Need

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Hermeneutics: How to Read and Understand the Bible

The Need for Understanding

A. We need to understand the Bible, because there are great benefits we obtain by knowing it.
   1. Whether we understand it or not, the Bible is the only criterion for truth in the world, without which we are totally lost (Psalm 119:128; Isaiah 8:20; II Timothy 3:16-17).
   2. Our religion is entirely dependent on the Bible, for the revelation in creation does not tell us of our need of a Saviour, the identity of that Saviour, or our duties to Him.
      a. We do not believe the Bible because we are Christians; we are Christians because we believe the Bible; for Jesus Christ is revealed in the Bible only.
      b. Personal duties and the nature of His church and ordinances are by the Bible.
   3. We search the Scriptures to learn of Jesus Christ, for He is the end all of all things.
      a. The Jews reverenced Scripture, but they missed the Person of them (John 5:39).
      b. God forbid, if we study Scripture for reasons outside Him (Gal 6:14; I Cor 2:2).
      c. We must come with the passionate desire of Mary (Luke 10:38-42; John 20:31).
   4. We can only be sure of eternal life by learning Bible evidence (I John 5:13; II Pet 1:10).
   5. We do not have visual aids and special revelations as before (Num 16:30; Dan 10:14).
   6. The Scriptures are a great heritage from God (Deu 4:5-10; 6:20-25; 32:46-47; Ps 119).
   7. There is great reward in learning the Scriptures (Psalm 19:11; Prov 16:16; 19:8; 21:16).
   8. Learning the Scriptures – even the O.T. – will bring greater hope to us (Romans 15:4).
   9. Zeal is good, but zeal must be directed properly by knowledge (Gal 4:18; Rom 10:2).

B. We need to understand the Bible, because many different religious groups claim to use it only.
   1. The Jews knew Scripture, but did not understand (Mat 9:13; 12:7; 22:23-33; Act 13:27).
   2. In Paul's day there were many that wrested and corrupted Scripture (II Cor 2:17; 4:2).
   3. Paul wrote of understanding declining further (II Tim 3:1-13; 4:1-5; I Tim 1:5-7; 6:3-5).
   4. Ignorance is a judgment of God upon those who reject Him (Rom 1:31; II Thess 2:11).
   5. Many people have given up on the Bible. They reason: if many learned men cannot agree on the meaning of Scripture, then I will never be able to find the truth for sure.

C. We need to understand the Bible, because God wrote it in a way to require much interpretation.
   1. The Bible is not a Boy Scout handbook, with easy-reference chapters thoroughly covering specific points and written on a third-grade level in short, simple sentences.
   2. The Bible is an exalted book, therefore it must be studied with an elevated approach not known to

carnal men who are feeling about in life by fleshly senses (Ps 138:2; Is 66:2).

3. The Bible is a spiritual book, therefore it must be studied spiritually outside the ordinary word methods used by natural men to understand their own carnal writings (I Cor 2:13).
4. The Bible is a prophetic book, therefore it must be studied with great care deciphering the similitudes, signs, and figures used by prophets (Hos 12:10; I Peter 1:11; Rev 1:1).
5. The Bible is a poetic book, therefore it must be studied with the caution that literary form requires, lest its alliterative, metaphorical, and figurative features are lost (Pr 1:6).
6. The Bible is a broad book, therefore it must be studied with the patience and effort to find all that its Author intended for us in any given text or passage (Ps 119:96).
7. The Bible is a blended book, therefore it must be studied with much effort at dividing its terms and concepts to provide a proper understanding (II Tim 2:15).
8. The Bible is a rigged book, therefore it must be studied with much vigilance and honesty to avoid the traps and snares designed into it (Matt 13:10-13; II Pet 3:16).

D. We need to understand the Bible, because it is written with beautiful challenges for the wise and righteous and difficulties to mislead and trip the ignorant and rebellious.
   1. Scripture is easy to them that understand (Prov 8:9), but hard to others (Isaiah 28:9-13).
   2. Peter said Paul wrote things that were hard to understand (II Pet 3:16), and ignorant persons attempting to interpret those things would wrest them to their destruction.
   3. God even reserves things for those with great wisdom and understanding (Rev 13:18).
   4. Our Lord told the Jews to search the Scriptures and find Himself in them (John 5:39).

E. Ministers need to understand the Bible, because their usefulness to men depends upon it.
   1. Proper understanding is necessary for a minister to serve God and men (II Tim 2:15).
   2. A minister who understands his Bible well is like a wise householder (Matthew 13:52).
   3. Dedication to reading and doctrine can save minister and hearers (I Timothy 4:13-16).
   4. For all the information needed for a minister to be perfect is in it (II Timothy 3:16-17).

← Examples
Qualifications →