

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Respecting God's Words, Revelations, & Purpose

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" – Ephesians 1:18

1. **Respect God's Words** – Faith is required first: if you aren't saved, the Bible is closed to you – 1Cor 2:12-14
 - a. Believe the Words: approaching it with doubt, you'll search in vain for the treasures it offers – 1Thes 2:13
 - i. Romans 3:4 means giving God the benefit of the doubt & realizing our best idea might be wrong
 - ii. Even if it's hard (Mat 16:28), confusing (Gal 5:21), or contradictory (Mat 5:5 v Eph 2:6)
 - b. God's words/book/agenda, not yours: bringing your own agenda prohibits knowing what God is doing
 - i. Proof-texting: using God's words to say what you want = corruption & deceit – 2Cor 2:17 & 4:2
 - ii. God said what He meant & meant what He said | See what the text actually says (or doesn't say)
 - c. Don't change them: perfectly inspired & perfectly preserved – 2Tim 3:17
 - i. Let the Bible define its own words (Mat 2:9); Take them literally unless God says not to (Gal 4:24)
 - ii. Not every question needs answered. Somethings aren't for us to know (2Co 12:1; Hebrews auth.)
2. **Respect God's Revelations** – God's words were revealed progressively
 - a. Different people believe different things at different times – Heb 1:1, Rom 4:16-22,
 - i. Key to unlocking the Bible is realizing what was or was not known by whom & when – 1Cor 2:7-8
 - ii. Just because one person knew something doesn't mean everyone at that time did (Acts 15)
 - b. Not everything is written to or about you: all for our learning, but not all for our participation – 2Tim 3:16
 - i. Easy to get with the obvious (Gen 6:14), obscure (Lev 21), or undesirable (Acts 2:45) passages
 - ii. Harder to handle with traditional (Mat 6:9), familiar (John 3:16), or desirable (Acts 2:4) passages
 - c. Don't mix them: If God changes instructions, it is wrong to ignore the change – Jonah 3:10, Gal 2:7-14
 - i. Timing is important, but inspiration is more important – what does the text say? (i.e., John?)
 - ii. Always consult both the immediate & greater contexts for proper understanding & application
3. **Respect God's Purpose** – God reveals according to His purpose
 - a. Household of Faith concerns 2 different entities/places: Israel (on Earth) & the Body of Christ (in heaven)
 - i. Both will ultimately be in Christ (Eph 1:10-11), But God has different purposes for each (Col 2:17)
 - ii. Knowing your place greatly affects your understanding – Col 2:8, 1Thes 5:1-9, Gal 3:1-2, 2Tim 2:7
 - b. Bigger than yours: God wants to reorient your mind to conform to His – Rom 12:2, Eph 4:23
 - i. The end goal is not only for your growth, but for others' edification – 2Tim 2:2, Eph 3:9-11
 - ii. Your understanding will increase drastically when you learn the Bible for someone else's sake
 - c. Don't Depart from God's Purpose: beware the seduction of other doctrines – 2Tim 3:13, 1Tim 4:1-3
 - i. Don't "N"-gage in nitnoids, numerology, the novel, non-sensical, & non-existent
 - ii. The unknown & speculative can also derail (this includes future events – 1Pet 1:10-12)
 - iii. Profitable Bible study requires time on the fundamental doctrines of the Christ – 1Cor 2:2, Phi 3:1