



# Truth For These Times



## 9. HOW TO READ AND UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

The way God has revealed His will to mankind is through the Holy Scriptures, or as we say, the Bible. It is true that the evidence of God can be seen as we look into the wonderful world of nature, and as we behold the stars in the heavens, but His will for our lives is found in the Bible only. Take away the Bible and our contact with God is lost. It has been affectionately termed, God's love-letter to man, and so it is, for here we see God's plan revealed for the salvation of lost humanity. How did the Bible come to us? Did God write it? The answers to these questions are clearly given.

2 Timothy 3:16      ALL SCRIPTURE *IS* GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Notice that all Scripture comes from God. It does not say that God did the actual writing, rather, God inspired certain men. He gave revelations of truth, and man wrote it down in a way understood by his fellowman. God did not use these holy men as we use a typewriter, instead, He told them what to write and they recorded it in their own words. This is why we see different styles of writing in the Bible, but even so, the truths presented are always the same. The Bible is in complete harmony from Genesis through to Revelation.

See how the Bible is profitable for doctrine (teaching of truths), for reproof when we are wrong, for correction if we are in error and instruction that we may know the correct path to follow in life.

2 Peter 1:21      For prophecy NEVER CAME BY THE WILL OF MAN, but HOLY MEN of God spoke *as they were* MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Man did not choose to write the Bible – God chose holy men to write it for Him. The Bible has been written by approximately 40 men, over a period of thousands of years, yet there is in fact only one Author – the Holy Spirit. He is the source of inspiration.

Luke 24:44,45      Then He said to them, “*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the LAW OF MOSES AND THE PROPHETS AND THE PSALMS concerning Me.*” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Jesus had confidence in the Scriptures, and here we see Him explaining the truths concerning the promised Messiah. Notice how Jesus divided the Old Testament Scriptures into three sections.

The Law of Moses – often called the Pentateuch, it is the first five books of the Bible.

The Prophets – this is the rest of the Old Testament, excluding the Psalms.

The Psalms – which were used in a similar way as we sing hymns today.

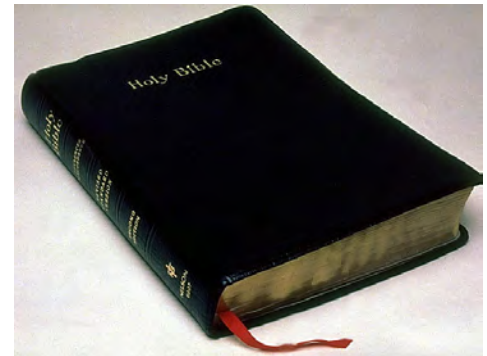
John 20:30,31

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in THIS BOOK; BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Now we come to the inspiration of the New Testament. The Old is the New concealed, and the New is the Old revealed. The Old Testament said Jesus was coming, the New tells us of His coming to this planet and that He is coming again. We cannot separate the Old Testament from the New.

Psalms 119:11

YOUR WORD I HAVE HIDDEN IN MY HEART, that I might not sin against You!



God's Word is a lamp unto our feet.

When God's word is deeply embedded in our lives it gives us the knowledge and power to overcome sin through Jesus.

Psalms 119:105

Your word *is* a LAMP TO MY FEET and a light to my path.

If we are on a bush track on a dark night with no torch, we are in danger of falling and getting lost. The torch, however, shows the way clearly. We are in a world of spiritual darkness, but the Bible is our light to show us the way to eternal life, that we might not fall and be lost. The Scriptures give us patience, comfort and hope.

Acts 17:11

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY *to find out* whether these things were so.



Paul commended the Bereans for searching the Bible every day.

Paul commended the Bereans because of their study of the Scriptures on a daily basis. As the truths are read in an attitude of prayer, wonderful spiritual revelations flash into the mind. The only way to study the Bible is in an attitude of prayer. This is why it is good to say a short prayer before reading the Bible that God will enlighten the mind.

Isaiah 28:10

For PRECEPT *MUST BE* UPON PRECEPT, ...LINE UPON LINE, ... Here a little, there a little.

How should we interpret the Bible? Here we are told to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is not written in subject form. For example, the second coming of Christ is mentioned in many different books of the Bible. If we want to know what the Bible teaches on this subject, the texts are brought together so we can see the complete picture. To appreciate an artist's work we must see the whole picture, not just a small part of it. So the Bible becomes its own interpreter. It is not man's interpretation – it is what the Bible says about itself. Many have made the mistake of building a teaching around one or two texts and have come to wrong conclusions.

Acts 8:30,31

So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?" And he said, "HOW CAN I, UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.



