

# Rightly Dividing the Word

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## Week One: Why Study the Bible?

### 3 Tracks to this Class

1. Taking the class
  - a. Coming, being consistent, taking notes, interacting...
    - i. Don't feel the pressure to do anything more than to come to this class and read your bible daily!!!
2. Assigned Reading
  - a. Read each week's assigned reading from books: Basic Bible Interpretation (Zuck) or How To Study Your Bible (Arthur)
    - i. The reading and the class reinforce each other.
3. Homework
  - a. I'll be assigning a small handful of homework assignments that can be turned in and I'll look over them and write out some notes and hand it back. These assignments will be exegesis, Greek word studies, IBS outline and the final will be to *Observe, Interpret and Apply* a small section out of Philippians.
    - i. Might be an option to come and teach what you studied the last class.

### 7 Week Class:

- Week One: Why Study the Bible
- Week Two: Observation (Proper Exegesis)
- Week Three: Interpretation (Hermeneutics)
- Week Four: Interpretation (3 Lenses of Interpretation)
- Week Five: Application
- Week Six: Practical Tools Lab
- Week Seven: Class Exercise (Final Due)

## John 5

- Audience was the Jews in Jerusalem. Which always included the infamous Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes etc...
  - They wanted to kill Jesus because he was breaking the Sabbath and calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God (vs. 18). Jesus is explaining His unity and oneness with the Father.

## Verse 39-40

You search the scriptures because “you think”... (heart exposing)

- There are many reasons why people might begin to read and study the bible.
  - Christians
  - Politicians
  - Cults
  - The Curious...
- People naturally read the bible from a certain perspective or hermeneutic (Calvinist, Armenian, Pre-trib, Post-trib, Feminist, Homosexual, )...“agendas”

## We must not refuse to come to the God of the scriptures, the Lord Jesus

- We must agree, [the point and the goal of Scripture is Jesus Christ.](#)
- THUS...the Attitude in studying the scriptures must be **HUMILITY**.
  - [“Humility is not so much a virtue along with the others, but is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God and allow Him, as God, to do all”<sup>1</sup>.](#)
    - Prayerful, Submissive, Open hearted and releasing any dogmatic prejudices.

## Read to know Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Murray, *Humility*, 17

## Why Study the Bible?

### 1. Clarity – Because you can understand it

- No matter how hard you think the bible is to read, you can understand it.
- God wrote a human book (or a book to humanity), and He wrote it in language humanity could understand. Thus God employed every kind of available form of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses.<sup>2</sup>
- **God did all this that you and I could understand!**
  - Analogy of Pitcher and Catcher<sup>3</sup>.
    - Like when writing a letter or e-mail, we do it to be understood. Might contain “inside” language but the goal is understanding.
  - “The human authors whose writings were given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote to be understood, not to confuse...”<sup>4</sup>
- **Christian Theistic presuppositions**<sup>5</sup>: God is there; God communicates with us through His Word (Bible); God is involved in the authorship of the Bible and He says what He intends. And us, being made in His image, can receive and understand God’s communication.
  - **God wants relationship and you can’t have relationship without communication.** He desires to disclose His heart to us His people.
- **The Doctrine of Clarity** (*Also called the Perspicuity*) was not an easy doctrine to form. Before the Reformation the bible was not in the language that people read or spoke, so the only way to know what the Bible said and taught was to listen to the Church (Catholic).

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon Fee, *How To Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 22

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer J. Adler & Charles van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, 5-6

<sup>4</sup> Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 26

<sup>5</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 34

- The Reformation was a hermeneutical reformation, a reformation in reference to the approach to the Bible.<sup>6</sup>
  - Martin Luther, being so disgusted by the Catholic Church's interpretation of Scripture to suit their own needs and fill their own pockets by selling indulgences and keeping the Word of God from people that, on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1517 at noon he nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.
  - Diet of Worms, when Luther was asked if he is willing to recant and retract the doctrines of his writings and books, (that were copied and distributed all over Germany) he said:
    - "Unless I am convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments that I am in error—for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves—I cannot withdraw, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand; I can do no other. So help me God.<sup>7</sup>
- The thrust of the Reformation was a plain and literal interpretation of Scripture and the Clarity of Scripture.
  - Anyone picking up the bible and begins to read from beginning to end will pick up the message that God is Creator, Redeemer who sent Jesus. He died on a cross and rose again...
    - All parts not equally clear, but essentials are clear.
  - The bible is clear enough that any literate person can understand it's basic message.
    1. Because the Bible is **Natural**:
      - a. Written in a human language to be understood by humanity.
    2. Because the Bible is **Supernatural**:

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<sup>6</sup> Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 44

<sup>7</sup> S.M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, 89

- a. Written by God and His Word has Living power to work in the lives of humanity.
- I was saved through reading the Bible (Book of Job) in High School. What I was reading was plain to me but by God's Spirit I was called and regenerated.

