

CHAPTER ONE PREPARATION FOR BIBLE STUDY

The Bible is unlike any other book that has ever been written. When approached as the perfect word of God it can yield limitless, personal blessings. When approached as "just another book" it can be studied, dissected, collated, categorised, memorised, and commented upon, but it will not affect the soul of the seeker. The Bible will be little more than another lifeless piece of historical literature. Therefore, before any study of God's word can be undertaken, the individual approaching the Bible must be "prepared."

Salvation is a Prerequisite for Bible Study

I Corinthians 2:14 - "But the _____ receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he _____ them, because they are _____ discerned."

I Corinthians 2:9-12 - "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 _____ 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 _____ knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now _____ 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."

When Paul speaks of "us," is he referring to believers or the spiritually lost? Exactly to whom is he speaking? Compare I Corinthians 1:1-2 _____

A Proper View of the Scriptures Is a Prerequisite for Bible Study

A) The Inspiration of the Scriptures Must Be Recognised

II Peter 1:21 - "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God _____ as they were _____ by the Holy Ghost."

II Timothy 3:16-17 - "_____ Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for _____ for reproof, for correction, for _____ in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

B) The Preservation of the Scriptures Must Be Recognised

Psalms 12:6-7 - "The words of the LORD are _____: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt _____ them, O LORD, thou shalt _____ them from this generation _____."

Matthew 24:35 - "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my _____ shall not _____."

Inspiration without preservation makes the Bible a useless book. If the Bible only exists in the form of some "original manuscripts" that were lost long ago, then we have no guarantee of possessing absolute truth today and God is proven to be a liar for not keeping and preserving his words as promised.

C) The Purity of the Scriptures Must Be Recognised

Psalm 12:6 - "The words of the LORD are _____: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

Proverbs 30:5 - "_____ of God is _____: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

D) The Preeminence of the Scriptures Must Be Recognised

Psalm 138:2 - "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy _____: for thou hast _____ thy _____ thy name."

E) The Final Authority of the Scriptures Must Be Recognised

As God is perfect and incapable of error, it is only natural (and obvious from the above Scriptures) that his words are perfect and without error. The end result of inspiration and preservation is a perfect copy of the words of God. This perfect, written revelation of God to mankind demands our submission and obedience.

1) We are to be in submission to the words of God

Matthew 4:4 - "But he [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by _____ word that proceedeth out of the _____ of _____."

2) We are told not to add to, subtract from, or change the words of God

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 - "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the _____ and unto the _____ which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not _____ unto the _____ which I command you, neither shall ye _____ ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Proverbs 30:5-6 - "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. _____ unto his _____, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Revelation 22:18-19 - "For I testify unto every man that heareth the _____ of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall _____ unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall _____ from the _____ of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Although the context of the first passage is the Law of Moses and the context of the last passage is the book of Revelation, the context of the verse from Proverbs is "EVERY word of God." All three passages cross-reference with one another to provide a solemn warning about tampering with the words of God.

3) Humility must replace pride

James 4:6 - "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the _____, but giveth _____ unto the _____."

One of the most difficult things for any person to do when approaching the Scriptures is to submit to what they find written therein. The attitude with which one comes to the Bible is therefore of paramount importance - if the Bible is not accepted as one's absolute, final authority in all spiritual matters, then Bible study is a hypocritical farce. Therefore, any other revelations, prophecies, visions, or experiences that "add" to the already revealed, written word of God must be carefully viewed in the light of the above verses.

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit Is a Prerequisite to Bible Study

John 14:26 - "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall _____ you _____ things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 16:13 - "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will _____ you into _____: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

Note that although the context of these verses point to the disciples of Jesus, this truth is repeated to the church:

I Corinthians 2:12-13 - "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might _____ the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the _____ _____; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

As it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for writing the word of God, it is only consistent that his guidance is necessary for understanding it.

Prayer is a Prerequisite to Bible Study

Psalms 119:18 - "_____ thou mine _____, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

A Proper Understanding of How to Interpret Scripture is a Prerequisite to Bible Study

A) God Knows the Proper Interpretation of Any Given Passage

Genesis 40:8 - "...Joseph said unto them, Do not _____ belong to _____? tell me them, I pray you."

II Peter 1:20 - "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the _____ is of any _____."

God knows the proper doctrinal interpretation of every verse of his word - any interpretation other than his interpretation is the wrong interpretation.

B) The Literal Method of Interpretation Is the Proper Approach

Interpreting the Bible "literally" simply means that every word of Scripture is given the same exact, basic meaning that it would ordinarily have in normal, customary usage. The only major alternative to the literal method of interpretation is the allegorical method (also called the spiritual method of interpretation). In this method one assumes there is a hidden interpretation to every verse. The result of interpreting allegorically is to make the Bible mean whatever you want it to mean.

The literal method of interpreting the Bible takes into account figures of speech such as metaphors (eg. Luke 13:32), parables, symbols (eg. Rev. 1:12,16,20) and allegories (eg. Gal. 4:22-24). These figures of speech, which are obviously not to be taken literally, are always clearly pointed out in Scripture - we never need to guess at them.

C) Cross-referencing Is the First Key to Proper Interpretation

I Corinthians 2:13 - "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; _____ spiritual things with _____."

Comparing Scripture with Scripture (cross-referencing) is essential to understanding the Bible. This method is often seen throughout the New Testament by the way in which Jesus, Paul, Peter, and others quote from, compare, and contrast their words with the Old Testament Scriptures.

D) Recognising God's Divisions Within His Word Is the Second Key to Proper Interpretation

II Timothy 2:15 - "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, _____ the _____ of truth."

Proper interpretations are therefore dependent on finding right divisions within God's word. To ignore these divisions or to incorrectly divide God's word is the mark of one who has not studied and will lead to shame.

E) Noting the Context of a Passage is Third Key to a Proper Interpretation of God's Word

The Bible is not a disjointed collection of sayings like the Koran [Muslims] or the "holy books" of the eastern religions. For every verse of Scripture God provides a context. For the student of the word of God, it is an absolute necessity that he take note of **who** is being spoken to as well as **when, where, why** and by **what** means. The cults are renowned for pulling verses from their context in order to prove their pet doctrines. The Bible-believer however must take every verse *at face value, in its context!*

A Realisation of the Importance of Doctrine Is a Prerequisite For Bible Study

Matthew 7:28 - "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were _____ at his _____:"

I Timothy 4:13 - "Till I come, give attendance to _____, to exhortation, to _____."

I Timothy 5:17 - "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who _____ in the _____ and _____."

II Timothy 3:16 - "All _____ is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for _____, for reproof, for correction, for _____ in righteousness:"

II Timothy 4:2-3 - "Preach the _____; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, _____, exhort with all longsuffering and _____. For the time will come when they will not endure _____; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

Titus 2:1 - "But _____ thou the things which become sound _____:"

Many within the Charismatic movement succumb to the temptation to deemphasize doctrine. "Love unites but doctrine divides" is a phrase often heard in such circles. Such a deemphasizing of doctrine gives the non-charismatic just cause to criticise. Thus this workbook will seek to help establish you in sound doctrine!

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Questions For Study

1. What is the difference between inspiration and preservation?
2. What are the prerequisites for a person studying the Bible?
3. What should be the believer's "final authority?"
4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the interpretation of the Scriptures?
5. Why is the context of a verse important to a proper understanding of that verse?
6. What should be the believer's attitude towards "doctrine?"

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