

"Not Too Hard"

The Bible is the best-selling book of all time and it comes today in hundreds of languages. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. This is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Some think the Bible is too hard to understand. Well is it really? Stay with us for an important study.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search God's Word. God's way is always a blessing. God loves us and He gave us His will in written form in the Bible so that every age and every nation could know the truth and be saved. God wants every person to come to faith and to obey His will. Thanks so much for spending this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week. We also hope that you'll encourage your friends to watch this program.

Some think the Bible is too hard to understand. Perhaps you've heard people say, "Well the Bible is not meant to be understood." Or, "The Bible says different things to different people." Or, "Well what is important is not so much what the Bible says but what the Bible says to me." I've heard people claim "the New Testament addressed the culture of the first century and really doesn't speak to us at all."

Others dismiss God's word by saying, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere and love Jesus." And then there's the skeptic who says, "You can make the Bible say anything you want it to." Some say, "Well you just take a passage of Scripture and read it to a group of people. And there'll be as many interpretations of that passage as there are people in the room."

Well these charges against the Bible lose sight of God's purpose in giving us His Word. They seem to forget about God's incredible desire to have a relationship with us that lasts for an eternity. Well that relationship means that we can know Him and His will. The Lord Jesus promised us in John 8 and verses 31 and 32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Perhaps you want to study more about this topic, and so we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Luke 1:1 thru 4 and we'll see how the Bible can be understood.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, we're going to be looking at the introduction, the first four verses of the book. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." That's an introduction to this gospel account, and one that gives us a lot of information about the Bible, and how the words of Jesus came to us. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You and Your wisdom have allowed Your spirit to inspire men to write out the words that Jesus spoke, and to tell about His life so that we may have exact knowledge of Your will and of His life. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Is the Bible meant to be understood? Well the answer is yes, but let's see what the Bible says for itself. Psalm 19:8 says, "The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 119 verse 18 says, "Open my eyes, that I may behold

wonderful things from Your law." Psalm 119 verse 105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Again, verse 125 says, "I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies." Verse 130 says, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." And then Proverbs 6 verse 23 says, "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life."

When people say that the Bible is not meant to be understood, I wonder how they came to that conclusion. Did they get it from the Bible or from people? Surprisingly, some churches don't want you to read your Bible. These churches worry that if you read your Bible, you'll find that what the Bible teaches is different from what they teach and practice. The Bible has God's authority attached to it, and it challenges those who vary from it.

The apostle Paul warned in Scripture there were people who were misusing and tampering with God's Word. And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 2 to 4, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. (And he said) We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper (that is to twist, tamper) with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (And then he said) And even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled only to those who are perishing. And in their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Now, the devil will do anything to keep people from understanding the truth of God's Word. He'd love to blind people to the gospel so they wouldn't know the truth. And if he can tamper with, that is twist the word so that you begin to believe something that is only partially true, he'll do it. He realizes that his message must sound true, or you won't buy into it. And if he tells a lie that sounds true, he can lead people astray. And if he can tamper with the word to make his lie really appealing, he will. But when people obey the lie rather than listen to God, they are deceived with a counterfeit religion. The devil has supplied plenty of counterfeits today.

Now we wouldn't know what the truth is and what error is if it weren't for that permanent standard of truth. The Bible provides that standard of truth for all time. God's word is settled in heaven and does not change. It's this stability, this solid foundation, that allows Christians to remain united to God. Now God was wise to give to mankind His message in written form in the Bible, because by giving us the word, the written word, we can know the truth which makes us free. The difference between Christ's true disciples and others is that true disciples remain in the Word of God. And the others drift away from it.

This is why we must stay with God's word. God expected ancient Israelite parents to teach their children the Law of God. The Lord God was concerned that a generation might arise that didn't know His commandments. And so Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess" (that's Deuteronomy 31 verses 10 to 13)

If the Bible were so hard to understand, God wouldn't have commanded all Israel to go through this every seven years. Truly we can understand the Bible. Now the Bible says in Deuteronomy 29:29,

that “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” God gave us His Word to bless us.

Deuteronomy 30 verses 11 to 14 explains, “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It’s not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it back to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Well whose going to go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ No. But the word is very near you. It’s in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.” God not only wants us to understand it, He also expects us to love and obey it.

The word of God went out to all Israel. There were all kinds of people listening. They were the smart, they were the not so smart, the conservatives, the liberals, the educated, the young, and the old. Those who didn't know God’s Law were expected to learn the Law and to obey it. My friend, you are not an exception. God wants you to know His will.

1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 4 says, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Now God doesn’t communicate in riddles, nor does He hold back some secret message only to the select few. God wants everyone to be able to know the truth, to be saved, and to live in heaven with Him for ever. Jesus, the Bible says in Hebrews 2 verse 9, tasted death for every person. Well why then would God give us a Bible with the words of life, but give it in such a way that we couldn’t understand it?

