

Can We Understand The Bible Alike?



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

Can We All Understand The Bible Alike?

Learn that God's word is meant to be understood alike, some obstacles to achieving this goal, and some keys to understanding the Bible alike

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Written by Eric Krieg

About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Can We Understand The Bible Alike?

Draw a straight line on a piece of paper. Now, take a guess how long that line is. Then, I encourage you to ask a couple other people how long they think your line is. You will probably have several different answers. This is a state of division and disharmony. However, I now want you to take a ruler and measure that line. Record your answer. Then, allow the others to measure that line with the ruler. Record their answers. Now, all the answers should agree. You are now in unity with the others as to how long that line is.

What happened? You went from being divided in your opinions about how long the line is to being united. Why? Well, to begin with, the division was based on personal opinions. Then, whenever there was a recognizable standard of authority (the ruler) that was applied to the question, the answer it gave was accepted as truth. This brought about unity.

Allow me to illustrate another way. What is $3 + 3$? Write down your answer. You could also give this same math problem to others and record their answers. We know that the answer is 6. We can all be agreement (in unity) that the answer is 6 because we recognize the same standard that is to be applied in mathematics.

But, suppose that I refused to accept that answer. What if I insisted that $3 + 3 = 8$? What if I said that I have always been taught that $3 + 3 = 8$?

What if I contended that I have received excellent education in mathematics and I absolutely know that $3 + 3 = 8$? Would my opinion that the answer is 8 be just as good as the answer of 6? Or, what if I claimed that we simply could never agree as to whether the answer is 6 or whether the answer is 8?

In both of these examples, the confusion that causes disunity is solved by applying an objective standard. In the first example, the standard was a ruler. In the second example, the standard was the principles of mathematics. I am sure that I could provide other examples of areas in life in which we identify a common standard and know that our own personal opinions are not “just as good” as the answer given by that standard.

Today, in the area of religion, it is very common to hear folks claim that we cannot all understand the Bible alike. Therefore, we are told that all of the religious division that is in this world (even within “Christianity”) exists because it is not possible for us all to understand the Bible in the same way and be united. So (according those who make this contention), we cannot all agree about whether baptism is necessary for salvation or not, whether we are “once saved always saved” or not, whether God approves of instrumental music in worship or not, whether God approves of divorce for just any cause or not, whether consuming alcoholic beverages is sinful or not, etc. – because we cannot understand what the Bible says on these subjects alike! And, since we cannot understand the Bible alike, we are often told that we must accept differences in belief (called “unity in diversity” or “ecumenism”). Those who do not accept these differences are commonly referred to as being “dogmatic,” “legalistic,” or part of a “cult.”

However, during this lesson, I want to challenge the very foundation of these charges. Are we *really* incapable of understanding the Bible – and understanding it alike? Let me ask the question another way. “Is it possible for two people to understand the Bible alike?” Could these two people come to the exact same conclusions about the doctrines that are taught in the Bible? I suppose that many people would believe that it *is* possible for two

people to understand the Bible alike. Now, if it is possible for two people to understand the Bible alike, is it possible for 20 people to understand the Bible alike? If not, why not? If so, why could these 20 people understand the Bible alike – and couldn't more than 20 people understand the Bible alike? Throughout this lesson, I encourage you to open your mind to see whether the Bible can be understood – and be understood alike!

Some Tests

If it is true that we cannot understand the Bible alike, then that should be true about everything the Bible says. Everything it says, then, would be subject to our own personal interpretations and opinions. And, one interpretation or opinion would be just as good as another! However, let's take a few moments to think through some basic examples and see whether we are willing to accept the consequences of that position.

The creation of the world

Can we understand the Bible alike with regard to the creation of the world? Read Genesis 1-2 and learn everything that the Bible reveals about how God created this world. Now, answer a few basic questions.

(1) Who created the world? Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Therefore, the answer is, "God created the world." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that some explosion took place to create this universe? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that God created the world.

(2) What was created on the fourth day? Genesis 1:14-19 says, "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for

lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

Therefore, the answer is, "God created the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that God created water on the fourth day and created the sun, moon, and stars on the first day? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that God created the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day.

(3) What did God do on the seventh day? Genesis 2:1-3 says, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Therefore, the answer is, "God rested on the seventh day." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that God created man and woman on the seventh day and rested on the fourth day? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that God rested on the seventh day.