### **Analogy of Faith "*analogia scripturae*"**

- "Sacred Scripture is it's own interpreter."
  - Use Scripture to interpret Scripture
  - Luther maintained that what was obscure and difficult in one part of Scripture was stated more clearly and simply in other parts.<sup>8</sup> (Obviously this takes work)
- For instance, scripture is seems ambiguous about tongues in Acts 2...Was that the evidence of the Holy Spirit, should every believer speak in tongues? What are tongues? 1 Corinthians 14 gives more clarity of tongues and it's use in the church.
  - A good rule of thumb in studying the bible is "keep reading"

"There is no special intellectual prowess or pneumatic gift that is necessary to understand the basic message of Scripture."<sup>9</sup> R.C. Sproul

- The fact that the Bible is "a book" means that it is to be read and understood (follows basic laws of language and grammar). [But] as God's written revelation, the Bible reveals to us His character, plans, and standards.<sup>10</sup>

**All of the above is taking the bible as being a normal piece of literature.**

If you are literate you can understand the bible's basic message.

**Not only do we as Children of God have *clarity*, we also have the Holy Spirit...**

*"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." 2 Peter 1:2-3*

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<sup>8</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 15

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 16

<sup>10</sup> Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 26

### Scripture also says...

- Holy Spirit leads us into all truth **John 16:13**

### We study the bible because we can understand it.

#### 2. Theology – **Because every Christian is a Theologian**

- Theology is the study of God. A theologian is one who studies and formulates beliefs or doctrine about God.
  - Some think theology is reserved for the scholar or the pastor. That all the average Christian needs to know is “Jesus”.
    - But the question is, “Who is Jesus?”
      - As soon as you begin to answer that question you are in the arena of Theology and Doctrine<sup>11</sup>.

#### Romans 1:16-17

- Paul writes that he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ...The question then is “*what is the Gospel of Jesus Christ*”??
- In Romans 1:18 all the way to the end of chapter 8 Paul writes on the **theology of the Gospel of Jesus Christ**.
  - Look at scripture section headings...

#### Every Christian is a Theologian; the question is will you be a Good One?

*“We are responsible then to seek to know the truth as presented in God’s Word. This is essential for our own spiritual lives and for effectiveness in ministering to others. In sharing the Word of God, whether in personal counseling, teaching a Sunday School class or Bible study group, or preaching, the knowledge we impart, based on our understanding of the Scriptures, will definitely affect others. Their lives are in our hands. Without proper biblical interpretation, the theology of an individual or of an entire church may be misdirected or superficial and its ministry unbalanced<sup>12</sup>.”*

–Roy Zuck

#### As a Christian you cannot avoid theology.

- And as a Christian, you must endeavor to be a good theologian. **A good theologian is one who is instructed and taught (forms good hermeneutic & habit) by God’s word.**
  - 2 Tim. 2:15 *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

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<sup>11</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 22

<sup>12</sup> Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 14,15

- 1 Pet. 3:15 *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear...”*
  - **To be a good “theologian” your theology (what you believe about God, i.e. doctrine) must be controlled by Scripture. The authority must be placed on Scripture and its unity not on dogmatic assumptions.**
    - Ex. “God helps those who help themselves”
      - We read that into our study of scripture.
      - We live that out in our walk with God.

*Scripture must be our authority for all Theology...*

### 3. Authority – Because it's Divinely Powerful

- The Bible is from God therefore it holds authority over our lives.

*“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*  
Hebrews 4:12

- Before we would ever endeavor to rightly handle God's word or place it under a microscope or under our scalpel's edge we must remember that it has authority over our lives. It is the One dividing us, we are the ones under it's microscope, the recipients of it's scalpel edge!

The Reformers called this authority: **Sola Scriptura**—“Scripture Alone.”

- We believe that the Word of God derives its authority from God and not from the church.
- The Church did not create the Scriptures but we received them and submit to the authority that is already there by God.

Because the bible has authority over our lives we must 1. Correctly handle it and 2. we must obey it.

