COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 2

Study for Approval

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 3:

Approaching the Word of God

An overview of approaching God's Word with humility, prayer, and spiritual discernment.



EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE: APPROACHING THE WORD OF GOD

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Knowing why we should study God's Word is an important beginning, but we must also learn how to approach the Scriptures. A person may read the Bible carefully and possess considerable natural intelligence, yet still misunderstand spiritual truth if the Word is approached simply as an ordinary human book.

The Bible is different from every other book because its message came from God. David described the inspiration behind his own writings in **2 Samuel 23:2**:

> *"The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."*

David wrote the words, but he recognised that their true source was the Spirit of God. Because Scripture is spiritual in its origin, we must approach it with dependence upon God for spiritual understanding.

Diligence and Dependence

Depending upon God does not mean that careful reading, thought and study are unnecessary. We must still be diligent students, but diligence alone is not enough. Human reasoning cannot replace the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

We must therefore approach Scripture with both diligence and dependence. We carefully read, search and consider what God has written while depending upon the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual truth into understanding.

The Right Attitude Towards Scripture

Our attitude towards Scripture is extremely important. We should come to God's Word with reverence, humility, prayer and a genuine willingness to receive whatever God has revealed, even when His truth corrects something we have previously believed.

We should not approach the Bible simply looking for support for our existing ideas. We must be willing to allow God's Word to shape and correct our understanding.

This requires a teachable heart. When our present understanding and the Word of God do not agree, Scripture must remain unchanged and our understanding must change.

God's Word Is the Final Authority

We must also begin with confidence in the authority of Scripture. The Bible is not subject to our opinions, preferences or religious traditions. God's Word must remain the final authority by which every teaching and interpretation is tested.

Human teachers can help us understand Scripture, but no teacher, church or organisation has authority to change what God has revealed. Everything we believe and teach must therefore remain subject to the Word of God.

Preparing to Approach the Word

As we work through this Study Guide, we will consider why spiritual discernment is necessary, how the Holy Spirit teaches the born-again believer, why some spiritual truths remain hidden from the natural mind and why we must pray for understanding.

We will also examine the authority, harmony and purity of God's Word. This will help us understand why apparent difficulties should cause us to study more carefully rather than question Scripture simply because our present understanding is incomplete.

The purpose is to develop the right attitude before we move more deeply into the practical methods of Bible study. We want to approach God's Word believing that it is true, depending upon the Holy Spirit for understanding and remaining willing to change whenever Scripture shows that our understanding is wrong.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should you approach God's Word with both careful effort and dependence on Him?

Personal Reflection

When the Bible challenges an opinion you have held for years, do you become defensive or willing to learn? What does your response reveal?

Action Step

Think of one belief you have been reluctant to question. How will you examine it in the Bible, and what will you change if God's Word corrects you?

INTRODUCTION: HOW WE APPROACH MATTERS

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The way we approach the Bible affects the way we understand it. If we treat Scripture simply as an ordinary book, we will tend to rely mainly upon our own reasoning, education and previous ideas.

God's Word must be approached differently because its truths are spiritual and must be understood spiritually. Careful study is necessary, but human intellect by itself cannot produce spiritual understanding. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:14**:

> *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

Paul makes an important distinction between natural understanding and spiritual discernment. A person may be intelligent, educated and capable of analysing words carefully, yet still fail to understand the spiritual truth God intended.

We Must Approach Scripture With Humility

The sincere student must therefore approach God's Word with humility. We should recognise that our own thoughts are limited and that our present understanding may need correction. Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 55:8-9**:

> *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

God's thoughts are higher than ours. We should therefore come to Scripture asking God to shape our understanding rather than expecting His Word to conform to what we already believe.

We Must Be Willing to Receive the Truth

A correct approach also requires willingness. We must genuinely want God's answer, even when that answer challenges a tradition, assumption or interpretation we have held for many years.

This is why spiritual discernment is closely connected with obedience. A person who wants truth only when it agrees with them is not approaching Scripture with an open heart.

The right attitude is simple: *"Lord, show me what Your Word actually says, and help me to receive it."*

We must come to Scripture prepared not only to understand what God has revealed, but also to bring our thinking and lives into agreement with that truth.

We Must Depend Upon the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, and He also enlightens the believer's understanding. This does not remove our responsibility to study carefully. It shows us how that study must be approached.

Paul prayed concerning the understanding of believers in **Ephesians 1:18**:

> *"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"*

Our understanding needs enlightenment. We therefore study with diligence, but we also depend upon the Spirit of God to make spiritual truth clear.

Human reasoning has its proper place in reading, examining and comparing Scripture, but it must never become our final dependence. The born-again believer has the Spirit of Christ within and must depend upon Him for spiritual understanding.

The Right Foundation for Study

Before we consider specific principles of interpretation, this foundation must be established. We should approach the Bible:

- Believing that it is God's Word;
- Recognising that its truths are spiritual;
- Depending upon the Holy Spirit for understanding;
- Remaining humble and teachable;
- Being willing to obey whatever God reveals.

With this attitude, Bible study becomes more than an intellectual exercise. It becomes a spiritual search for the truth of God with a heart prepared to receive and live what He reveals.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can the way you approach the Bible affect what you understand from it?

Personal Reflection

When you open the Bible, are you seeking God's answer or trying to confirm what you already think? Explain.

