

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

2020, Quarter 2, Lesson 5

By Scripture Alone—*Sola Scriptura*

This study guide contains additional materials to accompany the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for the second quarter of 2020, titled How to Interpret Scripture. This Deeper Daily Bible Study develops the broad theme of studying and interpreting the Bible into some areas not covered by the Sabbath School Study Guide. While the general topic of each week's set of lessons corresponds to the Study Guide topic for that week, the daily focus will vary at times from that guide. We hope that you will find this approach to be a valuable added resource in your Bible study.

The "Digging Deeper" section probes into the day's topic, and illustrates the study principle or tool being discussed. Suggested answers, if included, are provided in parentheses. Sabbath School teachers will find this section especially helpful in the Sabbath School setting. The "Apply It" section gives the student an opportunity to apply the subject at hand to their own study of the Bible, and the "Share It" section provides an opportunity for those in group studies to discuss and share their response to the day's theme.

Sabbath (April 25, 2020): By Scripture Alone—*Sola Scriptura*

In this week's lessons we will focus on several characteristics of the Bible that make it unique and make its study effective. These characteristics reflect the characteristics of God, its Author, and in today's study we will explore some of these similarities between the Bible and what the Bible reveals about God.

Digging Deeper

Read the passages below and discuss the similarities they reveal between God and the Bible:

- Scripture as the Ruling Norm. Compare Psalm 99:1 and Revelation 19:11-16.
- The Unity of Scripture. Compare John 10:30 and John 17:11.
- The Clarity of Scripture. Compare Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1; and John 18:20.
- Scripture Interprets Scripture. Compare John 1:18; John 14:9; and John 16:13,14.

Share It

- What difference does it make theologically and practically that the characteristics of the Bible reflect the characteristics of God? How should this impact our faith in the Bible as God's Word to us?

Sunday (April 26, 2020): Scripture as the Ruling Norm

The Protestant Reformation was, in large part, a reaction against the usurpation of biblical authority that had led to the rise and dominion of the papacy. The Roman Church based its teachings on a mixture of Scripture, tradition, and the Magisterium—the teaching authority of the pope and bishops. The Reformers, in contrast, upheld the Bible alone as the final arbiter of religious truth and spiritual practice. Martin Luther wrote, "Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth" (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 32: *Career of the Reformer II*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999], pp. 11,12). In today's lesson we will look more closely at the important concept of Scripture as the ruling norm in matters of faith and spiritual practice.

Digging Deeper

- Read Revelation 22:18,19. What do the Bible's closing words say regarding the importance of our view of Scripture's authority? (It determines our salvation.)
- Read Acts 17:10,11. Where did the Bereans turn when confronted with questions regarding what Scripture teaches? (They turned to the Bible.) What was the practical result in their faith and characters? (The Bible says that they were "more noble." The Greek word *eugenēs* translated as "noble" here is the same word used to identify the "nobleman" in Luke 19:12, where Jesus refers to Himself as a "nobleman" that "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." The implication is that Bible study is a powerful tool by which God can change our characters to be more like Him.)

Apply It

- Read 1 Timothy 4:4,5. Some people have claimed that in verse 4 Paul lifts the Old Testament dietary restrictions against unclean meats. However, what does verse 5 reveal about Paul's true view on the matter? (Paul upheld the authority of the Old Testament's dietary laws, because he clarified that the "every creature" to be eaten includes only those "sanctified by the word of God.")
- Read John 5:39. Jesus pointed the people around Him to look at Scripture as a testimony to Who He was and how He lived. Should Christians be able to do the same thing today? Do you think God wants the world to be able to identify genuine Christians by comparing what they see in their lives with what they read in Scripture?

Share It

- What experiences have you had in your life that have affirmed or demonstrated the importance of the Bible as the source of spiritual authority?

Monday (April 27, 2020): The Unity of Scripture

One of the most important aspects of the Reformers' stance of *Sola Scriptura* was their belief in the doctrinal unity of all Scripture.

Digging Deeper

- Read Luke 24:27,44,45. What was Jesus' view regarding the unity of Scripture and the internal coherence of its teachings? (He believed that all of Scripture pointed toward Himself in a united and coherent way.) Verse 45 says that Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." What does this phrase suggest regarding the connection between understanding Scripture and viewing it as a unified whole? (If we do not see all of Scripture as unified and as pointing to Christ, we will not understand the Bible.)
- Read Romans 3:10-18. What Old Testament books does Paul quote from in this passage? (Ecclesiastes [7:20], Psalms [14:2,3; 5:9; 10:7], and Isaiah [59:7,8].) What does this suggest regarding Paul's view of the unity of the Old Testament books? (He assumed the unity of Scripture.)
- Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20,21. These passages point to God, and specifically the Holy Spirit, as the real Author of all Scripture. Why is this so important to remember when considering the fundamental unity of Scripture? (Because all Scripture has the same Author, its message and teachings will also be the same.)

Apply It

- Select a book of the Bible at random and prayerfully search for the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ in that book. Then look for a way to share that message simply and clearly with someone else.

Share It

- Does it matter that we see all of Scripture as being a unified whole? What would change in our understanding of God if this was not the case?

Tuesday (April 28, 2020): The Clarity of Scripture

Another important characteristic of the Bible is its claims to clarity. After all, its message of hope and salvation would be meaningless if we were not able to understand it.

Digging Deeper

- Read Matthew 18:3. What did Jesus imply in this verse about the clarity of the Bible's central message? (It is clear enough and simple enough that even little children can understand it.)
- Read the following passages and summarize how Jesus seems to expect us to read and understand the Bible: Matthew 12:3,5; 19:4; 21:42; 22:31. (He expects us to read, understand, and believe what is written.)
- Read 1 Corinthians 2:9,10,13,14. What is essential to our understanding of the Bible? (We must have the Holy Spirit guiding us as we read and study.)

