

Studying Scripture

Tools and Methods

Summary

We all should know and understand what we believe. Scripture calls us to be at the ready to defend and proclaim the truth¹. To that end, we must understand how to search out truth in scripture and show ourselves approved of GOD².

Introduction

Scripture is trust worthy, it says that the word is purified 7 times as silver in a furnace³. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the word made flesh⁴. He told us to eat of him and abide in him⁵. It is our responsibility to understand what it says and not lean to others for discernment. We can learn together through fellowship but asking men and worldly organizations questions instead of scripture will lead us astray and into confusion. No man teaches us, the Holy Spirit is our teacher⁶.

The Tools

Nothing can be truly discerned without the Holy Spirit and prayer. The first step is to be in Christ through belief and repentance. Reading scripture daily and as often as you are prompted to and responding to conviction with repentance and commitment to the truth.

The King James version of scripture is the most reliable translation available. Others, such as the New International Version, have changes made to sections of scripture which contain doctrine that is objectionable to men. Becoming familiar with old English is not the challenge it would seem to be. And for challenging verses, spending more time in them is a good thing.

A concordance will allow you to see connections between words in different areas of scripture and understand the meaning of those words. It is a reference tool that gives the meaning of the Greek words in the New Testament and the Hebrew words in the old testament. It will list other uses of the word in scripture along with detailed definition and examples of its use in scripture.

Both books can be found online and physical copies are available. The websites I use are Biblegateway.com and Blueletterbible.org. I use the first to read scripture and the second for the concordance features.

¹ 2 Timothy 4:2

² 2 Timothy 2:14

³ Psalm 12:6

⁴ John 1:14

⁵ John 15

⁶ 1 John 2:26-28, John 6:44-46

While going through your studies, make sure to have a notebook on hand to record what you learn so that you can establish truth.

Understanding

Scripture interprets scripture, it is not of a private interpretation. The meaning of a verse is established by the verses preceding it, and the paragraph and chapter it is contained in. When we come across a phrase or proper noun, we can do a search for matches in other areas of scripture. Frequently, the Old Testament defines truth in the New Testament.

Keep in mind not to read things into scripture, only out of scripture. If you come from a protestant denomination, a Catholic church or other organization, most likely you will need to train yourself to resist putting their teachings into scripture. But instead let the scripture speak. The word of GOD establishes truth, not the doctrines of men.

Being in our culture, it might come as a shock to understand the practices you are familiar with, such as observed holidays, ceremonies and even beliefs that you hold dear, may have no place in the Kingdom of God. Those organizations fly the banner of Christ but teach of another, deceiving themselves. It is then a blessing to undergo conviction and repentance and then follow him. The people of GOD are known by their actions, their fruit, not their “heart of hearts” as so commonly suggested by popular teachers.

Example

In the New Testament, Paul mentions having a “thorn” in him, to temper him⁷. We can search for all instances of the word thorn in the Old Testament. We must keep in mind two things. First, the results in a BibleGateway lookup does not include instances of the “Strong’s” word, meaning to say, the original word. It only returns matches of the word in that translation. Second, it may take time and prayer to understand the meaning of a verse. It is not always something readily revealed or discerned. In this case, there are many results.

As the Bible defines it, thorns are burned and rejected and associated with unbelievers. Notably in Joshua 23:13 “but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.” And in Numbers 33:55 “then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.” According to that understanding, a thorn for a Christian is to be vexed by unbelievers. And we do see that Paul mentions that about people he encountered⁸.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:7

⁸ 2 Timothy 4:14

Example 2

Let's look at Salt. In the New Testament, Paul mentions that our conversations are to be seasoned with salt⁹. A common protestant teaching is that it means to not be too serious and to be accepting of others. Because for us, salt makes things taste good. But we must remember, our ways are not God's ways. We must let scripture tell us what salt means to God.

A Search in BibleGateway shows many results indicating salt is part of the offering to God¹⁰. We can see this holds true in the New Testament, where we are called, "the salt of the earth¹¹". Also, in that context, the rest of the verse makes more sense. If we are not fit for the offering, then we are useless, "to be trodden under the foot of men".

Now we can also look up that verse in the BlueLetterBible. The word salt in Colossians 4:6 is Strong's g217. In this context, salt can mean wisdom. Therefore, now reading the verse as, seasoned with wisdom. Part of wisdom is the knowledge of God. Therefore, in context with this understanding, the verse makes even more sense. So that we can answer every man, according to scripture, with the proper meaning.

Conclusion

Using the tools and processes mentioned, always remembering to keep your heart right with God and being in prayer, will allow you to discover scripture for yourself.

References

1. King James Bible, Biblegateway.com
2. King James Bible, Blueletterbible.com

⁹ Colossians 4:6

¹⁰ Leviticus 2:13

¹¹ Matthew 5:13