Action Step

Identify an assumption you often bring to Bible study. How will you set it aside in your next study and respond if the verses challenge it?

THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE IS A SPIRITUAL BOOK

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Scripture Came From the Spirit of God

The Bible must be approached as a spiritual book because its message did not originate in the human mind. God used men to write the Scriptures, but the truth they recorded came from the Spirit of God. David explained this concerning his own writings in **2 Samuel 23:1-2**:

> *"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."*

David was the writer, but he did not claim that the message originated with him. He said *"The Spirit of the LORD spake by me."*

This gives us an important foundation for Bible study. The Scriptures were written through human writers, but their spiritual source is God.

All Scripture Is Inspired by God

Paul expressed the same truth concerning Scripture as a whole in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**:

> *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."*

The expression *"All scripture"* is important. We should not treat one part of the Bible as spiritual while regarding another part as simply human history or opinion.

The Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels and the writings of the apostles all form part of the inspired Word of God. The Bible as a whole must therefore be approached with reverence and confidence in its divine origin.

Human Intelligence Alone Is Not Enough

Because Scripture is spiritual in origin, it cannot be properly understood through human reasoning alone. Education can help us read carefully, examine language and understand historical information, but education itself cannot give spiritual discernment. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:14**:

> *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

The problem is not that the natural person lacks intelligence. The problem is that spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned.

Bible study must therefore involve more than analysing words with the natural mind. We need the Spirit of God to enlighten our understanding and help us recognise the spiritual truth contained in His Word.

Do Not Reduce the Bible to an Ordinary Book

If we approach Scripture as though it were simply another piece of literature, we will miss its true character. The Bible contains history, poetry, prophecy, letters and many different forms of writing, but through them God communicates spiritual truth.

This does not mean that we ignore grammar, history or the ordinary meaning of words. These things are important. However, the written words must be understood within the spiritual purpose for which God gave them.

The serious student therefore uses the mind carefully while remaining dependent upon God. Careful study and spiritual dependence belong together.

Approach the Whole Bible Spiritually

Recognising the Bible as a spiritual book changes the way we approach study. We do not come simply to analyse what human writers thought. We come believing that God has spoken through His Word and depending upon His Spirit to give us understanding.

This should produce both confidence and humility. We have confidence because the Scriptures came from God, and humility because we need His help to understand them correctly.

The Bible as a whole is therefore a spiritual book. We must read it carefully, study it diligently and depend upon the Spirit of God to bring us into a clear understanding of the truth He has revealed in His Word.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is the Bible more than a book that human intellect can fully explain on its own?

Personal Reflection

When studying a difficult verse, do you depend mainly upon your own reasoning or ask God to help you understand? Why?

Action Step

Choose a difficult verse this week. What will you do differently to depend upon God's help, rather than your own first explanation?

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IS ESSENTIAL

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Natural Understanding Is Not Enough

The Bible can be read with the natural mind, but spiritual truth requires spiritual discernment. Education, intelligence and careful reasoning are useful, but none of these can replace the understanding that comes through the Spirit of God. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:14**:

> *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

Paul does not say that the natural person cannot read the words. He says that the things of the Spirit of God are *"spiritually discerned."*

This explains why two people may read the same verse yet understand it very differently. Spiritual truth requires more than recognising the words on the page. We need God to enlighten our understanding.

God's Servants Receive Spiritual Understanding

The book of Revelation begins by showing that God reveals spiritual truth to His servants. John wrote in **Revelation 1:1**:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"*

The revelation was given "to shew unto his servants." Scripture also helps us understand who the servants of God are. Paul wrote in **Romans 6:22**:

> *"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."*

The servants of God are those whose lives belong to Him. Spiritual discernment is therefore connected with our relationship with God and our willingness to live according to His truth.

God does not reveal truth simply to satisfy curiosity. He reveals truth so that His servants may know His way and walk in it.

We Need the Mind of Christ

Our natural thoughts are not the measure of spiritual truth. God's thoughts are higher than ours, and therefore our understanding must be brought into agreement with Him. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:16**:

> *"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."*

To have the mind of Christ means that our thinking is no longer governed simply by natural reasoning. Through the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us, we can begin to understand spiritual things according to God's truth.

This does not mean that every thought we have is automatically correct. Our thoughts must continually be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit of Christ will never lead us into an understanding that contradicts what God has revealed in Scripture.

Do Not Lean Upon Your Own Understanding

Solomon gave an important principle that applies directly to Bible study. Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 3:5-6**:

> *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

The instruction *"lean not unto thine own understanding"* does not mean that we stop thinking. It means that we do not make our own reasoning the final authority.

We study carefully, ask questions and examine the Scriptures, but our confidence must remain in God rather than in our own ability to understand everything immediately.

This attitude keeps us teachable. When Scripture challenges our present understanding, we should be willing to reconsider our conclusions rather than assuming that our reasoning must be correct.

The Eyes of Our Understanding Must Be Enlightened

Paul prayed that believers would receive spiritual enlightenment. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 1:18**:

> *"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"*

Paul recognised that our understanding needs enlightenment. This is why Bible study must be approached prayerfully and with dependence upon God.

Spiritual discernment enables us to recognise the spiritual truth God is revealing through the words of Scripture.

