

How To Understand the Bible

David Halbrook

Have you ever followed a recipe? If you never used that recipe before, you probably read the same line several times throughout the cooking process to be sure you understood each step of the recipe before moving onto the next step. The Bible is not written in the form of a recipe, but it also requires careful reading, thought, and study.

How can you understand the Bible? The same basic way you understand other books. A basic rule is “start at the beginning.” The book of Genesis comes first for a reason—the word “Genesis” means “beginning.” Reading Genesis will introduce you to people and ideas that are essential to understanding the rest of the Bible. Start there!

A few weeks ago, we mentioned that God has always spoken in a way that can be understood by people who WANT to understand (Matthew 13:15), WORK to understand (2 Timothy 2:15), are WILLING to do what they understand (James 1:25), and PERSIST in learning and doing “these things” (2 Peter 1:8). This is a basic summary of how to understand the Bible. Can we help you in the process of studying the Bible? If so, contact us today!

Editor’s Note: Maybe you can think of a better way to illustrate “how” we understand the Bible, than by my “recipe” example. The better you know the person you are trying to teach, the better equipped you are to give an illustration that they can easily understand. Do what you can to get people thinking about the Bible and use our articles in *Arkansas Weekly* to help you do that.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Samuel Southall, and others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

Openings remain on two lists on the back bulletin board. One list is aimed at teaching the lost and the other at assisting each other when we assemble.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:
David Halbrook 569-4491

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

April 13, 2014

WWW.QVCOC.COM

The Wise Are Well-Advised

David Halbrook

By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom. Prov. 13:10

It is no newsflash that pride precedes destruction (Prov. 16:18). Solomon notes that the prideful refuse to listen to good advice. Savvy suggestions offered by the wise to the fool fall on deaf ears and become an occasion for contention. The shield of self-defense goes up with the words “I know best,” “You can’t tell me what to do,” or “You just don’t understand.” And unless the adviser is also wise enough to offer a soft, kind reply to diffuse the other’s anger, then fireworks are likely to follow, as well as the hard times that come by learning “the hard way.” The fool then often resents and searches for faults in the person who offered good advice. Until this fool humbles himself, his pride will continue to cause him more problems and constant strife with people who offer to help.

Then there are others. They are “well-advised” because they listen to wise words. “The words of the wise are like goads” (Eccl. 12:11). A goad would prick an ox who wandered off course as he plowed the field. It was momentarily painful, but it caused no serious wound and was effective to keep the ox in the way he should go. Similarly Solomon said, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). Those who will listen to wise advice which momentarily pricks their own opinion, plan, or conscience will avoid the deeper and more painful wounds that result from poor decisions. Thus being “well-advised” they gain wisdom that guides them in the way. The longer they live, the more they see how the wisdom offered to them works, and this is the process by which they themselves become wise.

Are you wise or a fool? Do you apply your heart to understanding by accepting advice from wise counselors who have proven they love you (Prov. 2:2)? “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15).

Membership in a Local Church

Robert F. Turner

You became a member of the church that belongs to Christ when you were baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). The Lord added you to the number of His followers, metaphorically assembled, when you became obedient to the faith (Acts 2:36-41, 47). As a member of the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) you accepted certain obligations: to submit to His leadership revealed in His word; and to give yourself freely to the service of your Lord (Rom. 6:17-18; 1 Pet. 3:15). This is your status whether you become a member of a local church or not. But the Scriptures clearly teach you to work and worship with other brethren (Heb. 10:25). Their presence and accessibility, present both privilege and obligation to all who would be faithful to Christ.

Saints who have agreed to function as a team, under overseers and through servants, become a "church" in the local organized sense (Phil. 1:1; 4:15). This "church" is made up of members of the universal body of Christ, yet has some distinctive roles - is not to be confused with the whole body of Christ, nor with individual members thereof. Believers are to care for their widows, "and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:16). A distinction is made between a plurality of saints engaged in a spiritual work, and "the church" (Matt. 18:17). Elders are to shepherd the flock "which is among you" - they have local church obligations (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23). Letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2:3) show clearly the distinctive nature of local churches. In becoming a member of a local church you accept obligations there also. You should not enter into local church membership without understanding the obligations and responsibilities that go with that relationship.

Team Responsibilities This means you give up some independence to function collectively. There could be no effective team work if each member operated with his own judgment, with no regard for the team effort. A local church must operate with a common mind, i.e., agreement in judgment. The elders lead in forming this judgment, and as a sheep you are to follow your shepherds (1 Thess. 5:12f). For a more current illustration: to play football as a team, each player must act in keeping with the play called by the quarterback or coach.

As much of the work done will be via some medium of exchange (money), you are obligated to bear your share of this load. The collection on the First Day of the week is a means of pooling resources so that team work can be done. When a planned program is announced, and you help finance that program, you are doing some share of that work - pulling with the team. But your participation also means you share in the responsibility for

what is done. If you cannot conscientiously support your local church program you had better change it, or join a team you believe is serving the Lord faithfully (Rom. 14:22-23).

Mutual Assistance Church members sometimes seem to think their presence at service and their contribution to the treasury is the whole of their relationship to the local church. This ignores a most vital reason for collective work. Hebrews 10:25 gives "exhorting one another" (encouraging) as the basic purpose for assembling. We must learn to think of the local church as a mutual encouragement society: brethren banded together to help one another go to heaven. In public worship we "teach and admonish" by our singing (Col. 3:16). We edify one another even as we pray (1 Cor. 14:14-17). The Lord's Supper recalls Christ's sacrifice in our behalf and we "show the Lord's death till he come" (11:23-26). Every member is told: "comfort yourselves together, and edify one another. . . ." (1 Thess. 5:11).

And mutual assistance goes far beyond public worship. Fellow Christians enter into a pact to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). This involves seeking to correct the errors of one another (v. 1). When you enter into covenant relationship with other brethren, you accept the obligation to correct and encourage others; and agree that they should correct and encourage you. You are to love your brethren, not in word only, but in deed and truth (1 Jn. 3:16-19). True love removes the chips from our shoulders. It suffers long and is kind, envies not, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, etc. (see 1 Cor. 13). These things need to be remembered when correcting, and when being corrected. If you have missed this aspect of fellowship in a local church, you are depriving others, and yourself, of help every saint needs and has a right to expect.

People Are Different Yes they are, and joining hands in the Lord's service does not remove all differences. Occupations, hobbies, financial status, regional customs, age, and many other personal differences will dictate friendships and associations. There is no reason to expect these differences to vanish when we become members of the same local church. But if we will concentrate on what we have in common: on our love for the Lord, and desire to do His will; we will not allow personal differences to destroy our more noble purpose. We may, in fact, learn to share with one another to such an extent that our differences only expand the field of our church work. We can help one another "fill out" what is lacking in each of us, so that our differences become our balance and our strength.

A very few, who "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), will be a mighty force for good. Remember the church at Smyrna, rich in God's sight (Rev. 2:8-11); and determine to do all possible to make the church where you are a member, a Christ-approved church.