

Lesson 16

How to Study the Bible

Opening Verse: **John 16:13a**

*Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth**, is come, **he will guide you into all truth**:*

Introduction:

Knowing the Bible is very important for us since God's Truth should be our guide for every part of our life (Psalm 119:105; Matt. 4:4), and since it is His forever settled Word that will judge us in the last days (John 12:48).

Can we understand God's Word by just reading it? And how do we know if our understanding is accurate? In this lesson, you will learn how to "supernaturally" study the Word of God since God did not expect us to learn it by our own wisdom or intellect. This lesson will provide a practical guide on how to study the Word and you will learn about eight essential biblical principles that we need to follow in order to get the accurate interpretation of scripture.

The Author, or the Spirit of Truth is our Teacher

- God is His Word, and you cannot know God intellectually or by human wisdom. (John 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:18-19)
- **We need the Author to guide us and reveal to us His written Word all the time.** Whenever we spend time studying His Word, we need to pray for God's guidance and revelation. (Mark 4:23-24; Luke 8:17-18)
- Studying the Word is just like having fellowship with His Spirit - as you listen to Him speak to you and reveal new things about His Word to you.

My Ability to HEAR is Dependent upon my HEART

- Finding Truth is all about my heart and not my head.
- **The degree of my DESIRE to hear Truth** (whether I like what it says or not) **determines my ABILITY to hear Truth.** Is there enough hunger, fear of the Lord, and submission in my heart? (Matt. 5:6; Psalm 25:12,14)

NOTES

Topical Bible Study Method

1. **Gather** all the verses on the subject by using a good **Bible Concordance** (*see inexpensive online apps*).
 - These verses could be either direct or indirect references on the same subject.
2. **Pray** and ask the Lord to show you the revelation of the **Truth** that will harmonize those verses.
 - When you accompany every study time with prayer, it helps you to recognize His voice.
 - You can call it **Truth** when specific verses of the same subject agree together on a specific interpretation or doctrine.
3. Keep a **record** of your study notes that contain the verses and God's revelation on those specific subjects.
4. **Update** your study notes with any **new** verses and revelation on the subject that God gives you.
 - This is when He "adjusts" our understanding in light of new verses.
 - Studying is a **continual process** since you may never gather "all" of the verses on a particular subject during each study time.
 - God always has a specific timing on when He wants to reveal His Truth to us and often His revelation is **progressive**:
Isaiah 28:10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; Line upon line, line upon line; Here a little, and there a little:
 - If He adds another scripture that seems divergent to the original revelation that I received, then I must seek for His "progressive" revelation that harmonizes all the verses together.
 - I always need to be WILLING for the Holy Ghost to add new verses to my topic and to adjust my understanding.
5. A **Bible Concordance** is always a good study tool.
 - An Exhaustive Concordance for English words
 - Greek and Hebrew Concordance

6. Aside from KJV, use **other Bible versions/translations**
 - *Amplified Classic Edition* (AMPC), *WUEST* for Greek Translation, *Easy to Read Version* (ERV).
7. A **Topical Bible Study** is a convenient tool to use to complement your study.
 - *The Treasure of Scriptural Knowledge*
 - *Nave's Topical Bible*

Biblical Principles in Studying the Word

1. All Scripture Comes from God and is Equal in Defining Doctrine

The Bible is the Word of God and EVERY scripture has its place of what would appear to the natural mind as the “*jigsaw puzzle*” of the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

- EVERY verse is beneficial in providing knowledge and wisdom.
- Since ALL scripture is relevant and profitable for doctrine, we cannot omit ANY verses.
 - Doctrine = instruction or teaching

2. Truth Cannot Contradict Truth

This is a very critical principle that needs to be followed in order to know the Truth. Our interpretation of Truth is correct WHEN verses of the same topic are in harmony, agreeing with each other.

- When all verses relative to a specific subject harmonize together = **Truth / true doctrine**
- When they don't harmonize = **FALSE doctrine!**

If our understanding or interpretation of certain verses contradict OTHER verses on the same subject then our understanding and interpretation is NOT ACCURATE.

By applying both principles (1 and 2) that are mutually dependent = **ALL verses on the same subject must harmonize together in portraying a specific doctrine, without any other verses contradicting it.**

3. No Verse Can Be Accurately and Truthfully

Interpreted Independently of Other Scripture (or from the rest of scripture OR from the concept of all other scriptures)

- **Violating this principle will ALWAYS result in false teachings.**
- **You cannot interpret scripture by looking only at ONE scripture for any subject.**

2 Peter 1:20–21

²⁰ **Knowing this first, that no prophecy** (not foretelling but divinely inspired utterance) **of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** ²¹ *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (or as God willed it to be spoken).