The sincere student therefore combines careful study with dependence upon God. We use the mind He has given us, but we do not rely upon natural reasoning alone.

We approach Scripture as servants of God, seeking the mind of Christ and asking that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened. Spiritual discernment is essential because spiritual truth can only be properly understood as God brings our understanding into agreement with His Word.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is spiritual understanding needed even when the words of the Bible can be read plainly?

Personal Reflection

When a verse is unclear, are you willing to admit that your understanding needs help? What makes this difficult for you?

Action Step

Identify a verse you have not understood. How will you pray and continue searching without forcing an answer to support your first opinion?

THE TRUTH IS SEALED

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Truth Is Hidden From the Natural Mind

Because God's Word is spiritual, there are truths within Scripture that the natural mind cannot understand by intellect alone. The problem is not a lack of intelligence or education. Spiritual truth requires spiritual understanding.

Isaiah used the picture of a sealed book to describe this condition. Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 29:11-12**:

> *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."*

Notice that neither education nor lack of education solved the problem. One man was learned and the other was not, yet neither could open what was sealed.

The lesson is important. Natural ability cannot by itself unlock spiritual truth. We need God to give spiritual understanding.

The Spirit Enables Us to Know

Paul explains why believers can understand things that remain hidden from the natural mind. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:12**:

> *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*

The Spirit of God enables us to know the things God has given. Paul then contrasts this with the natural person in **1 Corinthians 2:14**:

> *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

This does not mean that every born-again believer immediately understands every verse of Scripture. It means that the Spirit of God makes spiritual understanding possible.

We still need to read carefully, search diligently and remain teachable, but we do so with the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us.

The Sealed Book in Revelation

The same picture of a sealed book appears in Revelation. John saw a book that no one was able to open until Jesus Christ prevailed. John wrote in **Revelation 5:5**:

> *"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."*

John later described the opening of the seals in **Revelation 6:1**:

> *"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see."*

The Lion who prevailed is also presented as the Lamb. John the Baptist identified Jesus in **John 1:29**:

> *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

The imagery points us to an important truth. Jesus Christ is the One who opens what is sealed and reveals spiritual truth.

Jesus Christ Reveals Truth Through His Spirit

Jesus explained that the Spirit of truth would make known what belongs to Him. Jesus said in **John 16:13-14**:

> *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."*

The Spirit does not reveal a truth separate from Jesus Christ. The Spirit receives of Christ and shows that truth to us.

This is why spiritual understanding must remain centred upon Jesus Christ. The opening of truth is not simply the discovery of hidden information. It is the revelation of the truth found in Christ.

Truth Is Opened by God

Daniel also encountered truth that he could not fully understand at the time. Daniel wrote in **Daniel 12:8-10**:

> *"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."*

Daniel heard the words but did not understand them. This reminds us that hearing or reading Scripture does not automatically mean that its spiritual meaning has been understood.

We should therefore approach difficult verses with humility. When something remains unclear, we should not force an interpretation. We continue searching the Word and depend upon God to give understanding.

The truth is not opened by human intelligence alone. Jesus Christ reveals spiritual truth through His Spirit to those who seek Him with a sincere and teachable heart.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does the teaching about sealed truth show about the need for God's help?

Personal Reflection

When an answer does not come quickly, do you become impatient or remain willing to learn? Explain how this affects your study.

Action Step

Think of an unclear verse you have been tempted to explain too quickly. What assumption will you set aside as you patiently study the Bible further?

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE SEAL

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The Spirit of Christ Dwells Within the Believer

Spiritual understanding is connected with the Spirit of God dwelling within us. The New Covenant believer is not left to approach God's Word only through natural reasoning because the Spirit of Christ dwells within those who belong to Him. Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Paul makes the matter very clear. A person who belongs to Jesus Christ possesses the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit is not received through a later experience after the new birth. He dwells within the believer who belongs to Christ.

This inward presence of the Spirit is essential when we consider how spiritual truth is understood. The natural mind cannot discern the things of God, but the born-again believer has the Spirit of Christ within.

Sealed With the Holy Spirit

Paul also describes the Holy Spirit as God's seal upon the believer. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 1:13**:

> *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,"*

The believer hears *"the word of truth,"* believes the Gospel and is *"sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."*

The seal is therefore not an outward mark or religious ceremony. God's seal is spiritual and inward. It is the Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer.

Paul again wrote in **Ephesians 4:30**:

> *"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."*

These Scriptures establish an important foundation. The same Spirit who seals the believer is also the Spirit through whom spiritual truth is understood.

The Seal and Spiritual Understanding

A physical book may be opened simply by turning its pages, but spiritual truth requires more than opening a Bible and reading its words. As we have seen, Scripture can remain spiritually sealed to the natural mind.

The believer, however, has received the Spirit of God. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:12**:

> *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*

Notice the purpose Paul gives: *"that we might know."* The Spirit dwelling within us enables us to receive and understand the spiritual things God has freely given.

This does not mean that every believer instantly understands every Scripture. We must still study diligently, pray for understanding and remain willing to be corrected. The Spirit of Christ within us makes spiritual understanding possible.

The Eyes of Our Understanding Are Enlightened

Paul prayed that believers would receive spiritual enlightenment. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 1:17-18**:

> *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"*

Paul was writing to people who already believed, yet he still prayed that *"the eyes of your understanding"* would be enlightened.

