

How to Study the Bible – Week 8 – Comparison Factor – Bible Study Helps

Title: Scripture With Scripture:

The Comparison Factor in Bible Study

Sermon Summary: This sermon, part of a series titled "How to Study the Bible in 2026," focuses on the principle that the Bible is its own best commentary and must be interpreted by comparing Scripture with Scripture rather than through private opinion or human wisdom. Drawing primarily from 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 2, the sermon establishes that the Bible originated with God through the Holy Spirit, that spiritual truth can only be discerned by those who possess the Holy Spirit, and that the proper method of Bible study involves allowing God's words to interpret God's words. The sermon emphasizes that no interpretation is valid simply because it is popular, personally held, or widely agreed upon -- what matters is what God has clearly communicated through the whole counsel of Scripture. Practical tools such as concordances, cross-references, and Bible dictionaries are introduced as aids to the comparison process, and the principle of two or three witnesses is shown to be a biblical standard for establishing truth. The sermon urges believers to approach the Bible with humility, diligence, and dependence on the Holy Spirit, who has promised to guide believers into all truth.

Key Points:

- The Bible is of no private interpretation, meaning its meaning is determined by God as its author, not by personal opinion or popular consensus
- The Holy Spirit is the true author of Scripture, having inspired human writers, and is therefore the only reliable teacher of its meaning
- According to 1 Corinthians 2, the natural, unsaved man cannot spiritually discern the things of God, making the Holy Spirit indispensable to genuine Bible understanding
- The Holy Spirit teaches believers by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, meaning Scripture is illuminated by other Scripture
- The biblical principle of two or three witnesses, established in Deuteronomy 19 and affirmed in the New Testament, applies directly to the confirmation of biblical doctrine
- No doctrine should be built on a single verse; multiple passages must be examined together to arrive at God's intended meaning
- Practical tools for comparing Scripture with Scripture include concordances, cross-reference systems, Bible dictionaries, and digital Bible study applications
- Common mistakes in Bible study include taking verses out of context, using cross-references without reading them carefully, and selecting only verses that confirm a pre-existing belief
- Modern Bible versions marketed as easy to understand contradict the biblical teaching that Scripture is spiritually discerned and requires the Holy Spirit

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- Consistent, repeated engagement with Scripture over time is how God builds understanding in believers, line upon line and precept upon precept

Scripture Reference:

- 2 Peter 1:20-21, the foundational passage establishing that Scripture is not of private interpretation and originated with God through the Holy Spirit
- 1 Corinthians 2:1-14, the key passage teaching that the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual truth by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, and that the natural man cannot receive the things of God
- Deuteronomy 19:15, establishing the principle that a matter is confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses
- Isaiah 28:9-10, teaching the principle of learning line upon line and precept upon precept
- John 6:63, where Jesus identifies his words as spirit and life
- Romans 7:14, identifying the law as spiritual
- Isaiah 27:1, describing Leviathan as a piercing and crooked serpent connected to a dragon
- Psalm 74:13-14, describing Leviathan as a multi-headed creature associated with dragons
- Revelation 12:3 and 12:9, identifying the great dragon as Satan, the old serpent, confirming through comparison that Leviathan represents the devil

Stories:

- The pastor recounts his own experience coming to faith out of a background that included Mormon doctrine, describing how comparing Scripture with Scripture exposed the contradictions between what he had been taught and what the Bible actually said, and how discovering what the Bible clearly teaches was liberating rather than confusing
- The pastor shares a personal anecdote about reading the Bible with his wife, in which she would stop to look up unfamiliar words while he wanted to keep reading, and reflects that her instinct to look up the words was the correct approach to serious Bible study
- A Bible study conducted by searching every instance in which Jesus prayed, using a concordance to locate the relevant passages
- The word Leviathan from Job 41:1 was used as an example of the comparison factor, tracing the word through Psalm 74, Isaiah 27, and Revelation 12 to demonstrate through multiple witnesses that Leviathan is a biblical reference to Satan
- The historical moment when the Bible became available in English to common people, connecting the spread of Scripture through the printing press to spiritual illumination and the growth of biblical understanding among ordinary believers

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Discipleship Questions

Since 2 Peter 1:20 establishes that Scripture is not of private interpretation, how does this truth challenge the common cultural assumption that each person's reading of the Bible is equally valid, and what responsibility does that place on the believer?

