

An Orientation to Christ and Christianity

An orientation is an acquaintance with an existing situation or environment. This orientation to Christ and Christianity is an attempt to briefly acquaint you with Jesus of Nazareth and the movement based on Him known as Christianity.

There is No Christ Without Christianity

Some wish to separate Christ from Christianity. They see Christianity as a faulty man-made construct falsely claiming Christ's authority, perhaps even inventing it where it never existed. However, since Christ came, wherever He is, Christianity is there as well:

[Ephesians 1:22](#) And He [the Father] has put all *things* under His [Christ's] feet and gave Him *to be* Head over all *things* to the church, [23](#) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Christ tied Himself to Christianity, or the church, long before He came into the world to save them. He will never be untied from them. How we treat the church is how we treat Christ:

[Acts 9:4](#) And falling on the earth he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute Me?

Saul had never met Jesus before this, but his treatment of Christians had been his treatment of Christ. When Saul, soon to be Paul, bound himself to Christ, he became equally bound to the church:

[2 Timothy 2:10](#) ... I endure all things on account of the elect

Any orientation to Christ must also be an orientation to Christianity, the church, the body for whom He died.

There is No Christ Without Scriptures

To say there is no Christ without Scriptures is to say two things: 1) You and I have absolutely no way of knowing who Christ is, what He has done, or what He will do apart from an authoritative declaration from Him. That declaration is the Scriptures. If we do not know Him from there, we do not know Him. 2) Christ learned who He was through the Scriptures. The Scriptures gave a full accounting of Him.

He defined Himself and His mission by Scriptures. When Peter tried to prevent Jesus' arrest, Jesus said:

Mathew 26:54 How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?

Jesus did not seek for a voice from Heaven when Scriptures spoke. Scriptures were enough. Jesus was content to prove every point by Scriptures, even by a word as small as "am."

Mark 12:26 But concerning the dead, that they are raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, as God spoke to him at the Bush, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"?

For Jesus, this proved that there is a resurrection from the dead. God told Moses, generations after Abraham, that He was presently Abraham's God; therefore, Abraham was resurrected and still alive.

Are you as confident in Scriptures as Jesus was? Do you acquaint yourself with its details, as He did? Any orientation to Christ is necessarily an orientation to Scriptures, both generally and specifically, by the broader ideas *and* the details that make them up.

There is No Christianity Without Scriptures

If there is no Christ without Christianity, and if there is no Christ without Scriptures, then there is also no Christianity without Scriptures. How else are we to define our Lord and ourselves?

Paul only considered that he had fulfilled his obligation to men when he had faithfully conveyed the whole body of Scriptural truth:

Acts 20:26 Because of this I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all. **27** For I did not keep back from declaring to you all the counsel of God.

Paul knew that he would be guilty of fatal neglect if he didn't portray reality as defined in the Word. In Paul's view, why would God give us this large collection of books unless it took that whole body of work to define who God is, who we are, what salvation is, and everything in between?

Any man who would be correctly oriented to Christ and His church must ultimately become thoroughly acquainted with the collection of books we call the Bible.

There Are No Scriptures Without Study

That is to say, the Scriptures are of *no use to us* without study. Think: How could Paul confidently say that he had declared the whole "counsel," or "purpose," of God? He must have studied enough to be able to prove that what he said was what Scriptures said. He was not satisfied to merely get the main outline right. The main outline only stands if it is supported by every detail throughout. Paul knew Scriptures that well. He had invested himself in it.

Paul's confidence that investigation is our way to discern God's mind is seen in his instruction to young pastor Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:15 Give diligence to present yourself approved to God, a worker unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

"Rightly dividing" is literally "straightly cutting." Thought requires categorization. God, as a thinking being, made us thinkers too. The Bible is just God speaking His thoughts. Any sizeable collection of writings has to be grouped into sections, relating each to the other, and each piece to the whole. By saying "worker," Paul knew that Scriptural knowledge required labor. A couple of read-throughs wouldn't do the trick.

Is there anyone left who has the confidence and the studied background to say that he can tell you God's whole mind toward us? Is anyone left who even believes that is an attainable (or even a desirable) goal?

There is No Study Without Detail

Paul told Timothy to apply mental concentration, because he knew that the pull would always be AWAY from study and TOWARDS simpler, more agreeable teaching:

2 Timothy 4:1 Then I solemnly witness before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, He being about to judge *the* living and dead *at* His appearance and His kingdom: **2** preach the Word, be **urgent** in season, **out of season**, **convict**, **warn**, **encourage** with all long-suffering and **teaching**. **3** For a time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they will heap up to themselves teachers having *their* hearing massaged.

By "preaching the Word," Timothy would be avoiding the natural drift towards crowd-pleasing. When "sound doctrine" loses its appeal, "ear-gratifying" gradually displaces it. "Sound doctrine" can only occur where "the Word" is preached. "The Word" is only preached when the content is the Bible. Once Bible content has to be spiced up or pumped up, the battle is essentially lost.

Look at what true Bible content is in the verse above. It is "urgent." It is not laid-back. It must "convict" of sin. That hurts. It must "warn." That tells men that they are wayward, which is not entertaining or reassuring. Real Bible content, then, is exactly what people naturally **don't** want to hear. Bible content only "encourages" where men have been convicted and warned. It must be "taught," proving it line by line.

Paul warned Timothy from the outset that Bible preaching would seem boring at times. "Out of season" means that it feels like we're dragging ourselves through it. But going through those seasons actually indicates you're doing it right by 2 Tim 4:2. It's much easier to just adjust all times to being "in season" by modifying the message.

There is No Detail Without **You**

Paul put the onus on the preacher. The burden is also on the listener. Luke commended the faithful believers in Berea:

[Acts 17:11](#) And these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for *they received* the Word with all readiness, daily examining the Scriptures **if** these things *are so*.

To confirm Paul's teaching, they had to become about as conversant in Scriptures as he was. So it IS doable. Do you see this as your role? Faithful teachers *need* those who will double-check them.

To sum up, a proper orientation to Christ sees Him bound to the church, the preacher, and the listener, *all* bound by Scriptures. *You* will only become oriented to Christ by entering the process yourself.