This teaches us an important balance. Having the Holy Spirit does not mean that no further enlightenment is needed. The Spirit dwells within the believer, but our understanding continues to grow as He teaches us through the Word of God.

Hunger for Righteousness Matters

Our attitude towards truth also matters. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:6**:

> *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*

The person who sincerely desires righteousness wants to know the right way and walk in it. Such a person is not simply seeking information but is willing to receive and obey what God reveals.

The Holy Spirit does not teach us so that we can become proud of our knowledge. He enlightens our understanding so that we may know the truth and live according to it.

God's Seal Is Within

The Holy Spirit is therefore both the seal of God's people and the Spirit through whom spiritual understanding is made possible.

The believer does not depend upon education, position or human authority as the source of spiritual understanding. We depend upon the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us as we carefully search the Word of God.

God has sealed His people with His Spirit, and through that same Spirit He enlightens our understanding of His truth.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does God's Spirit as the seal matter for a believer's understanding of truth?

Personal Reflection

Does knowing that the Spirit of Christ already dwells within every born-again believer strengthen your confidence in God's work? Explain.

Action Step

When you next face a difficult verse, how will you depend upon the Spirit of Christ already within you instead of trusting only your ability or seeking another spiritual experience?

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE TEACHER

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Human Wisdom Cannot Replace the Spirit

Because the Bible is a spiritual book, we must recognise the Holy Spirit as our Teacher. Careful study, education and knowledge of language can all be useful, but none of these can replace the spiritual understanding that God gives. Jesus said in **John 6:63**:

> *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."*

The words of Jesus are *"spirit"* and *"life."* We therefore cannot depend upon intellect alone to understand their spiritual meaning. The Spirit of God must enlighten our understanding.

The Holy Ghost Shall Teach You

Jesus clearly promised that the Holy Ghost would teach His people. Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

Jesus did not leave His disciples dependent solely upon their natural ability to remember and understand His words. The Holy Ghost would teach them and bring the words of Jesus to their remembrance.

This same principle is important when we study Scripture. We read and examine the written Word carefully, but we depend upon the Spirit of Christ to bring spiritual understanding.

We Have an Unction From the Holy One

John also described the inward teaching of the Spirit as an unction, or anointing. John wrote in **1 John 2:20**:

> *"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."*

John continued in **1 John 2:27**:

> *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."*

The anointing *"abideth in you."* The born-again believer has the Spirit of Christ dwelling within, and therefore spiritual understanding is not restricted to a special class of religious leaders.

John is not saying that pastors and teachers have no place in the Church. Teachers can explain Scripture and help us see truths that we may have overlooked, but no human teacher can replace the Holy Spirit as the One who establishes spiritual truth within us.

The Spirit Does Not Teach a Different Truth

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He will therefore never teach something that contradicts the Word He inspired.

This gives us an important safeguard. We should never accept an idea simply because someone claims, *"The Spirit showed me."* What we believe has been revealed must agree with the Word of God.

The Spirit who inspired Scripture does not contradict Himself. His teaching will always bring us into greater agreement with the truth already revealed in God's Word.

Human Eloquence Is Not the Source of Truth

Paul understood that spiritual truth did not depend upon impressive human reasoning. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:4**:

> *"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:"*

Paul was not rejecting careful thought or clear teaching. He was rejecting confidence in human wisdom as the source of spiritual understanding.

A message can be eloquent and still fail to communicate spiritual truth. Our confidence must therefore remain in the Spirit of God working through the truth of His Word.

The Spirit Teaches Us to Walk in the Light

The purpose of the Spirit's teaching is not simply that we understand more. God reveals truth so that we may walk according to what He has shown us. John wrote in **1 John 1:7**:

> *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

The Holy Spirit brings understanding through the Word, and we are responsible to walk according to the truth we receive. True spiritual teaching therefore produces obedience rather than knowledge alone.

As students of Scripture, we should study diligently while continually depending upon the Spirit of Christ within us. We listen to faithful teachers, use helpful study tools and carefully examine the words of Scripture, but our ultimate dependence remains upon God.

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, guiding our understanding so that we may know the truth of God's Word and live according to what He reveals.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the Holy Spirit teach without setting aside the written Word?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever accepted someone's claim that the Spirit revealed something without first checking it against the Bible? Explain.

Action Step

Recall a spiritual claim you have accepted too quickly. Which verses will you examine, and how will you respond if the claim disagrees with God's Word?

THE TRUTH COMES BY REVELATION

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Diligent Study and Divine Revelation Belong Together

We have already seen that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher. This does not remove our responsibility to study. Rather, it shows us how diligent study and spiritual revelation work together. Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:15**:

> *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

We are commanded to study carefully, but spiritual truth is not discovered by human effort alone. We search the Scriptures diligently while depending upon God to reveal their spiritual meaning.

This protects us from two errors. We must not become careless and expect understanding without study, but neither should we imagine that study by itself gives spiritual understanding. Both diligence and dependence upon God are necessary.

Paul's Gospel Came by Revelation

Paul clearly explained that the Gospel he preached did not originate in human wisdom. Paul wrote in **Galatians 1:11-12**:

> *"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

Paul had not simply adopted another man's interpretation. He testified that the Gospel came *"by the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

This does not mean that Paul rejected Scripture or refused to learn from others. It means that the truth he preached was established in him by God rather than resting simply upon human authority.