Noah and the flood

Can we understand the Bible alike with regard to the flood God brought upon the world during the time of Noah? Read Genesis 6-9 to learn what the Bible reveals about the flood. Now, answer a few questions.

(1) Why did God choose to destroy the world through the flood? Genesis 6:5-7 says, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the

earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

Therefore, the answer is, "God destroyed the world by means of the flood because mankind had become very wicked." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that God destroyed the world because God was concerned that mankind was becoming too powerful? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that God destroyed the world by the flood because of the great wickedness of mankind.

(2) Who was saved from this destruction – and how did God save them? Genesis 7:1 says, "So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood."

Therefore, the answer is, "God saved Noah, Noah's wife, Noah's sons, and their wives by means of the ark." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that God saved 47 people from the flood by giving them special powers to survive underwater? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that the only people God saved from destruction were these eight people – and He used the ark to save them.

(3) What kind of wood was Noah to use to construct the ark? How many windows was Noah told to make in the ark? Genesis 6:14 records God's instructions to Noah, "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood." Then, Genesis 6:16 says, "You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above."

Therefore, the answer is, "God told Noah to use gopherwood to build the ark and only told him to make one window in the ark." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that Noah used oak to build the

ark and that the ark had 8 windows (Note that, today, the ark is commonly pictured as having many windows). Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that Noah was to use gopherwood and that there was to be only one window in the ark.

The birth of Christ

Finally, can we understand the Bible alike with regard to the birth of Jesus Christ? Read Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 to learn what the Bible teaches about the birth of Jesus. Now, answer a few basic questions.

(1) Who was Jesus' mother? Matthew 1:20-21 says, "But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.'"

Therefore, the answer is, "Mary was the mother of Jesus." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that Elizabeth was Jesus' mother? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that Mary was Jesus' mother.

(2) In what town was Jesus born? Matthew 2:1 says, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king...."

Therefore, the answer is, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea." Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that Jesus was born in Nazareth? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

(3) How many wise men were there? What did they bring to Jesus? And, where did they find Him? Matthew 2:11 says, "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And

when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Therefore, the answer is, “We are not told how many wise men there were, they brought three gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), and they found Jesus (called a “young Child”) in a “house.” Can we understand that answer? Can we understand it alike? Certainly! But, what if I insisted that there were three wise men who brought the three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus while He was still in the manger (as is common portrayed by people today)? Would my opinion be just as good as what the Bible says? Absolutely not! The Bible clearly does not tell us how many wise men there were, it tells us that these men brought the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus, and that Jesus was found in a house (not in the manger).

Is it possible for us to understand these things alike?

Now, is it possible for us to understand these things – and understand them alike? Absolutely! As long as we answer these Bible questions with the answers revealed in the pages of God’s word, we can be united in our answers! In addition, we can clearly see that it is unacceptable to hold to any other conclusion besides the ones revealed in the pages of the Bible!

God’s Word Is Meant To Be Understood – And Be Understood Alike

Whenever someone says that we cannot understand the Bible – and cannot understand it alike, he/she is undermining God’s revelation of His will to mankind! Now, it is one thing if God says that His word is impossible to understand (and understand alike). However, when God says that His word is designed to be understood and be understood alike, these people are making God out to be a liar!

God says that we can understand His word

Let’s begin by discovering that God says His word can be understood. In John 8:32, Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Note that to “prove” is to put something to the test so as to know its true nature). In Ephesians 3:3-5, Paul says that the Holy Spirit has revealed the message of salvation (which had once been a “mystery”) to the apostles and prophets. Then, as these individuals (including Paul) wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, those who would read the message “may understand.” In Ephesians 5:17, Paul said, “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” In Colossians 1:9-10, Paul told the Colossians, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

These are just a sample of the many Bible passages which demonstrate that God’s word has been revealed so that we can understand the will of the Lord (Ephesians 5:17)! 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is a summary of this: “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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Therefore, those who claim that the Bible is too difficult to understand must either believe: (1) God lied about His word being understandable or (2) that God failed to make His word understandable. But, rather than believing either one of these, we have already seen that God’s word can be understood! Couldn’t you understand what God made on the fourth day of creation? Couldn’t you understand that eight people were saved from destruction in the flood by means of the ark? And,

couldn't you understand that Mary was the mother of Jesus? You can understand God's word! You can know what doctrines He wants you to believe – and you can know what He wants you to do in order to be saved!

