

Appendix A: **How to Get God's Mind from God's Word**

If you have made the choice for Jesus Christ and are born again according to the directions in the last chapter, then you now have the Lord Jesus Christ carrying you the rest of your earthly journey. You have the Holy Spirit living within teaching you. Now what you learn from the Bible that your natural self could not have accepted will become obviously true and a joy to your heart. (See top verses, p. 166.)

Wondering where to start? Start in the New Testament with the Gospel of John or the Gospel of Matthew (Jewish perspective). Then read Acts, Genesis and Romans (and Hebrews if you are Jewish) before going on to read the whole Bible. This is typically suggested. Further reading plans are online.

You will miss God if you just look for verses in the Bible that seem to fit your situation. There is a right way to understand the Bible to get God's mind. These principles apply to all Scriptures. (Underlined words are defined in the footers below them.)

1. Begin by accepting that Scripture has no error (pp. 135-165).

Isa 46:9b-10 - I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

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2. Expect your knowledge, wisdom and insight to grow from *prayerful study* of the Bible, not just reading it.

2Tim 2:15 - Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

Prov 1:5-6 - A wise man will hear*, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation.

*[*In Old Testament times the Scriptures were available in synagogue readings since printing presses had not been developed.]*

3. Pray, asking the Holy Spirit for understanding. The Holy Spirit may directly *tell* or *show* you truth, but usually He will *guide* you into truth as you study both the Word and what others with differing information and opinions have written and said.

2Pet 1:20 - Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private *[one's own]* interpretation.

- Claiming that God (the Holy Spirit) gave a verse a new interpretation or new revelation, particularly for your own life, does not make the interpretation or revelation true. That is just one person's word against another's with no evidence to prove or disprove it. Such interpretations or revelations that have not been proved are "of private interpretation" and can lead to heresies and cults.

Prov 11:14 - Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Rightly divide—to analyze (break down/divide) for piecing together topics & concepts for full & correct understanding. **Proverb**—wise saying **Revelation**—the bringing forth of new understandings by God **Heresy**—teaching or opinion contradictory to God's Word **Cult**—a group considered by the majority to have teachings and practices contradictory to God's Word

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- If you attend a church in a denomination that makes a point of saying they are right and others are wrong, and that you shouldn’t attend Bible studies or services of other denominations or talk with individuals in outside churches about the Bible, you are likely in a cult, a group that does not accept certain *essential* teachings of the Bible (especially if they deny that Jesus Christ is God who became a human being to die for our sins). Seek out the opinions of others (plural!) and compare them with the Bible.

4. Accept the plain meaning even when it is contrary to your own mind by asking and allowing the Holy Spirit to teach you through your spirit.

- For example, belief in the Genesis account of the creation of Adam and Eve is difficult for people long schooled in the theory of evolution, but the Holy Spirit can teach your heart (spirit) to believe the truth.

5. Use resources.

A. A **study Bible** will give helpful information by introducing each book of the Bible and explaining verses below the text. Compare them by searching “study Bible” online.

B. A **dictionary** to learn the new vocabulary you will need to easily converse with other Christians and understand sermons. Online dictionaries are quick to use. Even if you use a Bible version like the New Century Version that puts the concepts in everyday vocabulary even second graders can understand, you will benefit from clearly understanding basic theological terms like *justification*, *atonement*, *propitiation*, *redemption*, *sanctification*, *dispensation*, *sin* and so forth.

Denomination—a Christian religious group with a specific name, such as Baptist, Lutheran or Methodist

C. **Blueletterbible.com** has study tools for understanding Bible things, cultures, situations, places, history and characters: Bible Commentaries (Text and Audio & Video Commentaries), Bible References (Harmony of the Gospels, Encyclopedias / Dictionaries, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Introductions to the Bible, Topical [subject] Indexes, Charts and Outlines, Timelines, and Maps / Images), Theological Resources (Articles / Books, Women's Resources, Don Stewart's Theological FAQs, Blue Letter Bible Theological FAQs, Missions Resources, Cult Resources, and Creeds, Catechisms & Confessions) and Multimedia (Media and Music)

D. **Gotquestions.org** and other online resources like search engines have ready answers for your questions.

E. **Christian media** will give you access to learn when you don't have time to sit down to study. To increase your understanding of the Lord and His Word, switch your media preference to

1. **audio Bible readings** (free online: biblegateway.com, blueletterbible.com, etc.; scourby.com; several readers to choose from),
2. **Christian radio**, and
3. **oneplace.com/ministries** to find audio and web sites of ministers that tend to emphasize various aspects of the Christian life like John MacArthur (Bible study), Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth (women's issues), Alistair Begg (pastoral sermons), Gary Hedrick (messianic / Jewish perspective), Perry Stone (prophecy), Ravi Zacharias (apologetics), etc.