The same principle is important for us. We may hear truth from a teacher, read it in a Study Guide or discover it while comparing Scriptures, but it must finally become established within our own understanding through the Spirit of God.

Christ Must Be Revealed Within

Paul continued by describing God's work in his own life. Paul wrote in **Galatians 1:15-16**:

> *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:"*

Notice the words *"To reveal his Son in me."* The purpose of revelation is not simply to give us new information. True spiritual revelation centres upon Jesus Christ and brings His truth into our understanding and life.

This is why revelation must never become a search for unusual ideas, secret knowledge or something that makes us appear spiritually superior. The Holy Spirit reveals truth that brings us into greater agreement with Jesus Christ and His Word.

Divine Revelation Is Consistent

Years later, Paul went to Jerusalem and communicated the Gospel he had been preaching. Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:2**:

> *"And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."*

The Gospel God had revealed to Paul was consistent with the truth recognised by the other apostles. God does not reveal one truth to one believer and a contradictory truth to another.

This gives us an important safeguard. If we believe God has revealed something to us, that understanding must agree with the Word of God as a whole.

Personal impressions are not the final authority. Scripture remains the standard by which every claimed revelation must be tested.

God Reveals the Deep Things by His Spirit

Paul explained that spiritual truth reaches beyond what the natural senses can discover. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:9-10**:

> *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."*

Paul does not say that the deep things of God are discovered by eyesight, hearing or human imagination. He says *"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."*

This is why we approach Scripture prayerfully and humbly. The Holy Spirit opens our understanding to spiritual truth that natural reasoning alone cannot reach.

Revelation Must Lead to Life

Spiritual revelation is never given simply so that we can say we possess deeper knowledge than others. God reveals truth so that it may be received, believed and lived.

The purpose is not simply to understand more, but to become more faithful to what God has shown us. Revelation should therefore produce humility, obedience and a clearer knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We study diligently because God commands us to study, and we depend upon the Holy Spirit because spiritual truth must be revealed.

The faithful student searches the Word carefully, trusts God to enlighten their understanding, tests every conclusion by Scripture and lives according to the truth that God reveals.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must truth be made known by God rather than invented by the reader?

Personal Reflection

Is there a belief you would find difficult to change, even if the Bible challenged it? What makes you hold on to it?

Action Step

Choose a belief that you have accepted mainly from another person. How will you test it by the Bible and allow God's Word to correct your thinking if necessary?

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE AUTHORITY

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God's Word Is the Final Authority

When we study the Bible, we must begin with confidence that God's Word is the final authority. Our understanding may change, teachers may disagree and religious traditions may differ, but the Word of God remains true. Paul wrote in **Romans 3:4**:

> *"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."*

Paul establishes an important principle: *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."*

This does not mean that every person is deliberately dishonest. It means that when human opinion conflicts with what God has revealed, God's Word must remain the authority.

Our own understanding is not infallible. A minister, teacher, denomination or Study Guide is not infallible. God's Word alone must be the standard by which every teaching is tested.

God Cannot Lie

Our confidence in Scripture rests upon the character of God Himself. If the Word came from God, then His Word must be trustworthy because God does not lie. Moses wrote in **Numbers 23:19**:

> *"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"*

God does not speak falsely. What He has spoken is reliable.

This gives the Bible student a secure foundation. When a verse is difficult to understand, we do not begin by assuming that Scripture is wrong. We begin by recognising that our understanding may be incomplete.

Apparent Contradictions Require Further Study

Sometimes two verses may initially appear to disagree. When this happens, we should not immediately conclude that the Bible contains a contradiction.

A good example is found in the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke wrote in **Luke 24:1-6**:

> *"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen:"*

Luke describes two men in shining garments. Matthew records other details of the same event in **Matthew 28:1-6**:

> *"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said."*

Matthew specifically describes an angel of the Lord, while Luke describes two men in shining garments. At first glance, this may appear contradictory. However, the accounts provide different details concerning the same event.

Matthew describes the angel who rolled back the stone and sat upon it, while Luke describes what the women encountered after entering the sepulchre. One account mentioning one angel does not require us to conclude that another angel was not present.

The accounts therefore give us additional details rather than requiring us to reject one of them.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why can two accounts of one event give different details without disagreeing?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever assumed two Gospel accounts disagreed without examining the details in both? What does that reveal about your approach?

Action Step

Compare **Luke 24:1-6** *and* **Matthew 28:1-6**. *What assumption might you need to reconsider, and how will you approach similar differences in future?*

Do Not Make Our Understanding the Authority

This example teaches us an important principle. When Scripture appears difficult, the problem may be our present understanding rather than the Word of God.

If we decide that Scripture must be wrong whenever we cannot immediately reconcile two verses, we have made our own understanding the authority over God's Word.

The proper response is humility: *"I do not yet understand how these verses fit together, so I need to study further."*

That attitude protects us from changing or rejecting Scripture simply because an answer is not immediately obvious.

God's Word Is True From the Beginning

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 119:160**:

> *"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."*

God's Word is not partly true or true only when it agrees with our present understanding. His Word is true from the beginning.

This confidence should shape the way we study difficult verses. We continue searching, comparing Scripture and asking God for understanding because we believe that His Word is harmonious and trustworthy.