The sermon draws a parallel between the author of a letter being the best interpreter of that letter and God being the ultimate authority on the meaning of Scripture -- in what practical ways does approaching Bible study with this mindset change how you handle difficult or uncomfortable passages?

First Corinthians 2:14 teaches that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned -- how should this truth shape the way we engage with unbelievers who claim to have read the Bible and rejected it?

The principle of two or three witnesses is woven throughout both the Old and New Testaments as a standard for establishing truth -- how might consistently applying this principle to your own Bible study protect you from accepting false doctrine or a single verse taken out of context?

The sermon warns against searching only for verses that support a pre-existing opinion -- in what areas of your own theology or Christian life might you be most tempted to do this, and how can comparing Scripture with Scripture serve as a corrective?

God promises through the Holy Spirit to teach believers who diligently compare spiritual things with spiritual things -- what does it reveal about your priorities if you consistently find more time for other sources of information than for the Word of God itself?

The historical reality that many believers for centuries studied the Bible by candlelight with limited resources stands in contrast to the tools available today -- what does the gap between our access to Scripture and our actual engagement with it say about where we place its value?

The sermon identifies the marketing of modern Bible versions as claiming to be easily understood by anyone, and contrasts that with the biblical teaching that the Word of God is spiritually discerned -- how does this tension help clarify why having the right text matters for serious Bible study?

Using the example of Leviathan being identified as Satan through cross-referencing Job 41, Psalm 74, Isaiah 27, and Revelation 12, what does this method of letting Scripture interpret Scripture reveal about the unity and divine authorship of the Bible?

The sermon closes with the sobering observation that God has promised to personally teach every believer who will spend time comparing Scripture with Scripture -- what specific and honest change in your daily habits would be required for you to take full advantage of that promise?

Small Group Guide: Scripture with Scripture

How to Study the Bible in 2026 -- The Comparison Factor

Overview

This session explores one of the foundational principles of Bible study: allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. Rather than relying on personal opinion, popular teaching, or outside commentary, the Holy Spirit teaches believers by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. This guide will help your group discuss, reflect on, and apply this principle in daily life.

Key Passage

2 Peter 1:20-21

The Bible did not originate with men. Holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, meaning God himself is the author. Because of this, the Bible is of no private interpretation -- our task is not to form opinions about what Scripture means, but to discover what God has already clearly communicated through his own words.

Key Takeaways

1. The Bible is its own best commentary. No outside source -- commentary, tradition, popular teaching, or personal opinion -- carries the same authority as Scripture itself. When a passage is difficult, the first and primary resource is the Bible.

2. Understanding Scripture requires the Holy Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 2:13-14, the things of God are spiritually discerned. A person without the Holy Spirit may understand the words on a page but cannot receive God's truth with spiritual understanding. This is why the modern marketing strategy of producing Bibles that "anyone can easily understand" misses the point entirely.

3. The Holy Spirit teaches by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. This is not a method invented by Bible scholars. It is God's own stated plan in 1 Corinthians 2:13. As believers read and compare Scripture with Scripture, the Holy Spirit actively teaches them.

4. Important conclusions require multiple witnesses. Just as Deuteronomy 19:15 established that a matter is confirmed by two or three witnesses, sound biblical doctrine is not built on a

single verse taken in isolation. The whole counsel of God, examined together, gives us a complete and accurate picture of what God is teaching.