Theological—having to do with the study of God (*Theo-* = God, *logy* = the study of) **Apologetics**—defense of the Christian faith as the only true faith.

6. Infer the meaning of words carefully.

A. Be aware that no translation can be exactly the same as the original. The original words may have other slightly different meanings as when the word is used in a figurative way or may imply a certain related use. The easy-to-understand version called the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) puts notes by the words with other possible translations.

B. Also, in the valuable, but old KJV translation, some of its words have changed meaning over the years since language is fluid. For example,

Mar 10:14 - [Jesus] said unto them, **Suffer** the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. [*Suffer meant permit in the 1600s.*]

For this reason be sure to define words by the plain meaning of the original language words rather than by the current English meaning. (You can understand the original meaning of words easily using blueletterbible.com > [word, phrase or verse] > Tools button > Interlinear tab > Strong's number. Under Strong's Definitions all words after ":-" are ways the word is translated in the King James Version.)

7. Read with precision by assuming that the original author's choice of each word in a true translation was purposefully inspired by the Holy Spirit.

8. Consider the context of the words at all levels: consider the sentences for interpreting words, the passage for sentences, the book for passages, the Testament for the book, and the whole Bible for the Testament. Learn the whole of Scripture because a part of it cannot be fully understood without knowing all of it.

Infer—to draw a conclusion by reasoning **Context**—words before or after a term or concept that influence its meaning

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9. Interpret Scripture appropriately for its various genres including the Law, history, poetry (Hebraic parallel poetry is restatement, not rhyme; example, p.103.), prophecy, narrative, doctrine, reproof, parables, lyrics, letters, songs, prayers, wisdom and so forth. Accordingly, interpret historical events as facts, not merely as fictional events that represent spiritual truths as you would for events in parables.

10. Recognize and interpret figures of speech, including idioms, similes, metaphors, personification and symbolism, by the intended literal meaning of the analogy rather than the unintended literal meaning of the words. (Learn more at https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_idioms.html., etc.)

11. Recognize and accordingly interpret literary devices such as allusion, flashback, foreshadowing (prophetic), hyperbole, irony, sarcasm and stereotyping.

12. Use other Scriptures to interpret Scripture. Be sure to interpret Scriptures so they agree with the whole of Scripture.

13. First find the one original meaning intended for and understandable by the original recipient or audience.

Genre ["zhon-ruh"]—here, a category of language arts with a particular form, content, etc. **Narrative**—story **Doctrine**—a teaching **Reproof**—scolding or gentle criticism **Parable**—a very short story for teaching a truth **Lyrics**—song words **Figure of speech**—expression with words not used in their normal meaning or way to suggest an image or special effect **Literal**—normal meaning of words **Analogy**—similarity, comparison **Idiom**—an expression using words that do not have their normal meaning (couch potato) **Similes**—comparison using *like* or *as* **Metaphor**—words used to represent something as a likeness rather than literally. (God is a *shield*.) **Personification**—giving human qualities to nonhuman things. (Trees *clap their hands*.) **Symbolism**—using one thing to represent another (A cross represents Christ's crucifixion.) **Literary device**—writing technique (examples follow) **Allusion**—an indirect reference to call something to mind **Flashback**—a scene previous to the current scene inserted in the current scene **Foreshadow** (prophecy)—to show beforehand **Hyperbole**, [high-per-buh-lee]—obvious, purposeful exaggeration **Irony**—an indication of something contrary to what is expected **Sarcasm**—hurtful or bitter irony **Stereotyping**—classifying all in a category as being typical instead of individualistic

14. Consider the author's point of view such as the author's cultural, historical, geographical, religious and situational context.

15. Consider the author's expected audience and purpose such as to encourage, persuade, inform, explain, direct or correct.

16. Make inferences only from statements previously established as obvious and proven, rather than from assumptions.

17. Make inferences with logical reasoning.

A. Rather than reading *into* God's Word what we *hope* it says, we must read *out* of His Word what it *does* say. We must draw conclusions from Bible evidence, not interpret the Bible with our own or outside-like accepted science-ideas.

B. The three basic laws of logic about *things considered at the same time in the same way*.

1. **Law of Identity**—Everything is what it is. Figs are figs, not birds. Definitions should be well-established to promote understanding.

2. **Law of Non-Contradiction**—No statement can be both true and false. Of two contradictory statements, at most one is true, and both could be false.

3. **Law of the Excluded Middle**—Every statement must be either true or its contradiction must be true—no middle position. Example: If you start with *Jesus is God*, its contradiction is *Jesus is not God*. *Jesus is half God* is a middle position that is not accepted as logical here. (Note that *Jesus is God* does not logically contradict *Jesus is man* any more than *Chickens are food makers [eggs]* contradicts *Chickens are food [meat]*).