Every Teaching Must Be Tested by Scripture

Because God's Word is the authority, every teaching must finally be examined by Scripture. We should never accept something simply because:

- A respected teacher said it;
- A denomination teaches it;
- It has been believed for many years;
- It is popular among Christians;
- It agrees with what we have always believed.

None of these things determines truth. The question must always be: What does the Word of God teach?

Teachers and study aids can help us, but they must remain servants of Scripture rather than authorities over Scripture.

Approach the Word With Confidence

Recognising the authority of God's Word gives us confidence when we study. We do not need to fear difficult verses or apparent differences between accounts.

Instead, we can approach them believing that God has spoken truthfully and that careful study will help us understand how the Scriptures fit together.

Our understanding may be corrected. Our traditions may be challenged. Our previous interpretation may have to change. But God's Word remains true.

The faithful student therefore submits every belief, teaching and interpretation to the authority of Scripture. God's Word, not human opinion, must determine what is true.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must God's Word remain the authority when two verses seem hard to reconcile?

Personal Reflection

When two verses seem difficult to reconcile, do you question the Bible or first question whether your understanding is complete?

Action Step

Identify a Bible difficulty that has troubled you. What attitude needs correcting, and how will you investigate it without dismissing either verse?

THE BIBLE IS ONE COHESIVE TRUTH

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One Truth From Genesis to Revelation

The Bible contains many books written by different men over many generations, yet it reveals one harmonious truth from Genesis to Revelation. Scripture is not a collection of unrelated teachings from which we may select the parts we prefer and disregard the rest.

The reason for this unity is that the ultimate source of Scripture is God. Peter wrote in **2 Peter 1:21**:

> *"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."*

Different men wrote in different periods and circumstances, but they were moved by the same Spirit of God. The same Spirit who inspired one part of Scripture inspired the whole.

This means that a correct understanding of one verse will ultimately agree with the truth revealed elsewhere in God's Word.

Jesus Christ Is the Truth

The unity of Scripture is centred upon Jesus Christ. Jesus said in **John 14:6**:

> *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Jesus did not simply say that He teaches truth. He said *"I am... the truth."*

The Scriptures collectively reveal the truth found in Jesus Christ. The Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels and the writings of the apostles may address different subjects and circumstances, but their spiritual truth must finally harmonise in Christ.

This gives us an important safeguard when studying. An interpretation that separates a verse from the truth revealed in Jesus Christ should cause us to examine our understanding carefully.

Scripture Must Be Understood With Scripture

Because the Bible forms one cohesive truth, we should not build an important teaching upon an isolated verse without considering what the rest of Scripture says.

A difficult verse may become clearer when we find another verse dealing with the same truth. These connecting Scriptures are sometimes described as *"mate Scriptures"* because one verse helps us understand another.

This principle is especially important when a verse appears difficult or seems to conflict with another verse. Instead of discarding one Scripture or forcing an immediate explanation, we continue searching for the fuller Biblical picture.

Scripture helps us understand Scripture.

The practical method for doing this carefully will be developed further when we consider how to study God's Word. At this stage, the important foundation is that we expect God's Word to agree with itself.

Different Parts Contribute to the Whole

Harmony does not mean that every writer records exactly the same details or uses identical words. Different books may provide different parts of the same truth.

One verse may introduce a principle, another may explain it further, and another may show its fulfilment or application. Each part contributes to the fuller understanding of the whole.

This is why isolated verses can be misunderstood. If we remove a statement from the wider testimony of Scripture, we may give it a meaning that God never intended.

The serious student therefore asks: What else does the Bible say about this subject?

That question helps prevent us from developing conclusions based upon only part of the Scriptural evidence.

We Must Receive the Whole Word of God

Because Scripture is one cohesive truth, we cannot approach it with the attitude that we will accept the parts we like and reject the parts that challenge us.

Sometimes God's Word will agree with what we already believe. At other times it will require us to reconsider an interpretation, tradition or assumption. Our responsibility is to bring our understanding into agreement with the whole Word of God.

This requires patience. We may not immediately see how two Scriptures fit together, but difficulty does not necessarily mean contradiction. It means that we should continue studying until we understand more clearly how the verses belong together.

One Spirit, One Word, One Truth

The unity of Scripture gives us confidence as we study. The Bible has many writers, but one divine source. It contains many books, but one harmonious revelation of truth.

The Holy Spirit does not teach one truth in one verse and an opposing truth somewhere else. Truth must harmonise with truth.

We should therefore approach the whole Bible believing that its parts belong together and that fuller understanding comes as Scripture is compared with Scripture.

From Genesis to Revelation, God's Word forms one cohesive truth that ultimately reveals Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the unity of the Bible help you study a difficult verse?

Personal Reflection

When a verse appears to support your opinion, are you willing to read other verses that may challenge it? Why?

Action Step

Choose a belief that matters to you. Which related verses will you compare, and how will you respond if the whole Bible changes your conclusion?

WE MUST PRAY FOR UNDERSTANDING

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Ask God to Open Our Understanding

Because the Bible is a spiritual book, we should approach our study prayerfully. Careful reading, comparison and thought are necessary, but we must also ask God to enlighten our understanding. David prayed in **Psalm 119:18**:

> *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."*

David already possessed the words of the Law, but he still prayed that God would open his eyes to understand what was there.

