

How to Understand the Scriptures

Ephesians 3:3-5

Introduction

1. The Gospel is God's power to salvation – **Romans 1:16**
 2. We must obey the gospel – **2 Thessalonians 1:8** (initially and continually)
 3. Therefore, we are commanded to understand the Lord's will in the gospel – **Ephesians 5:17**
 4. Some question whether we can understand, or they are not sure how they would be able to understand.
 5. Paul says we can understand when we read – **Ephesians 3:3-5**
 6. We must come to an understanding of God's word in order to be pleasing to Him, but how?
- I. Expect to Understand
- A. Some do not expect to be able to understand and are thus defeated before they have even started.
 - a. Such a mindset might even preclude one from the attempt to understand.
 - b. If such a mindset is present in the attempt, it will stifle success, as the act is vain from the start.
 - B. The scriptures claim to be understandable:
 - a. **Ephesians 3:3-5, 8-9** – read and understand, to make ALL see.
 - i. Mystery – not that it is too mysterious to know, but it was ONCE not revealed.
 - ii. **(v. 3)** – by revelation the mystery is MADE KNOWN.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 2:11-13** – God has made these things known in WORDS that can be understood.
 - i. God has adapted His word to man that He created.
 - ii. Would it make sense for God to give us something we couldn't understand?
 - C. The scriptures are addressed to everyone:
 - a. **Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27** – read to ALL.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 1:26-28** – the condition of the called – foolish, weak, base, despised, nothing.
- II. Have Faith in the Inspiration of Scripture
- A. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – the scriptures are God-breathed, the product of God, and are therefore profitable.
 - B. Scripture is useless if it is not inspired of God. Why then would anyone take the time and effort to understand it.
 - C. We must believe that these writings are the commandments of God – **1 Corinthians 14:36-38**
 - a. Context – maintaining order in the assembly with the use of spiritual gifts.

- b. If one does not view Paul's writings as the Lord's commandments, then they will not be inclined to take them seriously, or as requisites.
 - c. **(v. 38) – "But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." (NASB)**
 - D. **1 Timothy 1:19-20** – Hymenaeus and alexander made shipwreck of the faith, and in doing so blasphemed.
 - a. They did not approach the handling of scripture with the proper respect and made a mess of it.
 - b. Untaught and unstable – **2 Peter 3:16** – the one who does not believe in inspiration fits this description.
 - E. **2 Timothy 3:15** – the scripture is "Holy" and must be treated accordingly.
- III. Desire to do God's Will
 - A. The scriptures are God's will to man, but if we don't have a desire to do God's will it is not likely that we will come to an understanding of the scriptures.
 - B. **Ephesians 5:17** – understand the will of the Lord, not merely an intellectual exercise, but a spiritual commitment.
 - a. Anyone can know the facts of scripture, but if they don't desire to do God's will they truly know nothing at all – **cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3**
 - b. Form of godliness but denying its power – **2 Timothy 3:5**
 - C. Will to do His will – **John 7:14-19**
 - a. **(v. 16)** – Christ's doctrine is in line with that of the OT. (**cf. Galatians 3:24; Matthew 5:17-18**)
 - b. **(v. 17)** – IF they really want to do God's will, they will see that what Christ teaches is in accord with it.
 - c. Problem – they really don't want what God wants, and are thus unable to understand that Christ's doctrine is God's – **John 5:39-40**
- IV. Maintain Spiritual Purity
 - A. The truth is meant to sanctify, i.e. make one holy – **John 17:14-17** – separate from the sinful world.
 - B. When our desire is not to do God's will, but to fulfill our lusts then we will not understand God's will – **James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1-3**
 - a. **1 John 2:15** – love the world, love of Father not in you.
 - C. Those whose desire is to fulfill their lusts will compromise scripture, and warp it – **2 Peter 2:10, 18-19; Jude 4**
 - D. Love for the things of the world will blind us to the truth – **John 8:42-44; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:13-14** (Carnally minded)
- V. Apply Mental Industry
 - A. The understanding of scripture requires great effort – **2 Timothy 2:15**
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 12:12** – study is wearisome.
 - b. **Psalms 1:2** – meditating day and night.
 - B. Like the Bereans – **Acts 17:11-12** – searched daily in investigation of the truth of Paul's claims.
 - a. **Acts 17:2-3** – as Paul did with Thessalonica so he did with Berea.

- b. They investigated his reasoning, explaining, and demonstrating.
 - c. To the Athenians – **Acts 17:26-27** – seek, grope, find – EFFORT.
 - i. God has designed His word to be understandable, but THROUGH EFFORT AND TIME!
 - C. Requires reading – **1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16** – *“give yourself entirely”*
 - D. Reason of use – **Hebrews 5:14** – senses exercised.
- VI. Use Sound Logic (Common sense)
 - A. Non-contradiction
 - a. God can’t lie – **Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18**
 - b. God can’t deny Himself, i.e. contradict Himself – **2 Timothy 2:13**
 - c. Scripture harmonizes, and we must approach the study of it with this in mind.
 - i. Salvation by faith only? – **Romans 5:1; James 2:24**
 - ii. Once saved, always saved? – **John 10:25-30** (hear, follow); **Hebrews 3:12; 12:15**
 - d. Context – EX: difference of WORKS in ROMANS and JAMES.
 - B. Separate things equal to the same thing are equal to each other
 - a. **Acts 2:38** – baptism because your sins were already forgiven?
 - i. **Matthew 26:28** – Jesus’ shed blood because your sins were already forgiven?
 - b. **Romans 10:13** – calling on the name of the Lord is saying the sinner’s prayer?
 - i. **Acts 22:16** – calling on the name of the Lord is being baptized according to the Lord’s command.
 - C. Interpreting the difficult with the simple
 - a. From milk to meat – **Hebrews 5:12-14**
 - b. Otherwise – **2 Peter 3:16** – twist to own destruction.
 - c. EX: **Romans 8:9** (Spirit dwelling in them = spirit of Christ); **Galatians 2:20** (Christ dwells in us through faith); **Romans 10:17** (faith comes from hearing God’s word)
- VII. Seek the Blessing of God
 - A. None of this will matter if we are trying to do this on our own – **John 15:4-5**
 - B. Ask for wisdom – **James 1:5** – and God gives.
 - a. **Matthew 7:7-11** – ask, seek, knock.
 - C. **Ephesians 6:14-18** – put on the armor of God, and pray always.

Conclusion

1. God has told us we MUST understand His will.
2. God has told us we CAN understand His will.
3. In order to understand the scriptures we must apply ourselves in these ways.