- **“Private interpretation”** in this context means having its “own” or exclusive interpretation **SEPARATE** from other scriptures.
- **Thus, we cannot interpret scripture by looking at only one scripture for any subject!** It is not reliable!

For example, how can **Matthew 28:19** (*the belief of baptism by the titles, Father, Son and Holy Ghost*) be the only verse that we can use for water baptism? What about the OTHER verses in the Bible that directly AND indirectly state that water baptism should be done in the *name of Jesus*?

Our first principle states that we can't omit OTHER verses on the same subject since all scripture is necessary to teach us doctrine. And then our second principle states that IF these OTHER verses contradict our interpretation from that one verse – then it is FALSE doctrine! And then this third and current principle tells me that **I can't take Matt. 28:19 by itself and preach it as a doctrine independent of all other verses on the subject of water baptism.** And there are approximately 50 other verses that either directly or indirectly state *that baptism should be done in the name of Jesus!* That's **50:1!**

4. Let the Bible Interpret Itself

This principle is stating that the Spirit of God will lead us from verse to verse to interpret the scripture.

*Isaiah 34:16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: **No one of these shall fail, None shall want her mate**: For my mouth it hath commanded, And his spirit it hath gathered them.*

- WANT = to lack or miss (from Hebrew word)
- MATE = having another, as to fulfil or satisfy
- *None shall want her mate* = none shall lack, will always have another to fulfil it

AMPC ¹⁶ Seek out of the book of the Lord and read: not one of these [details of prophecy] shall fail, **none shall want and lack her mate [in fulfillment]**. For the mouth [of the Lord] has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them.

EXPANDED Bible Version

¹⁶ Look at [^LSearch] the LORD's scroll and read what is written there: **None of these will be missing; none will be without its mate**. God [^LFor his mouth] has given the command, so his Spirit will gather them together.

ERV (Easy to Read Version)

¹⁶ Look in the LORD's scroll and read what it says: **Not one of these will be missing. Not one will be without its mate. God said he would make this happen, so his Spirit will bring them together.**

WHAT DO THESE ALL MEAN? Not one scripture stands without a mated verse that is the KEY to unlocking its meaning. Every single verse in the Bible has other verses somewhere in the bible that are on that subject that apply to that verse, that give us the key to understanding God's explanation for that verse.

Illustration: Matt. 28:19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

- What is the **KEY VERSE** for understanding **Matthew 28:19**?

Matt. 28:19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

KEY VERSE: Matthew 1:21 *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

- This verse tells us that the NAME of the Son is **Jesus**. Does **not** say, ***thou shalt call his name "Son."***
- We can also state that *Son* is not a name but a **title**.
- That implies that the ***name of the Father*** is not a name but is also a **title**. And that the ***name of the Holy Ghost*** is likewise not a name but also a title.
- **John 5:43** tells us that the name of the Father is Jesus and **John 14:26** reveals that the name of the Holy Ghost is also Jesus.
- And the **FAMILY name** of heaven and earth is Jesus! ***Ephesians 3:14-15*** *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*
- And since the Son inherited his "family" name from the Father, they cannot have a different name!

Thus, we cannot isolate scripture from other scriptures or from its key scripture (that unlocks its meaning)! **For there will always be at least ONE complementary verse that holds the key to understanding and validating whatever verse is brought up for study.** This includes salvation doctrine, godhead doctrine, discipleship doctrine, prophetic doctrine, etc.

What's the Key Verse for understanding the application of **John 3:3-5?** Acts 2:38.

No verse in the Bible can be interpreted independently of the rest of the Bible. Every verse in the Bible has an explanation to it somewhere in the scripture. *I may not have found that yet but my faith says, this is the principle of God (as He will gather the scriptures together for us to find the Truth of what they say), so I will keep searching and praying for God to show me where it is. And that's why we study.*

5. By the Mouth of 2 or 3 Witnesses Let the Word be Established

As we have already determined, every doctrine that is based on a SINGLE scripture is FALSE DOCTRINE. Therefore, **any doctrine that can't be established by more than one verse is in error.** For the Lord has always established His Truth by more than one statement of it. He might state it in different ways but the different ways that He states it does not contradict one another. And these verses support this principle:

Matthew 18:16

¹⁶ But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

John 8:17–18

¹⁷ It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

So as we study to get the correct interpretation of scripture, we need to have at least ONE other verse that supports our interpretation of that verse, if not two other verses, that support our interpretation.

