

Understanding God Through Diligent Study of His Word

God has seen fit to provide for us in His Word. We know it as the Bible. Yet many ask, “There are so many interpretations out there, how do I know what is right?” Another prevalent comment is, “There are so many different religions and denominations out there, they can’t all be right.” It is good to ask, “What is right?”

Proverbs 8:1-21

*Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge. Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. **To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power.** By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full. (NIV)*

The purpose for this (very) short message is to help the individual in their personal study to find the truth from God’s Word. If you will keep the following in mind, they should help you in your search for the truth. Keep in mind, that the word ‘truth’ is understood as ‘that which is in agreement with God’.

1. **We must believe that the truth is found within pages of the Bible.** Without this expectation, your studies will be fruitless.

II Timothy 2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

2. **We must accept responsibility for our own understanding** and then commit ourselves to the study of God’s Word.

- A. In accepting our responsibility, consider verse 13 of Proverbs. (highlighted above). One must approach God with humility and not arrogance. A skilled man attempted to teach me something when I was younger. But I was so busy talking about me, that he simply stopped and left. For years, I have regretted my busy and arrogant mouth. I could have learned so much. He simply said, “You are not ready to learn.”

Before listing the following tools, may I suggest thoughts on the words ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’. Most of our human life is subject to our experience and how we feel about it. (thus being subjective in our understanding) **It is difficult to ascertain truth when we only know parts of the whole.** We often develop deep feelings based upon this partial knowledge. The GOOD counselor realizes that to ascertain the truth of a situation, he must gather all facts. This requires great time and diligence. So it is with our understanding the whole truth (whole counsel) of God.

It requires great time and diligence. We must learn to separate our own biases and experience as we approach God’s Word. **God’s Word is not subject to our life, rather the Bible’s objective is to transform our life.** We must separate ourselves from pride and arrogance and give ourselves over to the working of truth. This is being objective. In order to remain as objective as possible and open to the truth of God’s Word, consider the following as you study:

Simple steps in study: Keep it objective:

Consider the location wherein the words are spoken.

- Where in the world
- Where in the course of relevant world events
- Who is doing the speaking
- Who is being spoken to
- Who is being spoken about
- (consider the relevant history that led up to this point)

Consider the Word itself

- What is the context in which the words are written
- What do the words themselves mean
- What is the general subject matter
- Identify the specific ideas within the passage
- Consider how the writer uses illustrations or examples within the passage to illuminate what he is saying

Consider the rest of the Word

- What does God say about the subject matter in other parts of the Bible
- What are some ways that God illustrates the subject matter in other parts of the Bible
- Is this consistent with your understanding of the Bible as a whole

Words of counsel

- If it appears that the Bible does not agree with itself, consider that you have an improper understanding of one or more parts of the Bible
- If the Bible disagrees with your feelings or conclusions, remember that God knows the truth and that you are in the process of finding it out
- If the Bible disagrees with a church’s, preacher’s, teacher’s or commentary’s view, believe the Bible

By way of example:

As Jesus taught for approximately 3 years before going to the cross, he traveled to different cities. As you study the life of Jesus, consider where he went. Who did he meet along the way? Consider how one city might relate along the way. Who followed him constantly and why did they follow him? Some people had good motives and some people had evil hearts. Note how Jesus spoke to different people in different ways. Consider the answers that Jesus gave to different people's questions. Note how the writers of each Gospel would relate one story to another. Notice how they interplay together. Jesus continued to battle the idea that those who were responsible for the spiritual welfare of Israel, continued to reject the Father. This is the same problem addressed by the prophets of old. Consider how that God had plans for man's salvation since the beginning. No matter how good or evil man was, God moved forward for the sake of man's salvation.

In all your studies, realize just how patient and loving is God that he provided for your salvation through Jesus Christ. And, he gave us his Word that we might know him. **How better to know someone, than to read an honest autobiography?**

(Final Note: There is more that could be added to this. In spite of this, I hope that these few thoughts will assist you in your diligent study of God's Holy Word.)