5. Bible study takes time and consistent effort. Learning the Bible is not a quick process. It is line upon line, precept upon precept. The tools available today -- concordances, cross-references, Bible apps, and word searches -- make this more accessible than at any point in history, but they still require dedicated time and effort.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before hearing this sermon, how would you have responded if someone told you, "That is just your interpretation"? How might you respond differently now?
 2. Have you ever read a passage of Scripture and felt like you truly understood it in a new way? Looking back, how do you think that happened?
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Digging In

3. The sermon taught that the Bible is of no private interpretation, meaning the meaning of Scripture is not determined by what we personally think it means. Why is this both a challenging and a freeing truth to accept?
4. First Corinthians 2:14 says the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned. How does this change the way you think about sharing Scripture with someone who is not saved? How does it shape your approach?
5. The sermon described how comparing Scriptures with Scriptures -- looking up Leviathan across multiple passages and arriving at the conclusion that Leviathan refers to Satan -- is an example of allowing the Bible to interpret itself. What stood out to you about that process? Did it change how you think about approaching difficult or unfamiliar words and passages?
6. The principle of two or three witnesses appears in Deuteronomy 19, Matthew 18, and 2 Corinthians 13. Why do you think God repeated this principle across the Old and New Testaments? How does it apply to how we establish sound doctrine?
7. The sermon warned against three common mistakes: taking a verse out of context, using a cross-reference without actually reading it, and searching only for verses that support an opinion you already hold. Which of these do you think is most common? Which do you find most tempting personally?
8. The sermon made this statement: "Regardless of what you've been taught or have believed, when you come to the Bible and learn that the Bible clearly teaches something different, you have to believe the Bible." How have you experienced this in your own life? Was it difficult? What helped you trust what the Bible said over what you had previously believed?

Going Deeper

9. The sermon pointed out that for much of church history, ordinary people did not have access to the Bible in their own language. How does knowing that change the way you think about having a Bible -- or several Bibles -- readily available? Does it create a sense of responsibility?
 10. The sermon described reading the Bible together and stopping to look up unfamiliar words, even when it slowed down the reading. What habits or disciplines in your own Bible reading help you slow down and actually study rather than just move through the text?
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Practical Applications

The following are specific steps your group members can begin practicing this week.

Start with one word or phrase. Choose a word or short phrase from a passage you are currently reading. Use a concordance, a Bible app such as Blue Letter Bible, or the cross-references in your Bible to find every place that word appears. Read each verse in context and write down one sentence summarizing what each passage teaches. At the end, ask: what does the whole Bible say about this?

Ask the right question first. When you encounter a difficult verse or a doctrinal question this week, resist the urge to immediately search for a podcast, commentary, or popular teacher. Start by asking: what does the Bible actually say? Open your Bible before you open anything else.

Practice the two or three witnesses principle. Before accepting or teaching a doctrinal conclusion, find at least two or three passages that support it. If you can only find one verse, keep searching. If other passages seem to contradict what you believe, examine them honestly rather than setting them aside.

Pray before you study. Following the example of Psalm 119:18, begin each Bible study time with a simple prayer asking God to open your eyes to what he wants to show you. The Holy Spirit is not a passive resource -- he actively wants to teach you.

Use one new tool this week. If you have never used a concordance, a Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, or the search function of a Bible app, try it this week on a passage you are studying. Note what you discover and bring it to share with your group.

Closing Reflection

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The sermon closed with this thought: God has promised to give us his time and teach us personally if we will get into his Word. That is not a small offer. The same Holy Spirit who inspired every word of Scripture lives inside every believer and is ready to teach, clarify, and guide anyone who will open the Bible and compare what it says.

Take a moment before closing your group time to ask each member: what is one thing from this session that you want to put into practice before your group meets again?

Closing Prayer Points

- Ask God to give each group member a genuine hunger for his Word.
- Pray for humility to let the Bible correct your thinking rather than looking for verses to support what you already believe.
- Thank God for the extraordinary access to Scripture that exists today and ask him to help your group steward that access well.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher as you study this week.