This principle can also apply to getting the correct **translations** of the Greek or Hebrew words in its original language by using more than one resource, such as the *Strong's*, *Thayer's*, and *Wuest's*.

6. Rightly Divide the Word Before You Apply the Word

This principle has been mostly ignored by majority of Christianity.

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

- This verse is directly connected to the action of STUDYING and it is the responsibility of the STUDENT to rightly divide the Word of God.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

- **RIGHTLY** (in Greek, Per Strong's) *literally*, to make a right cut, to dissect, and *figuratively*, to expound or explain correctly the divine message.

Why is this so important? If you want to know about New Testament Salvation, you have to know when that was or when the New Testament church was conceived or actually began! Since you don't want to take the Doctrine of Salvation from the wrong book!

Furthermore, it is imperative for us to know whom particular scriptures are addressed to in order to be able to determine the accurate and intended application of a particular verse or verses.

- The Bible is not only divided into OLD and NEW testaments.
- There are also FOUR DIVISIONS in the New Testament that need to be identified because not all books or divisions are addressed to the same group of people.
 - Some books were addressed to the SINNERS (who were not yet saved), while other books were addressed to the CHURCH, or to the "saved" or to those who were already born-again.
- For every book or division, we need to identify if it is talking to the SINNERS or to the CHURCH.

When did the New Testament begin?

Hebrews 9:16 *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.*

A Testament or a will is not in effect until the death of the testator. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the **Testator** of the New Testament.

If **Jesus** was the *testator* of the New Testament, then when would the New Testament actually begin?

AFTER Christ's death which means the **New Testament begins** in the Book of Acts.

Thus, the GOSPELS will not be the division where we should search for the plan of salvation because the Testator was still alive during the gospels.

Even though Jesus taught about salvation in the gospels (i.e. John 3:3-5, Mark 16:16), His teachings did not explain HOW to be born-again. So without looking into the book of Acts – we would not have a clear knowledge on HOW to be saved or to be born-again.

For example, Mark 16:16 says *he that believeth and is baptized will be saved* but does not say HOW. And we certainly know that there is more than one way that Churches apply “water baptism.”

Significance of the Apostles' Teachings and Book of Acts:

Matthew 28:19 ¹⁹ *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

Note that verse 19 ends in a colon which means that the next verse continues this thought!

Verse 20: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

- These “**all things,**” were not included in the recordings of the gospels which means that **we need to look into the Book of Acts to see WHAT the Apostles are teaching because everything after Acts 1:1 is in obedience to Matt. 28:20.**
- That's also why we call our doctrine as APOSTOLIC, because we need to follow all the teachings of the Apostles. And those who are not following what the Apostles said are the ones who are not following what Jesus said because He commanded them to teach us what He taught them and to do what He commanded them to do.

7. The CONTEXT of Scripture Determines its Accurate Application.

A parallel in similar principle to rightly dividing the Word is **always considering the context in which the verse is contained.**

FOUR DIVISIONS of the New Testament:

- 1) **Gospels**
- 2) **Acts of the Apostles** or the history of the Church
- 3) **Epistles** or letters to the churches formed in the book Acts (written during the latter part of the book of Acts)
- 4) **Revelation of Jesus Christ** or the book of prophecy written by the last Apostle alive (John) who was in the Island of Patmos, where he was exiled because they couldn't kill him.

Majority of Christian churches have used the **GOSPELS** and **EPISTLES** to support their doctrine of salvation. ***But is this the CORRECT place to find the NT doctrine of salvation?***

BASIC CONTEXT:

GOSPELS

- Events that occurred exclusively during the time period that concluded the Old Testament.
- The religious leaders kept accusing the Lord Jesus of not complying with the Old Testament law since He was in the process of declaring or **writing His New Testament will** as He taught publicly and as He trained His disciples.
- The gospels also cover the history of the birth, life and death of the Lord Jesus.
 - And we wouldn't have the "gospel" of salvation without the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:1-4)
- The division of the gospels appears to be a TRANSITION between the OLD and NEW testament since the gospels concluded the Old Testament and were recorded before the Book of Acts, and also because both of these testaments were not applicable during the time of the gospels.

