it means something. That is why the Bible in Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." That is why the Word of God says in Proverbs 25:2 that it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.

Now, go back to Acts chapter 17. I want to show you this, because I asked, when I began this message, why, humanly speaking, there was reception of the gospel in Berea when there was opposition in Thessalonica and indifference in Athens. Here it is. In verse 11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Result: Belief and Opposition

"Therefore many of them believed." Why did they believe? Because they used the means that God ordained. They had a noble character to say, "I'm wrong, God's right." They had a mind eager for the Word of God. They actually searched and discerned the Scriptures. Therefore many of them believed. The reasons they believed were that they had a noble character, a ready mind, and searched the Scripture. Therefore, many of them believed.

Paul's methodology was to reason out of the Scripture and with the Scripture. In Acts 17:2, the Bible says, "He reasoned with them out of the scriptures." He opened—that is, he explained and interpreted—and then he alleged. The word paratithemi means that he took what he said and placed it right beside the Bible so they could see exactly that what Paul was saying was what the Bible said.

The way to learn biblical truth is exactly the same way that you teach Bible truth. When Paul reasoned out of the Scripture and with the Scripture, the Bereans received it with readiness of mind. They had a mind eager toward the truth as he opened the Scriptures. They took what he said and searched the scriptures daily to see if what he said was what the Bible said. In other words, you learn the Scripture the same way that you teach the Scripture.

A blessed result of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and searching was this: "Therefore many of them believed." But there was also a beneficial result: "But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." How can opposition be beneficial? Opposition will ground you in the faith and separate the wheat from the chaff. It will say, "Look, I know what I found. I know what I believe. I know what I saw in the Scripture. I am not changing."

What can the devil, the world, the flesh, or anyone do with someone who has bought the truth and refuses to sell it? This is the only way you can explain the martyrs. When they were being burned at the stake, they had opportunity after opportunity to recant, but they said, "We will not recant and we will never recant." They had bought the truth and refused to sell it. By way of application, there

will never, ever be any growth in knowledge and in truth until we relinquish error and sin.

Applications for Learning Truth

That is exactly what he said in Isaiah chapter one and in Amos chapter five. So if we want truth, we must be willing to let go of what Grandpa said, what Aunt Tilda said, and the way we were raised. We must come to the point where we submit ourselves to the Word of God. That is why the Bible says that we are to grow in grace, even in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Where there is no receiving of truth with a ready mind, no noble character, and no searching of the Scripture, there will never be any real conviction for truth. Do you understand that conviction comes from knowing what the Bible says? If it is not ours, there will never be any conviction. That is why our Lord quoted Isaiah 29 in Mark 7 and Matthew 15, when He said, "Their fear toward me is taught by man," not by the Word of God, not by the Holy Spirit.

That is why most people easily and quickly forsake the truth and the Word of God, just as Demas forsook Paul: there is no conviction. Wherever truth is embraced and believed, wherever there is genuine conviction of truth, there will always be opposition. You had it in Acts 17:13 and Acts 17:5. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:9, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." The doors of opportunity swing on the hinges of opposition.

You cannot move without producing friction. Whenever you have noble character, a ready mind, a searching of the Scripture, and deep convictions of the Word of God, inevitably there will be opposition. We are going to find out whether you have genuinely bought the truth, whether it is yours.

Here is the last application: no one will ever learn truth apart from the Word of Truth. Someone may tell me that he wants truth, but not unless he reads and studies the Bible. Our Lord said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Peter said, "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." We will never know truth, do what is right, or live a holy

life apart from the Word of God. The Bible is our foundation and our sole authority for faith and practice.

If we want the truth, we must endeavor to master this book. We will never accomplish it in this life, but we must do as the Bereans did: search the Scripture daily. How do you learn truth? The same way you teach truth. You must make sure that what is explained comes out of Scripture, and put what you say alongside the Word of God so everyone can see that they are one and the same. Those who hear must be noble enough to say, "The Bible's right. I'm wrong. I've got a mind willing to find out, and I'm going to search those scriptures to see if what that preacher said is true." Thus, the way to learn truth is the same way you teach truth. We will never learn truth apart from the Word of Truth and the Son of God, who is truth incarnate.

