



Pastor Calvin D. Williams

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The Proper Way to Study the Bible

Introduction:

- Understanding how to study the Bible is vital for every believer.
- The goal is to interpret Scripture correctly because it's God's Word and carries divine truth.
- Knowing how to handle the Bible with care prevents misinterpretation and false conclusions.

What is the proper way to study the Bible?

- Knowing how to study the Bible is important, because determining the meaning of Scripture is one of the most important tasks a believer has in this life.
- God does not tell us that we must read the Bible.
- We must study it and handle it correctly ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)).

(2 Timothy 2:15) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

- Studying the Scriptures is hard work.
- A brief scanning of Scripture can sometimes yield very wrong conclusions.

Key Principles for Studying the Bible Correctly

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit's Guidance

- God does not command us just to read the Bible; He calls us to study it diligently **(2 Timothy 2:15)**.

2. How important is prayer when studying the Bible?

Prayer is essential: Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate understanding.

(John 16:13) — “When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.”

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” **(John 16:13)**.

- *The Holy Spirit, the divine author of Scripture, dwells within believers and desires to reveal truth.*
- The one who would study the Bible must pray and ask the Holy Spirit to impart understanding, for that is one of His functions.
- Just as the Holy Spirit guided the apostles in the writing of the New Testament, He also guides us in the understanding of Scripture.
- The Bible is God's book, and we need to ask Him what it means. If you are a Christian, the author of Scripture—the Holy Spirit—dwells inside you, and He wants you to understand what He wrote.

3. Do you Study Scripture in Context?

- Context includes the verses before and after, the chapter, the book, and the historical setting.

The Dangers of Taking Scripture Out of Context

- Some of you are thinking, what's the danger of taking scripture out of context? It's not really a big deal, right? But I think it's a really big deal.
- The danger of taking the Bible out of context is that we end up with the wrong message.
- Our culture has the wrong ideas about the Bible, Jesus, and Christianity.
- Often times when we take scripture out of context, we remove the "**we**" and insert "**me**".
- We've made verses all about ourselves.
- We read the Bible as if it's a personal letter addressed to us. The problem is the Bible isn't written to you. It's written for you, but not to you.
- When we ignore the context, we miss the original meaning.
- We read the Bible for what we can get out of it, and not what God wants for us. The Bible has something for you, but it's not written to you.
- Our culture has made reading the Bible "**I**" thing. But much of the Bible is written with a "**we**" theme.

4. Why is this important?

- Taking verses out of context leads to misinterpretation—what's called "proof-texting."

Example: (Philippians 4:13) "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Misuse: As personal motivation for any goal.

Proper understanding: Paul speaks about contentment in all circumstances, trusting God's strength during hardships.

- This verse is often used as a personal motivation to get through something tough. We use it as a rallying cry to win the game, get through a tough test, deal with a breakup, get that promotion, or finish a project. But when Paul wrote this verse that's not what he had in mind. In fact, it's not even close.

The context of this verse tells us this, Paul is actually talking about being content whether hungry or full, having plenty or little, in prison or free.

- He's saying that God will get us through the seasons that God brings him too. Not that you can accomplish whatever you want.

Another example: (Jeremiah 29:11) *"For I know the plans I have for you..."*

Misuse: Promising personal prosperity in every situation.

Context: Addressed to Israelites in exile, promising hope and future deliverance, not individual wealth or success.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and hope.

- This verse is often quoted during a difficult season in life as a promise that God has a specific plan and will bring us through it.
- Many read this verse and think If we follow God we will prosper. Some think that if we trust God, then not only will we be brought through, we will have a good life, the money we want, a nice house, and plenty of vacations.
- The problem is that this verse is a specific promise to specific people, Israel.
- The promise is for deliverance by ending the Babylonian exile. During this time there were a few false prophets that were claiming that God was going to release His people soon.

- If you were to read the surrounding verses in Jeremiah 29, you would see God denounce the false prophets, tell them they are going to have to wait **(70 years)** and tell them while they are there to seek peace and prosperity.
- This verse is meant to encourage despite things not going the way the Israelites wanted, God is still in control.
- The Israelites are told to trust God, even though things aren't making much sense to them. That's faith, isn't it? Believing now, what will only make sense in hindsight.

5. Understand the Background and Audience

- Know who wrote the book, to whom it was written, when, and why.
- This background helps interpret the text correctly.
- The Bible was written by human authors under divine inspiration, with specific themes and purposes.

Let the text speak for itself: Avoid forcing personal meanings onto the Scripture.

- To study the Bible, we should understand the background of the book we are studying: it's helpful to know who wrote the book, to whom it was written, when it was written, and why it was written.
- Also, we should take care to let the text speak for itself. Sometimes people will assign their own meanings to words in order to get the interpretation they desire.

6. Recognize the Role of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts

Humility is key: We do not study the Bible solely relying on our own understanding.

Depend on the Holy Spirit: He guides believers into truth.

It is arrogant to think that we cannot gain understanding through the lifelong work of others who have studied Scripture.

- Some people, in error, approach the Bible with the idea that they will depend on the Holy Spirit alone and they will discover all the hidden truths of Scripture.
- Christ, in the giving of the Holy Spirit, has given people with spiritual gifts to the body of Christ.
- One of these spiritual gifts is that of teaching ([Ephesians 4:11–12](#); [1 Corinthians 12:28](#)).

[\(Ephesians 4:11–12\)](#) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

- These teachers are given by the Lord to help us to correctly understand and obey Scripture.

7. Can you Learn from others?

- God has given teachers and spiritual gifts ([Ephesians 4:11–12](#); [1 Corinthians 12:28](#)) to aid understanding.

Study in community: Discuss and learn with other believers for a better grasp of Scripture.

- It is always wise to study the Bible with other believers, assisting each other in understanding and applying the truth of God's Word.

Summary:

To study the Bible properly:

- Pray and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance.

- Read verses in their full context, considering historical and literary background.
 - Respect the efforts of Christian scholars and teachers who have studied Scripture extensively.
 - Approach Scripture with humility, recognizing God as the ultimate author and teacher.
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Closing Thought:

- God desires us to understand His Word because it reveals His character, His plan for salvation, and how we should live.
- Proper Bible study is diligent, prayerful, and humble, always seeking to know and obey God's truth.