This is an important attitude for every Bible student. The problem is not that God's Word lacks truth. The problem may be that our understanding has not yet been opened to see it clearly.

Pray for Understanding, Not Confirmation

David also prayed in **Psalm 119:27**:

> *"Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works."*

Notice the humility in David's prayer: *"Make me to understand."* He was not asking God to prove that his existing opinion was correct. He was asking God to give him understanding.

We should approach Scripture with the same attitude. Our prayer should not be *"Lord, show me that what I already believe is right."* It should be *"Lord, help me understand what You have actually revealed."*

This keeps our study honest and allows the Word of God to correct us when necessary.

The Spirit Reveals the Deep Things of God

Paul explained that spiritual truth is revealed through the Spirit of God. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:9-10**:

> *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."*

The natural senses cannot discover spiritual truth by themselves. Paul says *"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."*

This is why prayer belongs naturally with Bible study. We are asking the Spirit of God to bring our understanding into agreement with the truth He inspired.

The Spirit of Truth Guides Us

Jesus promised that the Spirit of truth would guide His people. Jesus said in **John 16:13**:

> *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

The Holy Spirit does not guide us away from Scripture. He guides us into the truth revealed in God's Word.

Prayerful study therefore involves both dependence and responsibility. We ask God for understanding, and then we carefully examine the Scriptures He has given us.

Prayer is not a substitute for study, and study is not a substitute for prayer. The two belong together.

Pray Before Forcing an Answer

There will be verses that we do not immediately understand. When this happens, we should resist the temptation to create an explanation simply because we want an immediate answer.

Instead, we can pray as David did: *"Open thou mine eyes..."*

There is nothing wrong with saying *"I do not yet understand this verse."* Such honesty is far better than forcing God's Word into an interpretation that it does not support.

A difficult verse should lead us to further study, comparison and prayer. Our lack of understanding does not change the truth God placed in His Word.

Paul Prayed for Spiritual Enlightenment

Paul also prayed that believers would receive greater spiritual understanding. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 1:16-19**:

> *"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,"*

Paul's prayer was that *"the eyes of your understanding"* would be enlightened.

This shows that spiritual understanding can continue to grow. Even believers who already know Jesus Christ should continue asking God for greater understanding of His truth.

God's Word Does Not Change

Our understanding may grow and change, but God's Word remains settled. The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 119:89**:

> *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."*

When we do not understand something, the Word of God does not need to change. We need our understanding to become clearer.

Prayer therefore keeps us humble before Scripture. It reminds us that God is the source of truth and that we are students who still have more to learn.

As we open the Bible, we should develop the habit of asking God to guide our understanding. Study carefully, pray sincerely, remain teachable and depend upon the Spirit of truth to enlighten your understanding through the Word of God.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do prayer and careful study belong together?

Personal Reflection

Is prayer a regular part of your Bible study, or do you remember it only when you become confused? What needs to change?

Action Step

Before your next study, ask God to expose any assumption you are protecting. How will you respond if what you read calls for a change in your thinking?

EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE

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Every Part of Scripture Has Purpose

Because Scripture comes from God, we should approach every part of it with care and reverence. Nothing in God's Word should be treated casually or dismissed simply because we do not immediately understand its purpose. Paul wrote in **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:"*

Paul does not say that only certain parts of Scripture are inspired or profitable. He says *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."*

This means that every part of the Bible deserves our attention. Some verses may be easier to understand than others, but difficulty does not make a verse unimportant.

Every Word of God Is Pure

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 30:5**:

> *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."*

Notice the expression *"Every word of God is pure."* This should affect the seriousness with which we approach Scripture. Words, phrases and details matter because God has given His Word for a purpose.

This does not mean that we should become so focused upon individual words that we ignore context or the wider teaching of Scripture. Every word matters, but every word must also be understood within the verse, the book and the harmony of the whole Bible.

Do Not Dismiss Difficult Words or Verses

Sometimes we may encounter a verse that does not seem to fit our present understanding. Our first reaction should not be to dismiss the verse, change its meaning or assume that something is wrong with Scripture. Instead, we should recognise that our understanding may still be incomplete.

A difficult Scripture may require us to:

- Read the surrounding verses carefully;
- Compare related verses;
- Examine important words;
- Consider who is speaking and to whom;
- Pray for greater understanding.

The practical methods for doing these things will be considered more fully when we study how to examine the Bible carefully. For now, the important principle is that we trust the purity of God's Word even when we do not yet understand it.

Apparent Difficulties Should Lead to Deeper Study

When two verses appear to conflict, this should not cause us to lose confidence in Scripture. Instead, it should encourage us to search more carefully.

The problem may lie in our assumptions, our understanding of the context or our failure to notice information given elsewhere in the Bible.

This is why humility is so important. We must be willing to say *"I may not yet understand how these Scriptures fit together."* That is a much safer position than forcing one verse to agree with our own interpretation.

God's Word is not corrected by our understanding. Our understanding must be corrected by God's Word.

Approach the Bible With Reverence

If we genuinely believe that every word of God is pure, we will not approach Scripture carelessly. We will slow down, pay attention and seek to understand what God intended.

This does not require fear or anxiety. It requires respect.

We are handling the Word of God, and therefore we should approach it with:

- Reverence;
- Patience;
- Honesty;
- Prayer;
- A willingness to be corrected.