Father, we thank You today in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for Your grace and mercy. We are thankful for Your truth, Lord, and ask that You would enlighten our minds, illuminate us, grant us understanding, and grant that Your will would be done in each life. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 1
JW01655 | YouTube

Chapter 2: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 2
JW01656 | YouTube

Chapter 3: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 3
JW01657 | YouTube

Chapter 4: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 4
JW01658 | YouTube

Chapter 5: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 5
JW01659 | YouTube

Chapter 6: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 6
JW01660 | YouTube

Chapter 7: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 7
JW01661 | YouTube

Chapter 8: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 8
JW01662 | YouTube

Chapter 9: Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 9
JW01663 | YouTube

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

A Holy Design p. 79

A Humble Mind p. 74

A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit p. 51

A Ready Mind p. 160

Alleging: Setting Teaching Beside Scripture p. 147

An Impartial Spirit p. 68

Application and Conclusion p. 116

Application: Knowledge Must Be Applied p. 42

Applications and Conclusion p. 80

Applications for Learning Truth p. 168

B

Biblical Examples of Asking for Understanding p. 46

C

Conclusion: Buy the Truth p. 62

Conclusion: Every Word of God is Pure p. 99

Conclusion: The Seriousness of Preaching p. 150

Considering Truth Applicatorily p. 122

Considering Truth Doctrinally p. 130

Considering Truth Eternally and Temporally p. 125

Considering Truth Heavenly and Humanly p. 124

Considering Truth Negatively and Positively p. 127

Contextual Consideration: 1 Corinthians 3 p. 118

D

Doctrine as the Foundation for Steadfastness p. 138

E

Election and the Means of Salvation p. 155

Experiential Consideration p. 109

Expositional/Contextual Consideration p. 111

F

First Necessity: Proper Tools for Study p. 49

First Reason: A Noble Character p. 155

H

Historical Consideration p. 104

How to Study and Learn Biblical Truth p. 83

I

Interpreting Scripture by Context p. 29

Introduction and Context p. 135

Introduction and Review p. 27, p. 45, p. 117

Introduction and Review of Previous Principles p. 83

Introduction and Series Overview p. 7

Introduction and the Problem of Lack of Study p. 101

Introduction to the 13 Ways and the First: Consider Linguistically p. 89

Introduction: The Question of Berean Receptivity p. 153

J

J.I. Packer Quote and Summary p. 60

John 3:16 and the World of Believers p. 36

Judicial/Legal Consideration p. 105

M

Mixed Responses to Faithful Teaching p. 148

N

No Private Interpretation (2 Peter 1:19-21) p. 12

O

Obedience as a Prerequisite for Receiving More Truth p. 88

Opening the Scriptures p. 143

Other Greek Words for 'World' p. 38

Other Words: Euthus, Selah, Tirshatha p. 98

Our Responsibility and Dependence on God for Understanding p. 10

P

Paul's Method: Reasoning out of the Scriptures p. 140
Practical Application and Conclusion p. 133
Practical Applications p. 24

R

Reasoning with Scripture and Disputing p. 142
Review of Linguistic Consideration p. 103
Review of Previous Messages p. 65

S

Second Necessity: A Mind Illuminated by the Holy Spirit p. 52
Second Reason: A Ready Mind p. 160
Second Reason: Prevent Being Misled by the Sound of Words p. 29
Six Things Necessary to Interpret Scripture: Introduction p. 48

T

The Command to Teach No Other Doctrine p. 139
The First Reason to Interpret: Explaining Seeming Contradictions p. 16
The First Reason We Must Interpret Scripture p. 15
The Historical Principle p. 103
The Holy Spirit as Teacher and the Danger of Carnality p. 58
The Importance of Bible Doctrine p. 136
The Measure and Reception of Truth p. 87
The Necessity of Divine Illumination p. 11
The Necessity of Seeking Truth from God p. 48
The Need for a Holy Design p. 79
The Need for a Humble Mind p. 74
The Need for a Praying Heart p. 77
The Need for an Impartial Spirit p. 68
The Principle of Measured Truth (Mark 4:23-25) p. 8
The Problem of Superficial Bible Reading p. 7
The Result: Belief and Opposition p. 167
The Tools Necessary to Study and Learn p. 48
The Word 'All': Does Not Always Mean All p. 91
The Word 'Flesh' Has Multiple Meanings p. 30