Our problem almost always lies with obedience

- a. The problem we have with the Bible is not a lack of understanding (we have perspicuity & sermons to thank for that) but understanding the bible too well!<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gordon Fee, *How To Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 17

i. For instance, "Do everything *without grumbling or complaining.*" (Phil 2:14)

b. The problem is not understanding, you don't need 3 commentaries and a word study dictionary to know what that means, **the problem is obeying.**

#### 4. **Responsibility** – **Because it's your Duty**

- Why study the bible?...
  - Because it speaks truth into your life? *True.*
  - Because by living according to its truth you will have life and peace? *Right.*
  - Because it's fulfilling and rewarding? *Correct.*

**The main reason why we should study the Bible is because it is our duty.**

- If the bible were boring, dull and cryptic, it would still be our duty.
- If the bible were impersonal and hard to swallow, it would still be our obligation to read and study God's word.

**This duty is not an option. If you have been lazy in this area ask God to forgive you and repent and begin today!**

*"I would have all lazy students drummed out of college, and all lazy ministers out of the Assembly. I would have laziness held to be the one unpardonable sin in all students and in all our ministers. ... We cannot look seriously in one another's faces and say it is want of time. It is want of intention. It is want of determination. It is want of method. It is want of motive. It is want of conscience. It is want of heart. It is want of anything but our time<sup>14</sup>." –Alexander Whyte early 1900's Edinburgh, Scotland*

## **The Goal of Bible Study**

### **2 Timothy 3:12 – 4:5**

Note the...

- **Clarity** the scriptures have (3:14-15)
- **Theology** that equips us for every good work (3:16-17)
- **Authority** given to scripture by God (3:16)

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<sup>14</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Living With the Giants*, 123,124

- **Responsibility** that is passed to Timothy (4:1-5)

Equipped = Fully Furnished or Completely Fit

- We all know we are not capable to handle certain situations in life and in ministry. We look at great men of the faith in total amazement thinking we are not capable like them.
- This word in context implies that the word of God can make the Man of God **competent, proficient, adept or capable**.

Every good work = Contextually, the good work of a pastor/shepherd.

The Goal of studying the bible is that the man of God would be adequately equipped to handle every situation biblically.

When you come into a situation as a student, as a parent, leader, as a husband, as a father or as a pastor you handle it biblically.

## **2 Timothy 2:15**

- “approved” – approved after being tested
  - after you are tested to handle situation biblically you are an “approved” worker.
- “correct handling” – straight cutting (literally)
  - “Because Paul is a tentmaker, he may have been using an expression that tied in with his trade. When Paul made tents, he used certain patterns. In those days tents were made from the skins of animals in a patchwork sort of design. Every piece would have to be cut and fit together properly. Paul was simply saying, ‘If one doesn’t cut the pieces right, the whole won’t fit together properly,’ It’s the same thing with Scripture. If one doesn’t interpret correctly the different parts, the whole message won’t come through correctly. In Bible study and interpretation the Christian should cut it straight. He should be precise...and accurate.”<sup>15</sup>

## **When Bible Study is Done Right (Daniel 9)**

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<sup>15</sup> Roy B Zuck *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 12-13

- Not a course in simply reading the bible but to study your bible.
- What bible study looks like when it's done right.

### **Daniel in Babylon (Chapter 9)**

- Context of the book of Daniel. (So. & No. Kingdom)
  - Southern Kingdom of Judah taken by Babylon
    - 1<sup>st</sup> Invasion 605 BC (Dan & friends taken)
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> Invasion 597 BC (Ezekiel taken Ez. 24:14-16)
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> Invasion 587 BC (Temple Destroyed 2 Kings 25:9-10)

### **Daniel 9:1-2**

*Daniel reads the Word*

### **Jeremiah 25:1-11**

- The Word Jeremiah received from the Lord about what would happen to Judah by Babylon

### **Jeremiah 29:1-13**

- The letter Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon, the scroll that possibly Daniel read from??? Or by that time (Daniel was 70) they could have had Jeremiah's entire scroll??

### **Daniel 9:2**

*From the text in Jeremiah we see that Daniel rightly handled the word. He understood it, he interpreted it rightly...*

### **Daniel 9:3-5**

*Daniel RESPONDS to the word.*

- He Observed the text, Interpreted the text, then Applied the text!!!
  - Daniel Read the Word, Believed the Word, then Did the Word.

**If you do not apply and respond to the text, you have not handled the text faithfully!**

*"Scripture was not given to us to increase our knowledge but to change our conduct." –Andrew Murray*

### **HOMEWORK**

- Read chapters 1-3 in How to Study Your Bible
- Inductively Read Philippians several times. (take notes)