Hebrews 9:14–17

¹⁴How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. ¹⁶For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷**For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.**

- The New Testament plan of salvation won't have any effect until after the Testator dies!
- **You cannot be saved by a NT plan of salvation where there is not yet a NT in force.**
- The gospels preached about the coming of the New Testament, and even Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Daniel prophesied about the coming of the NT BUT that does not make them NT books.
- **This is important because the Church world wants to omit the book of Acts! For they can't explain how it contradicts their doctrine since they're getting their doctrine from the wrong division!**
- The "Church" was not even in existence during the Gospels! It was mentioned only twice and found only in the future tense verb.

The existence of the Church correlates to the beginning of the New Testament.

- **Salvation puts you into "Church" because the born-again experience of water and spirit makes us part of the body of Christ.**
Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- The Book of Acts is the only New Testament book with an actual record of **SINNERS BEING SAVED**. It is the actual fulfilment of the promise of the New Testament, as sinners were receiving the promise of the Holy Ghost!

- The actions of the Apostles were in obedience to the Lord's command to fulfil His will! And the Book of Acts is for our foundation:

Ephes. 2:19–20 ¹⁹Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰And are **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**;

- Therefore, any doctrine that is NOT in TOTAL HARMONY with the specific teachings of the APOSTLES is FALSE DOCTRINE.
- You can't skip the Book of Acts and its context because it is the foundation of the Church.

EPISTLES

- These were letters not written to SINNERS but to the Church.
- **Not one Epistle was written to SINNERS!**
- Just look at the address (to whom the letter is for) at the beginning of each epistle and you will read that it is written to SAVED people.
- **Every Epistle and up to the last book of Revelation was written to the Church, people who were already saved with the born-again experience.**

What is *Romans 10:13* referring to?

Romans 10:13* For whosoever shall call upon **the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Since it was written to the Church or to "saved" people, Apostle Paul wasn't writing to saved people to tell them HOW to be saved!

Every discussion of Salvation in the books of the Epistles and Revelation was addressing, teaching and explaining the important topics and instructions concerning the roots, ramifications and subsequent life experiences relative to, and as postscripts to the plan of salvation, BUT NOT THE ACTUAL PLAN ITSELF AS PREACHED BY THE APOSTLES.

In **Romans 6**, Paul provides an **in-depth discussion about our salvation**, that those who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death, and that we are resurrected by the power of the Holy Ghost. And then in **Romans 8**, he **explains to saved people what is really going on in their life and what really happened in that simple act that they did strictly by faith, without fully understanding the depths of it.**

So when the plan of salvation is discussed in both the GOSPELS & EPISTLES, it is discussed in giving context, background and meaning to the plan of salvation.

- The writing or declaring of the NT plan in the GOSPELS was to give some **background on what was expected to happen.**
- The purpose of the Epistles was **to explain to the saved people what the plan of salvation meant, its significance.**

The Old Testament, our schoolmaster, points us to Christ, the GOSPELS tell us about that Christ (His birth, life, ministry, His death, burial and resurrection), and Luke concludes his gospel with Christ's ascension and picks up the same narrative in Acts 1 which begins with Christ's ascension.

And immediately before His ascension, the Lord Jesus commands them to go back to Jerusalem and to tarry until they receive the promise of the Father. Then He ascended into Heaven. And those who obeyed Him were part of the beginning of the Church in Acts 2. **And the book of ACTS is the only book that records sinners being saved.**

And then the **EPISTLES, starting with Romans 1:1, were all the teachings and the instructions of the Apostles to the SAVED people. About what they did to be saved, and what that meant.**

Aside from defining scripture by the context of its division, this principle also applies to getting the context by reading the complete verse, the connecting verses, the whole chapter of a verse, or by reading several chapters that cover the flow of teaching that's related to that verse.

8. Beware of the Danger of Adding To or Taking Away from the Word of God

John 21:25 *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

- Jesus has condensed all that could be known and that is required by Him for us to know in the written Bible.
- What we have God gave, no more, no less. What we have is what God requires of us. To add to it is presumption, to take away from it is foolishness.

Deuteronomy 4:2 *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

Proverbs 30:6 *Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

Revelation 22:18–19 ¹⁸ *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, **If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*** ¹⁹ *And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

The Word of God is the final authority in our lives. For that to be true and effective, I cannot take out and ignore the parts that I don't like, nor add to the Bible the things I think ought to be in there that are not there (that includes any personal convictions).

And over time, God has moved on a multitude of Holy men to decide on what books were from God and what books weren't from God. So that today we could have confidence without a shadow of a doubt, in the 66 books that we have, called the Bible.