The Word 'Friend': Philos vs. Hetairos p. 93
The Word 'Love': Agape, Phileo, and Eros p. 90
The Word 'Temple': Hieron vs. Naos p. 96
The Word 'World' (Kosmos) Has Multiple Meanings p. 31
Third Reason: Insert Explanatory Words p. 40
Third Reason: Searching the Scriptures Daily p. 165
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 1 p. 7
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 2 p. 27
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 3 p. 45
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 4 p. 65
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 5 p. 83
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 6 p. 101
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 7 p. 117
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 8 p. 135
Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture - Part 9 p. 153
Truth Must Be Considered Applicatorily p. 122

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 12 p. 52

Genesis 22 p. 22, p. 23

Genesis 22:1 p. 22, p. 23

Exodus

Exodus 21:22-25 p. 105

Leviticus

Leviticus 23 p. 132

Leviticus 24:19-22 p. 105

Numbers

Numbers 2:21 p. 144

Numbers 21 p. 123

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 15 p. 132

Deuteronomy 19:16-21 p. 105

Deuteronomy 25:1 p. 107

Deuteronomy 29:29 p. 41, p. 126, p. 127

Deuteronomy 33 p. 86

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 8 p. 146

Job

Job 19:25-27 p. 30

Job 36 p. 17

Job 38:4 p. 32

Psalm

Psalm 2 p. 126

Psalm 66:18 p. 159

Psalm 111:2 p. 25, p. 66
Psalm 116 p. 137
Psalm 119 p. 10, p. 78
Psalm 119:18 p. 59
Psalm 119:97 p. 163

Proverbs

Proverbs 2 p. 56, p. 77, p. 78, p. 85
Proverbs 2:6 p. 10
Proverbs 8:13 p. 75, p. 76
Proverbs 13:5 p. 99
Proverbs 15 p. 40
Proverbs 15:3 p. 67
Proverbs 16 p. 154
Proverbs 16:18 p. 75, p. 76
Proverbs 17:15 p. 107
Proverbs 18:22 p. 127
Proverbs 19:14 p. 128
Proverbs 21:30 p. 160
Proverbs 22:7 p. 133
Proverbs 23 p. 137
Proverbs 23:23 p. 166
Proverbs 25:2 p. 166
Proverbs 29:23 p. 76

Isaiah

Isaiah 1 p. 159
Isaiah 29 p. 168
Isaiah 40 p. 30
Isaiah 40:5 p. 30
Isaiah 57 p. 76
Isaiah 57:15 p. 81

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 3:15 p. 16
Jeremiah 23:21 p. 13

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 13:6-7 p. 13

Amos

Amos 5:14-15 p. 160

Habakkuk

Habakkuk 1 p. 40
Habakkuk 1:13 p. 40, p. 41, p. 67

Matthew

Matthew 2:1 p. 91
Matthew 4:4 p. 99
Matthew 7 p. 129
Matthew 10:22 p. 92
Matthew 11:25 p. 74
Matthew 12:6 p. 96
Matthew 13 p. 69
Matthew 15 p. 168
Matthew 15:16 p. 11, p. 59
Matthew 18:33 p. 37
Matthew 20 p. 95
Matthew 21:12 p. 96
Matthew 21:14-15 p. 96
Matthew 22 p. 95
Matthew 24:14 p. 39
Matthew 24:3 p. 38
Matthew 25 p. 35, p. 36
Matthew 26 p. 95
Matthew 27 p. 27, p. 28

Mark

Mark 1:37 p. 92
Mark 4 p. 69
Mark 4:23-25 p. 8, p. 9
Mark 4:24-25 p. 9

Mark 4:33 p. 88
Mark 7 p. 146, p. 168
Mark 7:18 p. 11, p. 59
Mark 8 p. 147, p. 148

Luke

Luke 2 p. 145
Luke 6:35 p. 37
Luke 7 p. 95
Luke 7:29 p. 107, p. 108
Luke 8 p. 69
Luke 10 p. 27, p. 28
Luke 15 p. 113, p. 115
Luke 16:15 p. 108
Luke 19:12 p. 156
Luke 21:38 p. 92
Luke 23:14 p. 165
Luke 24 p. 47, p. 145
Luke 24:44-45 p. 11