Point of view—standpoint for taking a position or opinion **Inference**—a conclusion reasoned from evidence **Contradiction**—denial of a statement by claiming the opposite of it is true

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C. Four descriptions regarding logical inferences from Scripture reflected by the principles here:

1. **Consistent**—No inferences contradict any Scriptures
2. **Valid**—No false inferences from the Scriptures
3. **Complete**—Provable from the whole of Scripture
4. **Sound** (consistent, valid and complete)—Provable, logical reasoning from the whole of Scripture

D. Errors in thinking are called informal fallacies.

Example: Using an Example as Evidence—Do not try to prove a doctrine or practice from an example in Scripture. A teaching or another example you haven't thought of may contradict your conclusion. (Examples are for improving understanding rather than for proof.)

Informal fallacies are important to know. Learn more by searching “informal fallacies list” online.

E. The three reasons for misunderstanding:

1. using different definitions
2. thinking with different information
3. having different values

18. Accept what the Scriptures say before teachings and traditions which cannot be confirmed in Scripture. Use only the Scriptures to determine truth and necessary practice.

Col 2:8 - Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Informal fallacy—thinking errors unrelated to the form of the argument as are *formal fallacies*.

Act 17:11 - These [*Berean Jews*] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

19. Accept all beliefs and practices directed by the New Testament because the entire New Testament is the New Covenant that God made with us for the entire Church Age.

1Cor 13:8-10 HCSB - Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for languages, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when the perfect comes [*eternity with Jesus on the new earth in glorified bodies*], the partial will come to an end.

20. Seek to understand how each passage relates to Jesus Christ in God's plan of redemption through the ages. See the whole of the Scriptures as one unfolding story with progressive revelation until the fulfillment of all prophecy and the perfection of being with Jesus on the eternal new earth.

21. Learn Scriptural typology (shadows, analogies, allegories, parables) that both foreshadow future fulfillments and tie the 66 books of the Bible together with the Hebraic time concept of a spiraling timeline with repetition of similar events and truths to be ultimately fulfilled. "History repeats itself." (We are used to the Greek time concept of unrelated events as points on a straight timeline).

• Typology example: **Dryness, famine & death** are types of spiritual separation from God, **Egypt** of the world (with

Typology—the study of types and symbols **Shadow**—an image representing an object instead of the object itself **Analogy**—similarity of two things in an important way (Jesus was analogous to Moses because He also is a deliverer from bondage.) **Allegories**—stories with characters or events as symbols for truths or other ideas (example: parables)

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its idolotry instead of God), **its riches** of “the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just [*justified ones*]” (Prov 13:22), **judgment** on perpetrators, and the **Promised Land** of our earthly lives working out the Gospel salvation. The story of these types in the life of **Abraham** (Gen 12:10-13:3) repeat in the lives of **Jacob (Israel)**, **Moses**, and **young Jesus** all going down into Egypt. The ultimate fulfillment is in the life of **the believer**: We feel the “dryness” of separation from God. We look to the world for relief. God comes to save us. Our idols are judged. He gives us the earnest of our rich spiritual inheritance and brings us into the Promised Land, salvation, to live by this inheritance.

- Learn more online by searching “Biblical types” and related interpretation of prophecy (an outline here: www.learnthebible.org/prophecy_interpretation_lesson02)
- Learn about the Hebraic time concept at www.godward.org/hebrew%20roots/hebrew_mind_vs__the_western_mind.htm (Put all characters into your browser bar.)

To get to know God and avoid merely gaining head knowledge *about* Him, live and learn in prayerful relationship. Ask—don’t wonder—then let the Holy Spirit open the living book to you. Experience Jesus living in and through you as you follow Him.

Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds because of your evil actions. But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him—if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

—Col 1:21-23a (H)CSB

Example of an Interpretation

They missed Principle #12 with vs. 32 & Job 19: 25-27: though ...worms destroy this body,...in my flesh shall I see God...for myself. (Also 2Sam 12:23)

#17A2: The Law of Non-Contradiction: which is it going to be: resurrection or no resurrection?

Reproof

Doctrine, Correction

Besides missing Princ. #12 & #18, the Sadducees failed to make this inference which led them into the heresy of no resurrection.

Response to perceptive & wise reasoning

Mat 22:23-33 - The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up (seed unto) his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the (seven)? for they all had her. 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? [Exo 3:6,15] | God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

A sect of the Jews with this stated doctrine.

Cultural context

Children for

Hyperbole—drives the point

Sarcasm

Symbolism: 7 = completion—no matter how many times: till she stops marrying) p. 48

Simile—analogy communicates quickly, clearly to original audience

Foreshadowing the resurrection of the dead

Inference: Abr., Isaac & Jacob (etc) are alive.