

How Do You *Know* You Are Right?

SOMEONE MIGHT ASK, “What makes you so sure you have the *truth* and the rest of the world is wrong?” You may be asked this question one day. If so, how will you answer? How can you *know* that you are right on biblical matters? Here are several principles to keep in mind.

First, you must understand *why* people are wrong when it comes to understanding the Bible. The main reason is found in Revelation 12:9. The adversary of mankind is *actively deceiving* the whole world: “And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, who is [even now actively] deceiving the whole world.” The result is that too many believe Satan-inspired *lies*—such as the idea that God’s laws and commandments have been “done away with.” Jesus told His disciples just the opposite: “Do not [even] think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill [magnify, show their fullest application]” (Matt. 5:17). In I John 3:4, we are told that to transgress God’s law is the very *definition* of sin: “Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.” If this describes your approach to God’s laws, then you can be sure that *you will never understand* the Bible!

Satan is described as the de facto “god” of this present world or society—a sinister being who has “blinded the minds” of those who do not believe (II Cor. 4:4). This is the reason most people cannot understand the Bible.

Another principle we should keep in mind is that *understanding comes from God*. In I Corinthians 2:9–14, the apostle Paul says: “But according as it is written, ‘The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God. For who among men understands the things of man except by the spirit of man which is in him? [The spirit in man gives us consciousness, a mind.] In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except by the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God; which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Spirit in order to communicate spiritual things by spiritual means. But the natural [carnal] man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

The human spirit is something everyone receives at conception. With this spirit, human beings can plan and design and build—communicate through language, etc. It’s what gives us a *mind*, rather than a mere animal brain. Most importantly, it gives us the ability to have communication with God. In turn, the further addition of the Spirit of God gives us the ability to understand the spiritual concepts found in God’s Word. Remember, the truth of God is *spiritually discerned*—and it requires that one have the Holy Spirit of God, which requires obedience to God (Acts 5:32). Any of us could understand the Bible *if* we were willing to study it diligently with a genuine *willingness to obey* what we read.

A third vital key is how we approach the Bible—which requires an understanding of how the Bible is put together. Passages relating to any given subject are never in one place, but scattered in various places throughout the Bible. Finding them and putting them all together is necessary if we are to obtain an accurate picture of any doctrine or teaching. Paul stresses to Timothy the importance of *careful* Bible study in which we “rightly divide [and then rightly put together] the Word of the truth” (II Tim. 2:15). This “dividing” is necessary because Bible topics are written “here a little and there a little.” This concept is *the* cardinal rule of Bible study—found in Isaiah 28: “Whom shall He [God] teach [spiritual] knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Those who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts [mature in their approach to God and in their desire to please Him]; for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little” (verses 9-10). This is how teachings are found in the Bible—scattered “here a little, there a little.” But for those who are “not willing to hear” (verse 12)—and frankly do not wish to really obey what they read—this “scattering” leads them to misunderstand and misapply the Bible. Thus, they “fall backward, and [are] broken and snared and taken” (verse 13) in self-inflicted deception.

Finally, Paul tells us: “Prove [test] all things. Hold fast to that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21). Does he say to prove *some* things, then take the rest for granted? No, he says to prove *all* things: prove God exists; prove the Bible is true and is the inspired Word of God; prove what the Bible says and what it does *not* say; and prove what a true believer must *do* to attain the Kingdom of God.

Familiarity with the Scriptures takes many months, if not years—time we need to be willing to invest on a daily basis. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God is a rewarder of those who *diligently seek* him—seek His truth through a proper approach to the Bible. In Isaiah 8:20, we’re given the *standard* by which we can judge whether a teacher or preacher is telling us the truth or not: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Strive to live by *every word of God* (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4)—not just what is convenient for you. This also means keeping the seventh-day Sabbath—for you will never understand the Scriptures if you cling to false beliefs such as Sunday-keeping. Ultimately, only those who are diligently seeking the truth with the intention of fully *obeying* what they read will understand the Bible.

—Duncan MacLeod