Phillip studying with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

The full story of the Ethiopian eunuch's deeper understanding is found in Acts 8:26-39. Philip understood the words of Isaiah, which the Ethiopian did not. God therefore used a man who understood the truth, to explain it to one who did not. So God uses men and women today to reveal wonderful things in His word to those who do not yet understand, then they themselves become teachers to others. They become Jesus' sheep – they hear His voice and follow Him.

John 5:39 **You SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

When we search the Scriptures, we find the greatest treasure of all – Jesus – the way to eternal life.

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, **"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have HIDDEN THESE THINGS FROM THE WISE and prudent and have REVEALED THEM TO BABES."**

It is not our intellectual greatness that helps us to understand the things of God. In fact many of the world's intellects scoff at the Bible. Spiritual things are understood only by those who are spiritual. Our understanding does not come from mental ability, but from revelation of the Spirit of God. As we are prepared to receive so it is given.

1 Corinthians 2:13,14 These things we also speak, **NOT IN WORDS WHICH MAN'S WISDOM TEACHES BUT WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES**, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But **THE NATURAL MAN DOES NOT RECEIVE THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD**, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

If we are on the Lord's side, we will understand great things out of His word.

Matthew 7:21 **Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER in heaven.**



We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible.

What shall we do with the Bible? It is God's will for us, so we must willingly obey otherwise we will never inherit the kingdom of God.

John 7:17 **IF ANYONE WANTS TO DO HIS WILL, HE SHALL KNOW CONCERNING THE DOCTRINE**, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.

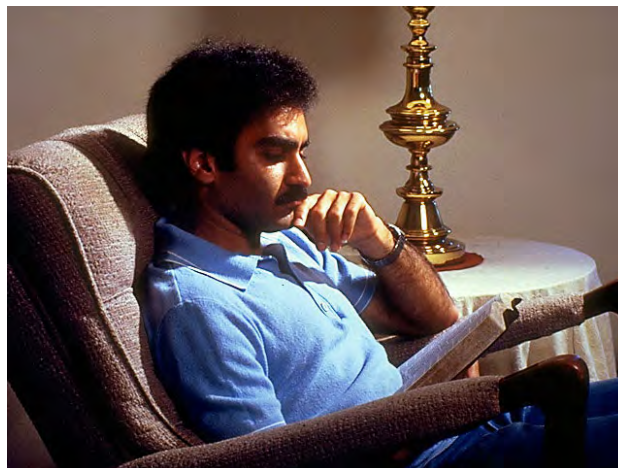
Many today are confused – they don't know what to believe, but we will not be in darkness if we are prepared to do God's will. This is the condition, and if we meet this requirement we will clearly understand the difference between truth and error. It will be like the voice of God saying, "This is the way – walk in it".

2 Timothy 3:17 **THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETE**, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The word 'perfect' was understood by Bible writers to mean 'mature'. When we understand and read the word of God we develop to the stage of maturity in our Christian living – we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus.

My friend, the greatest joy in your life can be in reading the letter God has sent you – the Bible. Read it in the morning, and read it in the evening. It is not necessary to read a lot in each sitting, but rather, read a small section, then meditate on what you have read and try to understand it and apply it to your life. This will give you the right attitude for prayer, and will give your prayer life new meaning. If you are a new Christian it may be easier to read the New Testament before the Old, or alternate between the two.

God has done so much for us in giving us the Bible, but He also gave us His Son to die on Calvary. Today He is asking for your life, that He might save it for eternity. Friend, read His Word and you will know how to live a life of victory through Christ.



Daily Bible study is important for spiritual development.

## ***Review Sheet – How to Read and Understand the Bible***

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

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1. Who is responsible for the writing of the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16  
All \_\_\_\_\_.
2. How were holy men inspired to write the Bible? 2 Peter 1:21  
They were \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Into what three sections did Jesus divide the Old Testament? Luke 24:44,45  
In the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Why was the Gospel of John written? John 20:30,31  
But these are written \_\_\_\_\_.
5. To what is the Bible likened to show us the way through a world of spiritual darkness? Psalm 119:105  
Your word is a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What good example did the Bereans give us in their habits of Bible reading? Acts 17:11  
And searched \_\_\_\_\_.
7. How does the Bible indicate that God's word is its own interpreter? Isaiah 28:1  
For precept \_\_\_\_\_ line \_\_\_\_\_ here a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
8. God uses men who have an understanding of Bible truth to reveal it to others. Acts 8:30,31  
TRUE \_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_.
9. Is intellectual greatness needed to understand Bible truths? Matthew 11:25  
YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_.
10. How does 1 Corinthians 2:13,14 show how Bible truths are understood?  
Not in words which \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
11. What should be the Christian's attitude toward the Bible if he wants to understand its truths? John 7:17  
If anyone \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_.
12. What will be the result of a continued study of the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:17  
That the \_\_\_\_\_ (mature).

Is it your plan to read some of God's word (the Bible) each day? \_\_\_\_\_.