God says that we can understand His word alike

Now that we have established that we *can* understand the word of God, let's see that we also *can* understand it alike. First, understand that God has created a system in which we can all be united. Ephesians 4:4-6 says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Now consider what God has just revealed – and how these facts contribute to unity.

(1) There is only one body. That is, there is only one church that those who are His people are part of (since the body is the church, see Ephesians 1:22-23). God has not created tens of thousands of different churches (as there are today). He only created one! (2) There is only one Spirit. This Spirit (as we have seen) was responsible for revealing God's will to mankind (see John 16:13; Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). This He accomplished by revealing God's will to the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3-5). Therefore, there is only one unified message from God. (3) There is only one hope. Those who will be obedient to God all have the same hope – the hope of everlasting life in Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-9). (4) There is only one Lord. Jesus Christ is the only Savior and He is to be the only Master of those who desire to do God's will (Matthew 6:24). (5) There is only one faith. That is, there is only one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that is acceptable to God. There are not many different systems of religious belief, teaching, and practice God approves of. (6) There is only one baptism. Those who become Christians all become Christians the same way – including the command to be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). We are, therefore, all baptized into the one body of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians

12:13). (7) There is only one God. This one God is Father of all.

Second, not only did God create a system of religion in which we could be united, but God commands unity between those who want to follow Him. Just prior to identifying all of these sources of unity, Paul said that we are to be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). There is unity in the message revealed by the Spirit of God. It is man's responsibility to eagerly maintain that unity! Then, 1 Corinthians 1:10 helps us to understand the degree to which man must be united: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Philippians 1:27 identifies what the unity is in: "...that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." So, Christians must be perfectly joined together in unity as they strive together for the one system of acceptable religious belief, teaching, and practice that God has revealed in the pages of His word (the gospel's message)!

Now, since God has given us a message that outlines one united system of religion that He approves and He commands that we be united in it, how can man say that it is not possible to understand the Bible alike? Did God fail to give us a system of religion we can be united in? Did God give us a command to be united that is too difficult for us to obey? No, He did not! We can understand the Bible – and understand it alike!

All of the religious division came from someone else!

Clearly, the problems that come in trying to understand the Bible and understand it alike do not come from God! They come from men. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace...." God's ways are always perfect. However, man is fallible. Therefore, Romans 3:4 says, "let God be true but every man a liar." Whenever there is any problem, you can know that the problem did ***not*** originate with God!

Instead, as we read the Bible, we can know that mankind has a history of rebelling against God's ways. Eve was deceived into thinking she should take of the forbidden fruit. The wicked people in the time of the flood were living according to their own desires. The Israelites often rejected God and pursued idols. And, this trend has only continued. Today, people are still often not content to simply listen to God. Instead, they want to go their own ways. As a result, there are now thousands upon thousands of different religious organizations (even "Christian" churches) – and "interpretations" of the Bible!

Obstacles To Understanding The Bible Alike

Well, if God has designed His word to be understood – and to be understood alike, it ought to cause us to consider why so many people fail to actually accomplish this and why there is so much religious division in the world today. Let's consider some common obstacles to understanding the Bible alike.

As with everything we will discuss, the main obstacle to understanding the Bible in the way God wants us to understand it – and then to understand it alike – is to be able to see the Bible for exactly what it is and what it says and be willing to apply the proper conclusions. We must be able to see what the Bible teaches without any kind of distortion whatsoever. However, there are many different things that attempt to distort the way in which we understand the message God has revealed.

Personal backgrounds

The way that we understand some passages and Biblical concepts can become distorted because of ideas that have been engrained in our minds. Sometimes these ideas come from our parents. Sometimes they come from the ways in which we were raised. Sometimes they come from our cultures. Sometimes they come from the ways in which we have been educated. They can come through many

different sources. Then, when we study the Bible, we can be guilty of interpreting what God says through our own personal worldviews rather than allowing God to shape our entire worldviews!

Opinions

Sometimes we can become guilty of distorting Bible passages (knowingly or unknowingly) in a way so they will fit our own ideas/opinions. Then, opinions often are bound on others (forcing others to accept our own opinions). However, the Bible says that there is a way which often "seems right to a man" but its end "is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Therefore, we must not be wise in our own opinions (Romans 12:16) – or place our confidence in the opinions of other men.

Tradition

Sometimes we can be guilty of placing more emphasis on man's traditions (even his religious traditions) than on what God's word actually teaches. In fact, in some churches, tradition is viewed as being just as authoritative as the Bible! However, in Matthew 15:3-9, Jesus condemned some religious people because they violated God's commandment by holding to man-made traditions!