A casual approach can produce careless conclusions. A careful approach encourages us to examine Scripture before deciding what it means.

God's Word Is Worth Searching Carefully

The purity of God's Word gives us confidence as students. We do not need to discard difficult verses or avoid verses that challenge us.

Instead, we can continue searching because God's Word is trustworthy even when our present understanding is limited.

Every word of God is pure. Every part of Scripture has purpose. Every difficult verse deserves honest study.

The faithful student therefore approaches the Bible with reverence, trusts the purity of God's Word and continues searching until their understanding comes into agreement with the truth God has revealed.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should a difficult word or verse receive careful attention rather than be dismissed?

Personal Reflection

When a verse challenges you or seems difficult, do you tend to avoid it? What does your reaction show about your willingness to learn?

Action Step

Choose a verse you have avoided because it is difficult. How will you study it in context, and what will you change about the way you respond to challenging teaching?

CONCLUSION: THE RIGHT APPROACH TO GOD'S WORD

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The way we approach the Bible matters. We are not approaching an ordinary human book, but the inspired Word of God. Our attitude towards Scripture should therefore reflect both confidence in what God has spoken and humility concerning our own understanding.

Throughout this Study Guide, we have seen that spiritual truth cannot be understood by natural reasoning alone. God has given His Spirit to those who are born again, and the Spirit of Christ dwelling within the believer is our Teacher, enlightening our understanding as we carefully search the Scriptures.

This does not remove our responsibility to study. We must still read carefully, compare Scripture with Scripture, consider the wider testimony of God's Word and refuse to build conclusions upon isolated verses. Prayer and study therefore belong together.

Ask God to Open Our Understanding

David's prayer provides an excellent attitude for every student of Scripture. David prayed in **Psalm 119:18**:

> *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."*

We should come to God's Word with that same dependence. We are not asking God to confirm what we have already decided. We are asking Him to help us understand what He has actually revealed.

This requires humility and patience. When we do not understand a verse, we should continue studying and praying rather than forcing an interpretation simply because we want an immediate answer.

God's Word Remains the Authority

We have also established that the Word of God must remain our final authority. Teachers, Study Guides, traditions and personal interpretations may assist us, but none of them possesses the authority that belongs to Scripture itself.

When a verse challenges what we believe, we must allow Scripture to correct us. When two verses appear difficult to reconcile, we should continue searching rather than assuming that God's Word is mistaken.

Our understanding may change as we grow, but God's Word remains true, harmonious and pure.

The Right Approach

Our approach to Scripture should therefore be marked by:

- Reverence for the Word of God;
- Dependence upon the Holy Spirit;
- Confidence in the authority and purity of Scripture;
- Prayer for understanding;
- Willingness to search the whole Bible;

- Humility when our understanding is incomplete;
- Readiness to obey the truth God reveals.

These principles form the foundation for effective Bible study. Before we learn particular study methods, we must first settle how we will approach the Word itself.

Approach God's Word With Confidence and Humility

We approach Scripture with confidence because it came from God, and we approach it with humility because our understanding is not infallible. We study diligently because God has given us His Word to search, and we depend upon His Spirit because spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned.

We should therefore never place our own reasoning above Scripture. Neither should we become discouraged when understanding takes time. We remain teachable, continue searching and trust God to enlighten our understanding through His Word.

God's Word is spiritual, true, harmonious and pure. The faithful student therefore approaches it prayerfully, studies it carefully, depends upon the Spirit of Christ for understanding and willingly brings every belief into agreement with what God has revealed.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How should humility, prayer, and trust in the whole Bible guide your approach to God's Word?

Personal Reflection

What attitude or habit most often prevents you from approaching the Bible with humility and trust? Explain.

Action Step

At your next time of Bible study, what specific habit will you change so you are ready to receive God's truth rather than defend your own opinion?

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Why must the Bible be approached as a spiritual book? Explain why careful reading and the Spirit's help both matter, and why either one alone is not enough.

2. Understanding

How do the truth being sealed, the Spirit as seal and teacher, and truth coming by revelation fit together? Use a verse to explain how God makes truth known without setting aside His written Word.

3. Personal Reflection

How has this teaching affected your confidence in the Spirit of Christ who already dwells within a born-again believer? Explain what attitude or assumption you personally need to change.

4. Response to Truth

When two verses seem to disagree, what should your response be? Explain why the authority and unity of God's Word call for humility and further study.

5. Action Step

Choose a difficult Bible verse or a belief you have accepted too quickly. How will you pray, examine related verses and allow God's Word to correct your thinking? Say when you will begin.

6. Early Response

Have you begun the examination you described in Question 5? If yes, explain what you examined and what changed in your understanding or attitude. If not, explain what held you back.

7. Ongoing Practice

When an answer remains unclear, how will you keep praying and studying patiently without forcing a conclusion? Explain which habit you need to strengthen.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Why must a believer study carefully while depending upon the Spirit of Christ already within? Explain how God's Word protects us from relying on our own reasoning alone.

9. Living the Truth

Think of a familiar belief that the Bible may challenge. How will you respond personally, and what change in your thinking or conduct may be required?

10. Final Response

Consider the Bible as God's Word, the Spirit as Teacher, prayer, harmony and the purity of God's Word. What has been corrected in your approach, and what will you practise differently?