There are many things apparently difficult or obscure, which God will make plain and simple to those who thus seek an understanding of them. But without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct. Whenever men are not in word and deed seeking to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations. Those who look to the Scriptures to find discrepancies, have not spiritual insight. With distorted vision they will see many causes for doubt and unbelief in things that are really plain and simple. {SC 111.1}

Apply It

- Read John 7:17. What did Jesus imply was the reason that most people will claim that the teachings and doctrines of the Bible are not clear? (Jesus implied that confusion and uncertainty regarding the teachings of the Bible arise when we are not willing to do God's will. Compare Matthew 13:14,15.)

Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. The teachings and restrictions of God's word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority. In order to arrive at truth, we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it. And all who come in this spirit to the study of the Bible will find abundant evidence that it is God's word, and they may gain an understanding of its truths that will make them wise unto salvation. {*Steps to Christ*, 111.1}

Share It

- What experiences have you had in your life that have helped you understand the Bible better?

Wednesday (April 29, 2020): Scripture Interprets Scripture

One of the most fascinating aspects of Bible study is the fact that the Bible acts as its own interpreter. While Bible dictionaries, concordances, and other extra-biblical materials can provide help in our understanding of Scripture, the Bible is perfectly capable of explaining itself.

Digging Deeper

- Read Isaiah 28:9,10. What does this passage say regarding the method of Bible study that will help us to “understand doctrine”? (We should compare line upon line, or verse with verse.) What does the phrase in this verse “here a little, and there a little,” imply? (Comparing various passages of Scripture together often reveals biblical truth.)

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {*Education* 190.2}

- Read Matthew 24:37-42. In His discussion about being prepared for the second coming, what point was Jesus trying to make by referring to Noah’s story? (The second coming will surprise many people who won’t be ready for it. Like the people in Noah’s day, they will be lost.) For what reasons did Jesus attempt to make His point by referring to another passage of Scripture? (He realized that His warning would be more easily understood and remembered by comparing what He was saying with another passage of Scripture.)

Apply It

The Bible does contain some passages that can be confusing to understand correctly if they are wrestled away from the larger context of the entire Bible. The following Bible verses provide an example of this regarding the state of the dead.

- Read Revelation 14:11 and 20:10. Taken at face value, what do these verses seem to suggest about the fate of the wicked? (They will burn forever in hell.)
- Read Jude 1:7. What point(s) is this verse making by comparing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to the fate of lost angels and people? (Just like these cities were burned with fire, the lost will perish in fire, too.) What does this verse say about the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? (It was an “eternal fire.”) Are those fires still burning today? (No.)
- Read Exodus 21:6. What does “for ever” mean here? Does it mean that the servant will serve this family throughout eternity? (It means that the servant will serve as long as he lives.) How can this help us understand the verses in Revelation 14:11 and 20:10? (The lost will burn in hell as long as they remain alive, which won’t be very long. The fires will burn until there is nothing left to burn, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah.)

Share It

- People sometimes criticize the use of a Bible verse to prove a doctrinal point, claiming that this is an unlearned “proof-texting” approach to Bible study. What are the dangers associated with isolating a single Bible verse and letting it determine a doctrinal point? On the other hand, what are the dangers associated with refusing to allow the Bible to explain itself?

Thursday (April 30, 2020): *Sola Scriptura* and Ellen G. White

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White demonstrated the gift of prophecy in her life and in her writings. Understanding the relationship between her writings and the Bible is an important topic that Ellen White herself wrote about.

Digging Deeper

- Read the following passages from the writings of Ellen White and discuss what they reveal about her view of the Bible:

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support. {*The Great Controversy*, 595.1}

The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light. O, how much good would be accomplished if the books containing this light were read with a determination to carry out the principles they contain! There would be a thousandfold greater vigilance, a thousandfold more self-denial and resolute effort. And many more would now be rejoicing in the light of present truth. {*Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903, Art. B, par. 9}

You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God’s word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God’s inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings. {*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 605.1}

Apply It

Read Luke 20:1-8. What did Jesus say regarding the authenticity and role of John the Baptist, a contemporary prophet in Christ’s day? (Jesus said that if the people did not believe John was a true prophet, then they wouldn’t accept Jesus as the Messiah, either.) How should we apply the principles in this conversation to our day and the role of Ellen G. White? (Answers will vary.)

Friday (May 1, 2020): The Primacy of the Word

The Bible reveals much about the final conflict on this earth between good and evil. We will conclude this week’s set of lessons by looking at this conflict and the role that the Bible, and our view of the Bible, will play in the destiny of every person.

Digging Deeper

- Read Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 13:8. In the “time of trouble” at the end of time, what role do God’s books play in the destiny of individual people? (Those who are written in the book of life will remain faithful to God and will be delivered.)
- Read Daniel 12:3,4. At the end of time, what will those people who are faithful to God be reading and following? (They will be reading, following, and explaining “the book” to many people.) What is “the book” that will be unsealed at the end of time? (It is the prophecies in the book of Daniel, specifically chapters 8-12.)

- Read Daniel 12:10. What does this verse imply about those that don't understand the things written in "the book"? (They will not be purified, made white, and tried, but will instead continue "do[ing] wickedly.") What does this suggest about the importance and the practical results of studying God's Word? (It has a direct bearing on our salvation, and results in a life of victory over sin through God's power.)

Apply It

Read the passage below from the book *The Great Controversy* and discuss its relevance for us today:

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief. {GC 625.3}

Share It

- How has the Bible helped you stay faithful to God in a "time of trouble" in your life?