Desire to justify

Sometimes we can fail to accept the truth that God's word teaches because we simply do not want to change. So, whenever we read of something God wants us to do, we distort God's message to fit what we want. Or, we can also desire to justify someone else (i.e. a family member or friend) and be guilty of the same. For instance, in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Paul warned Timothy (a preacher) that a time would come when individuals would not "endure sound doctrine" (they would not like what true gospel teaching required of them). They would, "according to their own desires" and because of their "itching ears" (wanting to be told something that was pleasing to them) would find "teachers" who would tell them what they desired to hear. Thus, they would "turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." Many individuals today do not want to study God's word to find out what they are doing wrong

and what they need to change. Instead, they study God's word and listen to preachers only to learn what they *desire* to know.

Failure to rightly divide the word of truth

There are accurate and inaccurate ways to interpret God's word. There are many people who will find one passage (or a few passages) they like and that they *think* teaches a particular doctrine. They will often use these passages to teach that doctrine – and interpret them in a way that contradicts other passages of Scripture. However, 2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Yet, there are many people who are guilty of twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction (either intentionally or unintentionally) because they are not being diligent to accurately interpret God's teachings – just as some were guilty of in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Failure to study God's word for oneself

Many folks are guilty of not being diligent to search out what the Bible teaches – for themselves. They will only listen to what some people tell them the Bible says and what it means. Therefore, many people only ever know what the Bible says by what their parents, teachers, preachers, etc. say – without searching the truth out for themselves. Rather than being guilty of this, we should imitate the example of the Bereans (in Acts 17:11) – who “searched the Scriptures daily” to find out whether they were being taught the truth or not!

False teachers

Sometimes the false conclusions folks come to in their understanding of God's word is due to their own errors. However, there are many times false teachers assist folks in coming to false conclusions about God's word. There are many warnings about false teachers and false prophets in the Bible. These individuals claim to speak the things of God but actually teach things that do not originate with God. Jesus warned about false prophets in Matthew 7:15-20. Peter warned about such in 2 Peter 2:1-3. In Galatians 1:6-9, Paul warned about those who would

“pervert the gospel of Christ” and urged that no other gospel be accepted besides the one true gospel! He even says that all false gospels must be rejected – no matter who preaches them (even if it originated with an apostle of Christ or an angel of God)! Therefore, you must determine never to listen to any false teacher – no matter who is teaching you!

Bottom line

The “bottom line” is that there are a large number of things that can get in our way of understanding the Bible accurately – and understanding it alike (even in addition to the things discussed here). But, we can be sure that God is not one of those things!

Keys To Understanding The Bible Alike

Now, before closing this study, I want us to think about some things that will help us understand the Bible alike. Though I am sure we could add some things to this list, let's think about five things that will go a long way in helping us understand God's word and understanding it alike – on any and every subject God has revealed His will!

Recognize the right standard

In order to understand God's will and understand it alike, we must recognize an objective standard of truth. And, as we have already seen, it is through His written word that God reveals His will to mankind. Remember, it is through that message which has been given by inspiration of God that we can understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). After all, the Spirit of God has revealed the mind of Christ to mankind through this message (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Therefore, it is important to establish that whatever God says on any subject is the complete truth on the matter. Whatever He says about baptism is truth. Whatever He says about the church is truth.

Whatever He says about worship is truth. Whatever He says about our moral conduct is truth. If we change His word in any way (either by adding to what He has said or by taking away from what He has said), we fail to recognize the right standard to guide our lives (Revelation 22:18-19).

Rightly divide the Scriptures

As we saw earlier, it is absolutely essential to be diligent and rightly divide (accurately handle) the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). This instruction implies that there are things that we can do to interpret God's word in a way that fails to please Him. So, here are some practical things we need to do to help us accurately interpret the word of God.

(1) Observe the context of the passage and interpret each verse in a way that is consistent with the context. (2) Remember that, since God's word is truth, all Scripture must harmonize. Therefore, every verse of Scripture must be interpreted in a way that does not cause it to contradict any other Bible teaching. (3) Understand and recognize the differences in the testaments. Know that we live under the law of Christ, revealed in the New Testament – not the Law of Moses, revealed in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:14). (4) Never interpret figurative language (i.e. poetic language, apocalyptic language) in literal ways. Instead, read the passage in its context and understand the point that the author is making. (5) In all things, be diligent to be fair and honest with the Bible text.

