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5 MINUTES / 5 DAYS

Handle it Carefully! As Robert Plummer states in his book, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*, “Appealing to the same Bible, Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah’s Witnesses can reach amazingly divergent conclusions...” For this reason, how we interpret the Bible is as important as reading the Bible. This week, we’ll talk about the important issue of Biblical interpretation.

MONDAY You Don’t Have to Be a Scholar!

Psalm 19:7, 119:130

It seemed like an impossible task. I remember when I first saw the syllabus for all the classes I’d be taking in seminary, I thought there was just no way. As a guy who had the lowest grade in his senior English class in high school, I wasn’t sure I’d have what it takes to undergo intensive theological training. As I went along though, I found I had such a thirst for God’s Word, that I just couldn’t get enough, and oftentimes, it didn’t seem like work at all.

According to Psalm 19:7, and Psalm 113:130, the Word of God is not just for those who have graduated from seminary, but for anyone with a teachable spirit. Do you consider yourself to be a “simple” person? **Good!** Then pick up God’s Word and receive His wisdom.

Read, understand and apply God’s Word.

TUESDAY Don’t Assume It’s Easy!

2 Peter 3:15-16

I’ve always enjoyed watching experts do something—particularly professional drummers—because they can make it look so easy. After learning some drumming basics, I concluded that they make it look easy because they discovered it wasn’t. In other words, they worked at it.

When the apostle Peter wrote to an audience of displaced Christians, he referenced the writings of Paul and proclaimed they were “hard to understand.” The same Peter who got out of a fishing boat and walked on water tells us that understanding the Scriptures is challenging. If Peter, who spoke Paul’s language and lived in his culture, toils through Paul’s writings, how much more will we? When studying God’s Word, don’t be shy about using good resources—like commentaries—to help bridge some of the time and cultural gaps. If it wasn’t easy for Peter, it won’t be easy for us.

Nothing worth doing is ever easy; keep at it.

Glorifying God by producing more maturing followers of Jesus.

WEDNESDAY Don’t Fly Solo!

Ephesians 4:11-13

Hot dog roasts aren’t much fun by yourself. A friend of mine grew up overseas, and he wanted to be a boy scout. His dad researched and found something called the “lone wolf program” for kids who weren’t able to be part of normal scout troops, but my friend said this was pretty unsatisfying. He remarked that “some things, like weenie roasts, are no fun by yourself.”

Like the Boy Scouts, Christianity invites team participation. As Ephesians 4 proclaims, God gifted people to edify and to mature the body of Christ. When studying the Scriptures, keep in mind that we need others to properly interpret God’s Word so that we don’t fall into the trap of misunderstanding and misapplying. God has gifted a community of believers with pastors and teachers to help us understand what God is saying. There may be lone wolf boy scouts, but we don’t want lone wolf Bible interpreters.

Study the Scriptures in the context of community!

THURSDAY Do Have Patience!

Galatians 6:9

I hated reading. If you had asked my 17-year-old self what I thought about reading and English in general, I would’ve told you it was useless. In truth, I didn’t like reading. Remember those tests where you had to read a section and then answer questions about it? I would just read the questions and try to find the answer. My biggest issue was patience. I just didn’t want to take the time to read.

Understanding God’s Word though, will require patience. In order to do the hard work of interpreting Scripture, we must be patient in our reading and use resources to aid us to get the meaning. If we do this, then, as Paul says in Galatians, *...we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Hurry up and learn patience!

FRIDAY Do Be on Guard!

2 Timothy 4:2-3

Poet Michael Johnson once stated, “You can believe in whatsoever you like, but the truth remains the truth, no matter how sweet the lie may taste.” Unfortunately, the truth isn’t what always draws a crowd. With the amount of pastors on TV, the internet, and the bookstore, one may conclude that we have a better chance now of learning Scriptural truth than ever. Of course, this really means that we need more Spiritual discernment than ever. As Paul told Timothy, *...the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.* As you seek to know the Scriptures, be careful, because there are those who are eager to give you what your itching ears want to hear.

Use careful discernment when choosing which pastors and teachers to listen to!