When God inspired Luke to write a gospel account, He chose this Greek Gentile to write a Roman authority about Jesus, Theophilus. Now Theophilus had only heard bits and pieces about Jesus, so here is what the inspired Luke wrote in Luke 1:1 thru 4: he said “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, (he said) it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught.”

Theophilus apparently wanted to know the truth, and Luke wrote to him with certainty (that is, exact knowledge) the things concerning Jesus Christ. Now the Bible was written to impart to us true knowledge, exact knowledge, and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The apostle John said in John 20 verses 30 to 31, “Therefore many other signs (that is miraculous events) Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” Now God gave us this book, the Bible, so that we might believe in Jesus Christ and by believing be saved and have life in His name. I can’t imagine why, if this is the purpose of the Bible, that God would write something that no one can understand. The fact is: we can understand what we need to know to be saved and to go to heaven and to live with God forever!

In Acts, chapter 17, verses 2 to 4 the Bible says, “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, and as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.” Now the Scripture is not some strange riddle, but a book that gives life and tells the marvelous story of Jesus Christ.

From this inspired book, we learn the most wonderful story of love and sacrifice. To some it may be meaningless, but to us it’s the most meaningful story in the entire world. And I’m so thankful that God

chose men and inspired them to write that story down in the first century, and He did it so that we could hear and could read it as it really happened. The New Testament gives us eyewitness accounts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a story of good news that saves our souls. There simply is no better, no more important, no more meaningful story in the entire world, than the story of Jesus.

The gospel is God's power unto salvation to everyone who believes it, according to Romans 1 and verse 16. God knew that He had to reveal Himself to mankind, if they were to know and to believe in Him and find salvation. Now we can know some things through observing the universe, but we cannot know the full story apart from the Word of God. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God (it says) was well-pleased that through the foolishness of the message preached He could save those who believe." If we want to know the precious truth about God, we must go to His Word. Our task is to hear it, to believe it, to love it, to obey it, and to share it with others. Oh, thank God for the Bible!

The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 13, "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand it until the end." Paul wrote no other thing but what the Corinthians could understand, and we too can understand the Bible.

In fact, we must understand the word of God and obey it. Why? Because one day we'll be judged by the written word of God. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:48: that "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." You and I will be judged one day by the words that are written in this book. We'll stand before God and we'll give an account for our lives, and the standard will be these written words.

Now the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 and verse 21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." For that reason we must know what the will of God is. We mustn't let anything keep us from our devotion to the Lord. My friend, the purest source of God's will is found in the New Testament. And so don't settle for anything less than the Scriptures. They will lead you to an exact knowledge of the Lord's will, but other things will lead you astray. The scriptures will give you the unfailing, unfailing truth that leads to eternal life. That's what we need. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You have given us Your Word. And that it's able to strengthen our souls, and it's able to teach us the things that we most need to be able to live with Your forever. Oh Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Now think with me. What kind of God says, "Well I'm going to judge you by the things written in the books?" Now Revelation 20:11 to 15 teaches us that we're going to come before the great white throne, and that the books will be opened and we will be judges according to the things written in the books, and according to the things that we've done, whether good or bad. You remember Jesus said in John 12:48 that we're going to be judges by his words. Well why would he give us this book, and all of this stuff, and give us and tell us we're going to be judged by these words, but give us a book that is a riddle, a riddle that people cannot understand? Wouldn't such a God be a monster? But our God isn't like that. He gives us a book that we can understand. Our God loves us and wants all men to be saved and to know the truth. Shouldn't we strive to know His will? If our knowing and doing the will of God is the difference between eternal life and death, can we afford to ignore what He says?

The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." God wants us to study the Bible so that we will know the truth and not be ashamed on the day of judgment because

we didn't follow the teaching of the Bible. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding."

Oh I hope you'll follow those teachings and come to Christ. To do that hear the words of Christ and believe them. Repent of your sins and confess the name of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Repentance means that you change your heart, that you leave sin, that you turn to the ways of God. And so with love and faith be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 teaches. Romans 6 and verse 3 says that when we're baptized into Christ, we're baptized into His death. And that's when we come into contact with the blood of Christ that cleanses us. Won't you be baptized, my friend? Won't you do it today?

Well we hope that today's study of God's Word has blessed you or maybe it's challenged you to think. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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Please do worship with a church of Christ in your area. They're the reason that we don't ask for money. And if you're looking for a church home, we'll be happy to help you find a good sound one. Churches of Christ love and want guests, and you'll be glad you went and worshipped. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and do tell a friend about our program, let them know about it. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.