Have a good and honest heart that is seeking the truth

In order to understand the Bible accurately and be united in our conclusions, we must not approach the Bible with any kind of preconceived ideas or inappropriate attitudes. Instead, we must approach the Bible with sincerity of heart and one that is seeking only the truth! We must remember that it is only the truth that will set us free from the consequences of our sins (John 8:32).

Honesty and humility are both necessary if we desire to come to unity in an accurate understanding of God's word. We must simply

accept whatever the Bible says – and be willing to accept the possibility of being wrong. Then, we must be willing to make whatever changes God tells us to make! Consider this. In Jesus' parable of the soils (in Luke 8:4-8, 11-15), Jesus demonstrates how many different people will hear the word of God. However, only those who have good and honest hearts will be pleasing to God and produce spiritual fruit.

Demand book, chapter, and verse for everything

When we are seeking the truth and when we are diligent to establish what is truth (by using the right standard), then we must also be diligent to demand book, chapter, and verse for everything. That is, we must demand Bible authority for everything that we do. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." To do everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is to do everything by His authority.

We must not do just anything that is pleasing to us in an attempt to serve God. Instead, we must make certain to have God's approval for everything that we do, think, and say. Acting with Bible authority in all things will contribute to unity. However, acting in ways that are lacking Bible authority will result in more and more division! Ultimately, we will all be judged by the things that are written in the Bible (John 12:48; Revelation 20:11-15). Therefore, we need to be certain that the things we do are done with full Bible authority. We establish Bible authority by having: (1) A direct command, (2) an approved example, or (3) a necessary inference.

Pursue unity

Even when all these things I have mentioned are being done, division can result because there is not a desire to pursue unity and peace. However, as we have already seen, unity is part of God's expectations for His people (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27). It will certainly take effort in order to be united.

We must be willing to practice love and exercise patience with folks as we study God’s word and make the right applications of His teachings. Whenever God’s word speaks about something, we must seek to be united in what God’s word has said. Then, whenever God permits areas of judgment in certain matters, we must continue to pursue unity and refuse to bind where God has not bound (see Romans 14)!

Conclusion

We can understand the Bible – and we can understand it alike! Not only *can* we do so; but, we are expected to do so. Let us never accept man’s excuses for religious division!

Consider Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:20-23. In this prayer, He demonstrates His desire for unity among His followers and the dangerous results failing to be united will have on others: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Study Questions

What two illustrations were given in the beginning of the lesson? Explain their significance.

1. Some Tests

Answer the following questions about the creation of the world. Can we understand the Bible alike?

- (1) Who created the world?

- (2) What was created on the fourth day?

- (3) What did God do on the seventh day?

Answer the following questions about the flood. Can we understand the Bible alike?

- (1) Why did God choose to destroy the world through the flood?

- (2) Who was saved from this destruction?

- (3) What kind of wood was Noah to use to construct the ark? How many windows was Noah told to make in the ark?

Answer the following questions about the birth of Jesus. Can we understand the Bible alike?

- (1) Who was Jesus’ mother?

- (2) In what town was Jesus born?

- (3) How many wise men were there? What did they bring to Jesus? And, where did they find Him?

Is it possible for us to understand these things alike? Why or why not?

2. God’s Word Is Meant To Be Understood – And Be Understood Alike

Does God claim that we can understand His word? Explain.

Does God claim that we can understand His word alike? Explain.

Where has all of the religious division come from?

3. Obstacles To Understanding The Bible Alike

How can personal backgrounds hinder us from understanding the Bible and understanding it alike?

How can opinions hinder us from understanding the Bible and understanding it alike?

How can tradition hinder us from understanding the Bible and understanding it alike?

How can the desire to justify hinder us from understanding the Bible – and understanding it alike?

How can a failure to rightly divide the word of truth hinder us from understanding the Bible – and understanding it alike?

How can a failure to study God's word for oneself hinder us from understanding the Bible – and understanding it alike?

How can false teachers hinder us from understanding the Bible – and understanding it alike?

4. Keys To Understanding The Bible Alike

Why is recognizing the right standard essential to understanding the Bible alike?

Why is rightly dividing the Scriptures essential to understanding the Bible alike?

Why is having a good and honest heart that is seeking the truth essential to understanding the Bible alike?

Why is demanding book, chapter, and verse essential to understanding the Bible alike?

Why is pursuing unity essential to understanding the Bible alike?