John

John 1 p. 34
John 1:10 p. 38, p. 66
John 1:17 p. 130
John 3 p. 34, p. 35
John 3:16 p. 36
John 5:24 p. 33
John 5:30 p. 24
John 6 p. 149
John 6:27 p. 129
John 6:33 p. 35
John 6:38 p. 24
John 7 p. 129
John 7:24 p. 129
John 10 p. 24

John 10:30 p. 24
John 12:31 p. 32
John 12:32 p. 92, p. 93
John 12:47 p. 35
John 13 p. 32
John 13:1 p. 32
John 14 p. 24
John 14:15-17 p. 59
John 14:25-26 p. 60
John 14:28 p. 24
John 15 p. 94
John 15:18 p. 33
John 15:26-27 p. 60
John 16 p. 85
John 17 p. 86, p. 94
John 17:17 p. 168, p. 169

Acts

Acts 2:22-24 p. 125, p. 126
Acts 4:26-29 p. 126
Acts 5:42 p. 16
Acts 6:1-4 p. 102
Acts 17 p. 140, p. 142, p. 143, p. 144, p. 145, p. 147, p. 148, p. 149, p. 153, p. 154, p. 155, p. 159
Acts 17:1-13 p. 135
Acts 17:11 p. 160
Acts 17:13 p. 168
Acts 17:17 p. 142, p. 143
Acts 17:2 p. 140, p. 141, p. 167
Acts 17:24 p. 32
Acts 17:3 p. 142, p. 143
Acts 17:5 p. 168
Acts 18:19 p. 142, p. 143
Acts 18:4 p. 142, p. 143
Acts 19 p. 143

Acts 19:8 p. 142, p. 143

Romans

Romans 3:19 p. 33
Romans 3:6 p. 33
Romans 5 p. 66
Romans 5:8 p. 37
Romans 7 p. 30, p. 31
Romans 7:18 p. 30, p. 31
Romans 8 p. 66
Romans 8:18 p. 127
Romans 8:33 p. 108
Romans 8:5-8 p. 56, p. 57
Romans 9 p. 41
Romans 9:19 p. 41
Romans 9:22 p. 37
Romans 11 p. 33, p. 34
Romans 14:10 p. 118
Romans 15:4 p. 123, p. 124

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2:14 p. 56
1 Corinthians 3 p. 118, p. 119
1 Corinthians 3:1 p. 57
1 Corinthians 4:17 p. 16
1 Corinthians 6 p. 97
1 Corinthians 8:1-2 p. 74
1 Corinthians 9:3 p. 165
1 Corinthians 10:12 p. 75, p. 76
1 Corinthians 15 p. 31, p. 137, p. 138
1 Corinthians 15:39 p. 31
1 Corinthians 16:9 p. 168

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 p. 127
2 Corinthians 5:19 p. 35, p. 36

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 p. 118, p. 119
2 Corinthians 6:16 p. 98

Ephesians

Ephesians 1 p. 72, p. 73
Ephesians 1:4 p. 32
Ephesians 3:11 p. 125
Ephesians 4 p. 16
Ephesians 4:18 p. 57

Colossians

Colossians 1:6 p. 37

1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1 p. 72
1 Thessalonians 4 p. 41
1 Thessalonians 4:3 p. 41

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 3:6 p. 76

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:8-9 p. 126
2 Timothy 2 p. 27, p. 56
2 Timothy 2:7 p. 9, p. 10, p. 45, p. 65, p. 79, p. 101

Hebrews

Hebrews 1:1-3 p. 53, p. 68
Hebrews 1:2 p. 53, p. 54
Hebrews 2 p. 8
Hebrews 12:6 p. 37
Hebrews 13:20-21 p. 124
Hebrews 13:8 p. 41, p. 42

James

James 1 p. 23
James 1:13 p. 22, p. 23
James 1:5 p. 78

1 Peter

1 Peter 1 p. 30

1 Peter 1:24 p. 30

2 Peter

2 Peter 1 p. 12

2 Peter 1:19-21 p. 12

2 Peter 2:5 p. 36

1 John

1 John 2 p. 110, p. 111

1 John 2:15-17 p. 32, p. 33

1 John 2:16 p. 76

1 John 2:27 p. 17, p. 18, p. 21, p. 22

1 John 5:19 p. 32

Revelation

Revelation 3:19 p. 37

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

Your companion study guide

Three Reasons We Need To Consider Truth And Interpret Scripture

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson, and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.



Scan to open the matching study guide

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above and search for this book by title.