



# Fundamentals of Bible Study

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## Introduction

When we set forth to study the bible we should begin with a loving, faithful and obedient attitude toward God. In addition to our state of mind there are some basic principles that are essential to a correct understanding of Scripture. It helps to keep these vital keys in mind when studying the Word of God. In this lesson we will set forth these principles and make application to our personal study of God's word.

## Always seek the true meaning of God's word

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." ([2Timothy 3:16-17](#)).*

Unfortunately many who say they are studying the Bible completely disregard this vital principle. You see, rather than seeking the truth in the Scripture, their time is spent looking for verses that appear to support their personal beliefs while intentionally ignoring the verses that clearly contradict their beliefs. When we use this approach we are putting our own beliefs above the word of God! Therefore, we can never gain a true understanding of God's word because it denies that every part of Scripture is inspired.

When we study the Scriptures, we should always be careful to seek the true meaning of the words that were *inspired by God*. No study of the Scriptures should be designed to support time-honored church doctrine or to "prove" a personal interpretation of the Scriptures. Take a moment to consider this; If we use the study of the scripture for our own personal gain, do we really think that God will overlook such a deceptive use of His Word? Really, when we get to the point that we think that we can fool God, we are only fooling ourselves.

Let's work hard to not be found guilty of such a presumptuous and self-righteous attitude toward the Word of God. Rather, be humble and allow the God's word to correct us and instruct us in the true righteousness of Jesus Christ.

## Always rightly divide the word of God

What does it mean to "rightly divide"? The book of Isaiah tells us that in order to understand doctrine, we must study the Scriptures line upon line and precept upon precept. This is exactly how we should study every doctrinal question.



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*"Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." ([Isaiah 28:9-10](#))*

The New Testament confirms this approach to understanding the Word of God and establishing sound doctrine!

*"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." ([2Timothy 2:15](#))*

In order to come to the knowledge of the Truth, we must always follow the Biblically outlined method of study--"straightly cutting" or "rightly dividing" the Word of God.

Whole congregations have been divided by strife and members disputing over the meaning of key words that are used in Scripture. Some have even tried re-defining the words by attaching their own personal interpretations. Anyone who participates in such a practice is "using the law unlawfully," as Paul said, and will eventually find themselves teaching false, doctrines that divert the minds of their followers from God's word. Actually, religious history is filled with bodies of people who have taught false doctrines, and those who have embraced their teachings. Only by learning to rightly divide the Word of God will we be able to recognize and resist these false doctrines.

## **Always apply the scripture correctly**

In today's world, we can find many false teachers who are twisting the Scriptures and deceitfully using their own personal interpretations in order to persuade others to believe their false doctrines. Remember what Peter said in [2Pet 1:20-21](#)?

*". . . knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. "*

Often these type of teachers will quote numerous Scriptures. To someone listening, their teachings sound very sound and even authoritative. However the way they apply the Scriptures exposes their error. They are using the same subtle methods of deception that Satan uses.



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Yes, even Satan quotes Scripture! In Matt chapter 4, when Jesus was being tempted by the devil in person, Satan quotes [Psalm 91:11-12](#),

*"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"*

Satan correctly quoted this Scripture, but misapplied it in an effort to tempt Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus resisted Satan's deception by rightly applying the Scriptures. Jesus said,

*"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" ([Matthew 4:7](#))*

Just because someone may continually quote the Scripture does not mean that they are teaching the truth. Scripture that is quoted accurately is often misapplied to teach false doctrine! True servants of God will not use such tactics. Those who are truly serving God will not deceitfully use Scripture to promote their own ideas and personal interpretations. They will seek to understand and teach the true meaning of the words that God inspired.

## We must know truth and false doctrine

The command to "prove all things" is a lifelong responsibility for every true believer.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good." ([1Thessalonians 5:21](#)).

We must continually be testing every teaching that we read or hear by carefully studying the Scriptures. The Bereans were commended because they diligently searched the Scriptures:

*"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." ([Acts 17:11](#)).*

The account in the book of Acts reveals that the Bereans were daily studying the Scriptures to prove whether or not the things they had heard were true. They did not react with blind emotion and refuse to consider the teachings of Paul. Instead, they care-



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carefully examined the Scriptures and proved to themselves that Paul was, in fact, preaching the true message of God. If we are going to be able to discern truth from false doctrine, we must study the scriptures daily, just like the Bereans did.

Too many Christians have remained as spiritual infants because they have transferred their God-given responsibility to discern truth from error to a preacher, elder or family member. Some denominations tell their members that they are incapable of understanding the Scriptures and must therefore rely on the doctrinal decisions of the church leaders, who alone can interpret the Scriptures. Friends it has never been God's intention that we, as individual believers, place our trust in human leaders who claim sole authority to establish doctrine. When we do this, we leave ourselves open to serious deception. We must not forget the many warnings throughout the New Testament to be on guard against false teachers and false apostles who make a pretense of serving God. Remember what Paul wrote?

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." ([Acts 20:29-30](#)).

## Conclusion

Christians today must constantly be on guard against false teachers whose Scriptural-sounding teachings are actually a diversion of the true meaning of Scripture. It is our personal responsibility as Christians to test and try the teachings of every preacher, teacher or scholar by careful examining the Scriptures. By following the Scriptural command to "prove all things," we can learn to recognize and reject false doctrine, and we will be able to stand fast in the true doctrines of Jesus Christ.



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## Fourteen Basic Rules for Bible Study

1. If possible have a regular, private place for your Bible studies. Before each study pray to God for humility while reading His word and to help guide your heart to comprehending, accepting and practicing His precious truth.
2. Start with Bible verses that are easy to understand when studying on a particular topic. This will help build a foundation that can then be used to understand harder, vaguer passages of God's word.
3. Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don't look for what YOU want to prove; look for what the Bible actually proves.
4. Try to understand the general context of a particular Bible verse by reading the verses and chapters just before and after it. Ask yourself; Does your understanding of a Bible passage harmonize with the rest of Scripture? Remember, the Bible DOES NOT contradict itself!
5. Study the original language (Hebrew or Greek) words and their meaning(s) behind a Bible verse. Remember, however, that although study aids like Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible can be helpful, they should **not** be exclusively used to discover and prove what the Bible teaches.
6. ASK yourself; what does the scripture you are studying clearly say?
7. ASK yourself; what does the scripture you are studying NOT say?
8. ASK yourself; Who was the book you are studying written to? Who wrote the book? Who is speaking the scripture(s) in question?
9. Seek to understand the general time frame in history when the Bible verses you are studying was written.
10. Remember that the Bible at times uses parables, allegories, symbols, poetry, metaphors and other figures of speech and literary techniques to reveal God's truth.
11. Don't bring your own personal assumptions and preconceived notions into your understanding or conclusions.
12. Base your study on scriptural knowledge that you already understand. WHAT DO YOU KNOW UP TO THIS POINT IN TIME?
13. Do not form conclusions based on partial facts or insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.
14. Remember that your or anyone else's convictions, regardless of how strong they may be, don't necessarily count. GOD'S WORD is your ultimate standard and guide.