

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Why Did God Make the Bible So Hard to Understand?

The Question

- Many unbelievers and some believers are ask this question “Why did God make the Bible so hard to understand?”
- The question assumes that God is intentionally wanting us to be lost by withholding a better way of living from us
- The question suggests that God wants prevent people from knowing Jesus and living godling lives
- The question contradicts the purpose of the Bible which to enlighten us, not to keep us in the dark ***Psalm 119:105 (KJV) 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.***
- A better question is, “Why is the Bible Hard for Me to Understand?”

The Bible

- The Bible is God’s Word
- The Bible is God’s revelation to us
- The Bible is the account of God’s action in the world, and His purpose with all humankind
- The word *Bible* comes from the Greek word *biblios* which means book or books
- The Bible is a book with 66 books inside (39 OT books and 27 in the NT)
- The Bible is written in a wide variety of literary styles from narratives to poetry, to history, to epistles, to proverbs, to parables, to prophecy, to end time literature
- The central message or theme of the Bible is God's plan of salvation
- In the Old Testament, we see God’s *concept of salvation* in Israel's deliverance from Egypt in the book of Exodus.
- The New Testament reveals God’s *source of salvation*: Jesus Christ
- By faith in Jesus, believers are saved from God's judgment of sin and its consequence, which is eternal death.
- The Bible is inspired by God or *God-breathed* ***2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:***
- The Bible is
 - A *guide* for living life to the full. ***Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (NIV)***
 - A *storehouse* of wonderful stories for every age from children and adults
 - A *refuge* in trouble
 - A *treasury* of insight as to who we are
 - A *sourcebook* for everyday living

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- The Bible has been taught and read by children for generations while at the same time challenging students of the Word as they dive deeper into it

Reasons We Struggle Understanding the Bible

- With all the great things said about the Bible, many people think the Bible is hard to understand.
- The Bible is not hard to understand, but our approach to reading the Bible may make it hard to understand

Sin

- We are fallen human beings; and sin clouds, distorts and confuses our understanding and leads us to mold, twist, and interpret the Bible to our own liking **Mark 4:10-12 (KJV)**
- **10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.**
- The believer hears the parable. He does not just hear the words, but he hears the message, and he hears with his heart.
- The unbeliever hears the parable, but not with spiritual ears. He just hears the words.
- Why does the outsider not perceive or understand? Jesus gives the reason: "lest they be converted and forgiven"
- They experience the *law of conditioning*. The more they reject spiritual truth, the more we decrease our sensitivity and become hardened to spiritual truth
- The *law of spiritual conditioning* says that the more we receive spiritual truth, the more we increase our capacity to understand and grow in spiritual truth.

We Don't Read the Bible

- It's impossible to live by the commands and principles of the Bible if you don't read it
- The Bible must be *read or heard* to be *understood* **Ephesians 3:4 (KJV) 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)**
- Understanding the Bible is a product of regular reading and study **2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

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- A couple weeks ago we all *studied* the weather because a winter storm was coming our way
- We studied the weather so we would know how to prepare
- **Question:** How prepared would we be for expected and unexpected events in life if we studied the Bible like we study the weather?

We're Haphazard Bible Readers

- The Bible is the most widely read book in the world, but it's also the most "randomly" read book in the world
- Many people we read the Bible don't have a Bible reading plan, they just read the Bible
- When the Bible is read in a haphazard manner, we easily ignore, overlook, or bypass words that are critical to our understanding
- When we read the Bible in a haphazard manner, it easily contributes to our confusion, misunderstanding and frustration

We're Not Familiar with the Customs and Practices of the Bible

- The Bible was written over a 1,500-year period and we are separated from the most recent parts of the Bible by over 2,000 years
- It would be safe to say that times have changed since then
- There are words, expressions, systems of measurement, ways of living, literary forms, etc.
- Study is necessary to understand the biblical text in its original setting

There Different Literary Types Found in the Bible

- The Bible is not written like a novel, magazine or a newspaper
- The Bible has different literary types such as law, poetry, history, poetry, proverbs psalms, gospels, and letters
- Each literary type involves a different type of interpretation
- The Psalms are poetry and often uses a figurative language, while Proverbs is wise sayings for life, the gospels are narratives, books of prophecy like Isaiah speak to events not to be fulfilled

We Don't Translate Words Correctly

- The Bible was written in three different languages and some words have multiple definitions and while others have different meanings today than they did when the Bible was written
- In the New Testament, the word love is used a lot, but there are four different meanings for the word love

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- But if we don't translate the word *love* correctly, it effects our ability to understand the scripture we've read
- We can also read scripture and give certain words a contemporary meaning
Judges 15:1 (KJV) 1 But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber.
- Does the word "kid" in this verse mean:
 - a) A young son or daughter
 - b) A joke
 - c) A young goat
- Depending on how we interpret the word "kid", it the meaning of the scripture will change dramatically

Some Parts of the Bible are Difficult to Understand

- There are some passages in the Bible that are hard to understand
- There are Bible scholars that have literally spent a lifetime trying to fully understand challenging Bible passages
- Many may hard to understand because we have some maturing to do ***1 Peter 2:2 (KJV) 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:***
- There are passages in the Bible that are hard to understand, but as we get into the practice of study, revelation will occur
- Regular study of the Bible opens our understanding

How Can I Improve My Understanding of the Bible and Help Others?

Repent of our sins

- Repentance removes the blockage to our understanding
- We no longer approach the Bible with our what we want the Bible to say, but we come to the Bible ready for god to speak to us through His Word

Pray for Understanding and Wisdom

- Before you have your daily devotion, pray for understanding and wisdom
- Prayer is of dependence on God and an act of humility

Study the Word of God

- A simple way to start studying the Bible is *observation, interpretation, and application*

Step 1: Observation—What does the passage say?

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- Observation is the first and most important step in how to study the Bible.

Step 2: Interpretation—What does the passage mean?

- Interpretation is discovering the meaning of a passage, the author's main thought or idea.
- Answering the questions that arise during observation will help you in the process of interpretation.
- Five clues (called "the five C's") can help you determine the author's main point(s):
 1. Context: Read the passages *around* the text
 2. Cross Reference: Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
 3. Culture. The Bible was written long ago, so when we interpret it, we need to understand it from the writers' cultural context.
 4. Conclusion. Having answered your questions for understanding by means of context, cross-reference, and culture, you can make a preliminary statement of the passage's meaning. Remember that if your passage consists of more than one paragraph, the author may be presenting more than one thought or idea.
 5. Consultation. Reading books known as commentaries, which are written by Bible scholars, can help you interpret Scripture.

Step 3: Application—What am I going to do about what the passage says and means?

- Application is why we study the Bible
- We want our lives to change; we want to be obedient to God and to grow more like Jesus Christ.
- After we have observed a passage and interpreted or understood it to the best of our ability, we must then apply its truth to our own life.

Study the Word with others

- The Bible is preached and taught at DFC
- Attend Christian education classes, WINGS, MOV, youth groups
- Get a friend group to study the Bible
- Get a Bible translation that aids in your understanding