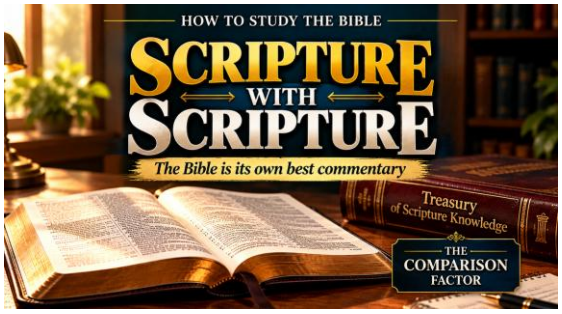

Series: How to Study the Bible in 2026

INTRODUCTION

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**.*

The Bible is its own commentary. It is of *no* private interpretation. All interpretations must be done by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

2 Peter 1:20 *Knowing this first,*
*that no prophecy of the scripture is of any **private interpretation**.*

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.

We discover the meaning of Scripture by comparing Scripture with Scripture, allowing the word of God to illuminate the word of God rather than depending on our personal opinions.

Have you ever heard someone say, “Well that is just your interpretation.”

It is an important question: Is the meaning of the Bible determined by what we think it means?

If I wrote a letter, who would be the best person to explain what I meant when I wrote it? Me! The author of the letter would be the ultimate authority on the intended communication. The same applies to the Bible. God is the Author, and our responsibility is to discover what He has clearly communicated through His words. He means what He says and says what He means.

1. The Authority of Scripture

In ***2 Peter 1:20-21***, Peter establishes that Scripture originated with God, *not* with men.

That means that we *must* approach the Bible with humility. We are *not* its authors, editors, or authorities. We are students of what God has revealed in the holy Bible.

Consider these truths:

- Whether we like what a passage says or not, the Bible is of no private interpretation.
- Whether others agree with you or not, the Bible is of no private interpretation.
- Whether a teaching is popular or not, the Bible is of no private interpretation.
- At issue is not your interpretation or mine, but rather the Author of the Bible – the Holy Spirit.

The Problem with “That is just your interpretation.”

Can every interpretation of the Bible be equally valid? Are different things the same? No.

If two interpretations contradict one another, both cannot be correct in the same sense and under the same circumstances. We must examine the evidence and determine which interpretation best fits the words, context, and teaching of Scripture – God’s interpretation.

Practical application: *When studying a passage, we must ask:*

- *What does the Bible actually say?* ***(God means what He says, says what He means)***
- *What do the words mean in their proper context?*
- *What do the surrounding verses and passage say and teach?*
- *How do other Scriptures help clarify this passage?*
- *Am I allowing the Bible to correct my thinking or trying to make it support my beliefs?*

2. The Agreement of Scripture

Compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual – *Romans 7:14 (the law); John 6:63 (Jesus' words)*

1 Corinthians 2:1-14 Paul contrasts human wisdom with the word of God

Verses 1-8 God's wisdom is greater than man's wisdom.

Paul did not depend upon the persuasive wisdom of men to establish the truth of God.

The Bible is not a product of human wisdom. Its truth rests upon God's revelation and power.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Verses 9-12 God has revealed His truth.

God has revealed truth and even the "deep things of God" unto us by His Holy Spirit.

God's truth is made known through divine revelation – you must have the Spirit to understand!

John 16:13 The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.
Eph 1:17-18 Paul prays for spiritual wisdom and understanding from God.
Psalm 119:18 *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

Verses 13 Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

This is the foundational principle of our study. This is how the Holy Spirit teaches us.

Verses 14 Spiritual discernment is necessary.

The natural man **(not saved, no Holy Spirit)** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.

This does not mean that an unsaved person cannot understand grammar, history, or the basic meaning of a sentence. It means that the things of God require ***spiritual discernment***. We must distinguish between understanding the words on a page and receiving God's truth with spiritual understanding.

NOTE Modern versions of the Bible are published with the intention of being easily understood by anyone in a single reading. A Bible that anyone can understand is not the same Bible presented in 1 Corinthians 2:13.

KEY A serious study of the Bible is necessary to rightly divide the Bible and to focus on every word of God. You must have the right Bible – God's perfect words.

The Importance of Two or Three Witnesses

The Bible teaches the importance of multiple witnesses in determining the truth of a matter.

Deut 19:15; 17:6 A matter is confirmed by two or three witnesses.
Matthew 18:16 Jesus refers to this same principle related to disputes.
2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19 Paul refers to this same principle for the Church.

The underlying principle is that important conclusions should not rest upon unsupported testimony. Do you apply this same principle in daily affairs that affect your life and family?

Paul used this same principle related to the letters sent to the churches. He always had two or three witnesses to testify to the fact that the letters were authentic and were Paul's words.

This is also referenced in Acts 15:22-35 (Jerusalem council and first Gentile letter sent).

Applying this Principle to Bible Study

When we study a doctrine, we should examine all relevant passages rather than relying upon one isolated verse.

For example, to understand the doctrine of salvation, consider:

Romans 3:23 – *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*
Romans 6:23 – *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life…*
Romans 5:8 – *… God commendeth his love … while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves…*
John 3:16; 5:24 – *For God so loved the world… whosoever believeth in him… everlasting life.*

Together, these passages provide a fuller picture of the biblical teaching concerning salvation.

