

Dear Church: How to Study the Bible, Part 4

A Bible study for individuals, groups or classes

Background scripture:

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Podcast Sections:

- 0:00 Introduction to interpretation
- 1:23 Hazards to interpretation – time barrier, books written long ago
- 2:58 Hazards to interpretation – space or geographical barrier, books written to other lands
- 4:19 Hazards to interpretation – cultural barrier, books written to people with other cultures
- 5:30 Shifting gender in newer translations and possible impacts on understanding
- 6:45 Hazards to interpretation – language. Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek
- 8:25 Hazards to interpretation – literary. Writing styles including narrative and poetry
- 9:35 Hazards to interpretation – communication. Ideas that are hard to bridge
- 11:27 Understanding the Bible is the most important thing to apply our minds to
- 12:09 Keys to interpreting scripture: content, context, comparison, culture, consultation
- 12:38 Understanding the book of Revelation
- 14:48 Content and interpretation
- 15:55 Context and interpretation
- 20:33 Context and the literary and historical background of the verse
- 23:50 Comparison and interpretation, between passages and translations
- 27:10 Key questions to ask when interpreting words, phrases or concepts
- 32:39 Culture and interpretation
- 35:40 Consultation and interpretation, looking at tools and other views (Concordances, Bible Dictionary, Bible Encyclopedias, Bible Atlas, Commentaries, other persons)
- 40:37 Looking to Jesus to see his interpretation of scripture
- 40:59 Jesus emphasizes relationships over ritual

Discussion questions:

1. Deuteronomy 29:29 (referenced at 10:20) speaks of the secret things that belong to God. Isaiah says we cannot understand God's thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). Does it bother you, as you study the Bible, to know that we may not be able to answer all of our questions about God through scripture?
2. Listen again to the discussion of Philippians 4:13 (I can do all things through him who strengthens me.) at 16:15 to 16:46 in the program. Now read Philippians 14 starting at verse 10 (provided below). How much do these three extra verses change the context? What does this verse really mean?
3. Discuss Romans 10:9-10 (below) in light of Chris' discussion from 18:25 to 19:46.

4. Fred mentions using a cross-reference (25:06) and Chris mentions an exhaustive concordance (26:08) as tools that help in study. Are there any Bible study tools you have used or would like to have?

Scriptures related to this study

Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (referenced at 10:20)

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 10:9-10 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (referenced at 18:25)

Philippians 4:10-13

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (referenced at 16:15)

2 Peter 3:16 as he [Paul] does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (referenced at 10:03)