

# Understanding the Bible

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Have you ever thought to yourself, “Why can’t I understand the Bible?” Or, perhaps you *do* understand the Bible, but you wonder why *others* cannot. Things which seem so plain to you—yet, others just don’t begin to grasp! Why can’t your family and friends understand the many spiritual truths which are so clear to you?!

For that matter, why is it that *you* understand things which are greatly *misunderstood* by even religious scholars? Have you ever wondered why it is that they just “don’t get it”?

## God’s Purpose

In answering the above questions, let’s first understand that God *purposely* had the Bible written in a rather unusual manner. It was written in such a manner that people could study it intricately—even in its original languages—poring over its pages for their entire lifetimes... yet, never come to a good *understanding* of God’s truths!

Many individuals have *memorized* great sections of the Bible, yet they haven’t come to understand what those passages really *mean*.

One reason for this is that God had the Bible written so that not all the truth on any one subject is found in any one place in the Bible. We find “here a little” and “there a little.” It’s somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle. “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? ... For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little” (Isa. 28: 9-10).

There are even cases where those who *recorded* God’s message did not understand what they wrote! At one point, the prophet Daniel was recording God’s word, and he said this: “Although I heard, I did **not** understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?’ And he said, ‘Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed **till** the time of the end” (Dan. 12: 8-9).

## WHY Christ Spoke in Parables

Why did Jesus Christ sometimes speak in parables? *Most* people believe that He did so in order to make the meaning clearer. Yet, the opposite is actually true!

“But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve [disciples] asked Him about the parable [that is, ‘**Why** do You speak to them in parables?’—(Matt. 13:10)]. And He said to them, ‘**To you** [that is, “to you **disciples**”—“to you whom God is calling”] it has been given to

**know** [or *understand*] the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, [Why?] so that “Seeing they may see and **not** perceive, And hearing they may hear and **not** understand...”” (Mark 4:10-12).

So here, Christ plainly said that He spoke in parables to *hide* the meaning—to hide the meaning from the masses—to hide the meaning from those not yet being called by God.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew, we find the parallel account of what we just read. Notice what Matthew adds: Still speaking to His disciples, Christ said, “But blessed *are* your eyes for they **see**, and your ears for they **hear** [understand]; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* [such as Daniel] desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*” (Matt. 13:16-17).

God Himself decides *who* He will call during this age. Christ said, “No one **can** come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him...” (John 6:44, 65). God decides *who* He will enable to understand during this age. Christ said the following: “...I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have **hidden** these things from *the* wise and prudent and have **revealed** them to babes” (Matt. 11:25).

## Two Approaches

God had the Bible written in such a way that only a certain *type* of person could come to a truly good understanding of it—a truly good understanding of God’s plan and purpose for mankind.

What *type* of person will understand? A person who has the following two approaches to God’s word:

**(1) Seek God with ALL your heart!** “...you will seek the LORD your God, and you will **find Him** if [notice: ‘IF’] you seek Him with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul” (Deut. 4:29).

Notice also from the book of Jeremiah: “And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with **all** your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

We cannot *just simply* ask God for understanding and expect to receive it. Rather, we must *show* God that we “hunger and thirst” for it—that we want it above all else! It must be to us like a “pearl of **great** price” (Matt. 13:45-46).

Those who are seeking God “with all their hearts” will be *searching* “the Scriptures **daily**”—just as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11). Such a person will *not* just “take for granted” that what a preacher says is actually what the Bible teaches. Paul urges us to “**Prove** all things” (I Thess. 5:21 *KJV*).

If a person is seeking God with all his heart, when he comes upon a scripture he doesn’t understand, he won’t just throw up his hands and say, “Oh well, nobody can really understand the Bible.” When he comes upon an *apparent* contradiction in the Bible, he *won’t* say, “Well, you can prove *anything* from the Bible.”

No, that person will seek God *diligently*—and with *all* his heart. God, along with God’s true ministers, will *help* the individual to “put the jigsaw puzzle together”—so that it all makes sense

(Acts 8: 30-31). The person will learn, with the help of God’s true ministry, to be “rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

(2) **Strive to LIVE BY God’s word**—and to be *corrected* by the words of the holy Bible.

This is the *second* approach to God’s word which a person must have, before God will guide the individual *into* a good understanding of His word and His purpose.

Actually, the *main purpose* of Bible study should be to learn God’s will—so that we can live according **to** that will! “Not My will, but Yours, be done,” said Christ (Luke 22:42). Christ also said, “...Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word** of God” (Luke 4:4). Yes, we are to study the Bible to be corrected *by* it. “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**...” (II Tim. 3:16).

So, when we *have* that approach, God will *grant* us understanding. Yes, “...A **good understanding** have all those who **do His commandments**...”! (Ps. 111:10).

Accordingly, notice what *type* of person God has *regard* for: “...These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and **who tremble at my word**” (Isa. 66:2 *NIV*). Do you and I *tremble* at God’s word? Do we have *that approach* when we read God’s word? Do we *fear* to go contrary to what the Bible tells us to do and not to do?

Yes, if we approach God’s word with trembling—if we study the Bible with an attitude of being instructed in *how* to live—with an attitude of being *corrected*—with an attitude of being willing to **do** God’s commandments—then, and *only* then, will God grant us a good ***understanding*** of His word!

## And Then?

If God is calling an individual, will that person ***respond*** to God’s calling? If so, then that individual will not only accept Christ as his savior, but he will also thoroughly *repent*—that is, unconditionally *surrender* his life in *obedience* to God. (See the article “Repentance.”)

At that point, following baptism, the person receives God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Then, the individual has the **guidance**—*not only* of God’s written word—but *also* the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will **teach** you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26, *NIV*). Christ said that the Spirit “will **guide** you into all truth” (John 16:13).

Finally, consider the following passage: “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has **revealed** *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who [‘which’—*KJV, RSV*] is from God, **that we might know** the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit

**teaches**, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are **spiritually discerned**” (I Cor. 2: 9-14).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it should now be plain that in order to have a *good* understanding of God’s word, you must have two approaches: Seek God with **all** your heart, and strive to **live by** God’s word!