The principle is to examine the whole counsel of God and allow related passages to confirm, clarify, and establish our understanding.

Cross-Referencing – let Scripture explain Scripture

Isaiah 28:9-10, 13 Isaiah describes instruction given: line upon line, precept upon precept.

The Bible contains many cross-references that help us understand its words, themes, doctrines, prophecies, and illustrations.

The Best Commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself

Commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and study tools can be very useful. However, they must never replace the authority of the Bible.

When a passage is difficult, begin by examining the Bible itself.

Four practical tools:

- **Cross-references** – find other passages on the same subject ***(Treasury of Scripture Knowledge)***
- **Concordance** – examine how a word is used throughout the Bible ***(Strong's Concordance)***
- **Bible Dictionary** – investigate unfamiliar people, places, customs, and terms
- **Study Notes** – record what you discover so that you can evaluate conclusions

A practical method for cross-referencing:

- **Read the passage in context** – read around the verse, identify the subject being discussed
- **Identify a key word, phrase, doctrine** – determine what needs further explanation
- **Find other relevant passages** – use cross-references to locate related Scriptures
- **Read each passage in its own context** – make no assumptions, ask God for help
- **Compare the passages** – look for agreement, clarification, important details, distinctions
- **Identify God's interpretation** – the conclusion is based on Bible witnesses, not own ideas

KEY Cross-referencing is not collecting verses to support an idea you already hold. It is allowing the whole Bible to inform your understanding of each part.

3. The Implementation of the Comparison Factor

Putting the principle to work! Let's apply this to a real life example.

Job 41:1 **Question: What or who is Leviathan?** ***(It is found 4 times in KJV)***

Psalm 74:13-14	Leviathan has multiple heads, associated with a dragon
Isaiah 27:1	Leviathan is a piercing serpent, crooked serpent, refers to dragon
Revelation 12:3	Describes a great red dragon with seven heads
Revelation 12:9	Identifies the dragon as "that old serpent…the Devil, and Satan"

What have we learned? Leviathan = Satan! Now, re-read Job 41… and Genesis 3!

The Comparison Factor is not just a principle to understand; it is a practice to develop.

Consider how often we encounter difficult words, unfamiliar customs, prophetic statements, or doctrines that require further investigation.

Some Examples

A. **What does it mean to be "born again"? John 3:3, 7** ***(It is found 3 times in the KJV)***

John 1:12-13	Those who receive Jesus Christ are described as being born of God.
Titus 3:5	Paul speaks of washing of regeneration and renewing of Holy Ghost.
1 Peter 1:23	Believers are described as being born again by the word of God.
2 Cor 5:17	A person in Christ is described as a new creature.

Each passage contributes to our understanding of the new birth.

We do not take one phrase and force every other passage to fit our assumptions.

We examine the passages together to understand the doctrine God is teaching us.

B. **What does it mean to be "saved by grace through faith"?**

Ephesians 2:8-9	This is one of the clearest passages in the Bible for the Church Age.
Romans 3:24-28	A man is justified by faith in Christ alone, not by the deeds of the law.
Romans 4:1-5	Faith like Abraham – fully persuaded and not something we earn.
Titus 3:5-7	Not by human works of any kind

Each passage contributes to our understanding of saved by grace.

There are absolutely no works necessary to be saved – the work is to believe on Christ! ***(Jn 6:29)***

C. **What does the Bible say about "prayer"?**

Philippians 4:6-7	Talk to God about everything; the peace of God will keep your heart.
Matthew 6:9-13	The disciples' prayer example given
Luke 18:1-8	Bring your requests to God persistently and at all times
1 Thess 5:17	We ought to pray all the time about all things
1 John 5:14-15	Ask according to God's will; He hears our prayers

Together, we learn much about prayer – the practice, persistence, approach, and importance of praying according to the will of God.

One passage may emphasize a particular aspect of prayer while another supplies additional instruction or details.

4. The Responsibility of the Comparison Factor

The Comparison Factor requires diligence and study. It is work! ***2 Timothy 2:15***

A. **Three Common Mistakes to Avoid**

Mistake 1: Taking a verse out of context
A verse must be understood in relation to the surrounding verses and the subject being addressed.

Mistake 2: Using a cross-reference without examining it.
A verse may contain the same word as another passage without teaching the same thing.

Mistake 3: Searching only for verses that support your opinion.
Be willing to examine passages that challenge your own ideas and conclusions.

B. **Three Questions to Ask Every Time**

1: What does the passage say?
Identify its actual words and statements.

2: What does the rest of the Bible say?
Find relevant passages and compare them.

3: What conclusion best accounts for the evidence?
Avoid forcing a conclusion upon the text and find God's interpretation.

The Conclusion

The next time you encounter a difficult verse…

- ✓ Do not immediately ask, "What does my favorite preacher say about this?"
- ✓ Do not immediately assume the first explanation you hear is correct.
- ✓ Do not rely upon what you have previously been taught or believed.

Instead, open your Bible and begin comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Let the Bible illuminate the Bible.

The more carefully we compare Scripture with Scripture, the better equipped we will be to understand the word of God, recognize error, and communicate His truth faithfully.