

Rules for Good Bible Study

Do we know how to study God's word? Many people do not know how to study the Bible to find its truth. In this article, we shall present several rules for Bible study.

(1) *Be objective - seek the truth.* If we read the Bible with preconceived ideas, or with the purpose of proving our own beliefs, we will not find the truth. Paul warns against this practice: "And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Our purpose in our study, therefore, must be to seek the truth.

(2) *Reach a conclusion only after you have studied all of what the Bible says about it.* Much error has been taught concerning salvation because people have failed to follow this rule.

For example, some read what the Bible says about faith and conclude that man is saved by faith only. If they would examine all the Bible said about salvation they would find that it takes more than faith alone. (Read Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16).

(3) *Rightly divide the Bible.* The law of Moses is not binding on us today (Col. 2:14), therefore, do not look in this law for the plan of salvation or for our responsibility in this age. If you want to know what to do to be saved, read the book of Acts. If you want to know how to live, read the epistles. If you want to establish faith, read the gospels.

(4) *Determine who is speaking.* Inspired men wrote the Bible, but they sometimes quote uninspired men. For example, Luke quotes Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin: "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39).

Some have erroneously concluded from Gamaliel's statement that we should not fight error. But since Luke only quotes this uninspired advice, it is not to be our practice. An inspired man, Jude, instructs us to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3).

(5) *Determine to whom it is spoken.* God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar is obviously not binding upon us today. Let us make sure that God is talking to us.

(6) *Interpret each passage in the light of its context.* In 1 Cor. 7:7, Paul says, "For I would that all men were even as myself" (i.e. unmarried). Does Paul command that we should be unmarried? A reading of the surrounding verses explains why he made such a statement. In verse 26, he says, "I suppose therefore that this is good for a man so to be." The present distress was severe persecution that existed then. So if we just read the context we will avoid many misunderstandings.

(7) *Never interpret a passage so as to contradict another passage.* For example. If we conclude from Rom. 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," that man is saved by faith only, it will contradict James 2:24, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."

To harmonize these passages, we must conclude that man is saved by a working, active faith.

If your interpretation of a passage contradicts another, then you know that your interpretation is wrong.

(8) *Use standard helps in understanding the Bible.* The following things will help:

- A good English dictionary will help us understand the meaning of words.
- A good Bible dictionary will help us understand the meaning of Bible words.
- A concordance is helpful in looking up passages.
- Other translations will help. Comparing the King James version with the New King James, American Standard or the Revised Standard translation helps our understanding.

The Bible is the greatest book in the world. We can understand it. Let us begin to study it.

—Robert C. Archer