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Comparing Scripture with Scripture: Letting God's Word Illuminate God's Word

Day 1: The Author Speaks for Himself

Reading: 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13

Devotional: The Bible did not originate in the mind of any man. Holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, meaning every word carries divine authority. Because God is the author, He alone holds the final say on what His words mean. We do not bring our opinions to the text and demand that Scripture agree with us. We bring ourselves to the text with humility and ask God to show us what He has already clearly said. The Holy Spirit who inspired the words also lives within every believer, eager to teach. Your daily reading is not merely an academic exercise. It is a conversation with the living God.

Reflection: In what areas of life have you been tempted to read your own opinions into Scripture rather than allowing Scripture to correct your thinking?

Practical Application: Before opening your Bible today, pray Psalm 119:18, asking God to open your eyes to see wondrous things from His Word.

Day 2: The Spirit Teaches What the Spirit Wrote

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-14; John 16:12-13

Devotional: Paul made clear that the things of God are spiritually discerned. A person without the Holy Spirit can read the same words on the same page and walk away with nothing but confusion or contempt. This is not a flaw in the Bible. It is a feature of its divine design. God has arranged things so that knowing His Word requires knowing His Spirit. For the believer, this is extraordinary news. The same Spirit who searched the deep things of God and breathed them into Scripture now lives within you, ready to guide you into all truth. Every time you open your Bible with a willing heart, God is prepared to teach you personally.

Reflection: Have you ever read a passage of Scripture and suddenly understood it in a way you never had before? What does that experience reveal about the role of the Holy Spirit in your study?

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Practical Application: Ask someone in your church this week to share a passage of Scripture that the Holy Spirit made personally meaningful to them. Listen carefully and look up the passage yourself.

Day 3: Two or Three Witnesses Establish the Matter

Reading: Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:15-16; John 3:16; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:8-9

Devotional: God established the principle of multiple witnesses long before the New Testament was written. He did not leave the most important truths of Scripture resting on a single verse. The doctrine of salvation, for example, is confirmed across dozens of passages. All have sinned. The wages of sin is death. Christ died for sinners. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. Each passage adds weight and clarity to the others. When you find a truth confirmed again and again across different books, different authors, and different centuries, you are not witnessing coincidence. You are witnessing the unified testimony of one divine Author who means exactly what He says.

Reflection: Is there a doctrine you have held based on a single verse or a single teacher without examining what the rest of Scripture says? What would it look like to test that belief against the whole counsel of God?

Practical Application: Choose one foundational doctrine this week, such as salvation, prayer, or the resurrection, and look up at least three passages that address it. Write down what each passage contributes to your understanding.

Day 4: The Bible Is Its Own Best Commentary

Reading: Isaiah 28:9-10; Romans 7:14; John 6:63; Psalm 119:105, 130

Devotional: God's design for teaching His people has always been line upon line, precept upon precept. The Bible does not require an outside authority to explain itself. It is its own commentary. When a passage is difficult, the answer is almost always found somewhere else in the same book. The words of Scripture are described as spiritual, as spirit and life. When you compare one spiritual passage with another, you are doing exactly what the Holy Spirit designed you to do. Tools such as concordances, cross-references, and Bible dictionaries exist to help you find those connections more efficiently. But the tools serve the Book. The Book does not serve the tools.

Reflection: How much time do you currently spend reading about the Bible compared to reading the Bible itself? What adjustment might be needed?

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Practical Application: Pick a word that appears in your current Bible reading, such as grace, faith, or covenant. Look it up in a concordance or Bible search tool and read three to five other verses where the same word appears. Note what you learn from comparing them.

Day 5: Letting God's Interpretation Replace Your Own

Reading: 2 Peter 1:20; Colossians 2:8; Isaiah 27:1; Revelation 12:3-9; Job 41:1

Devotional: The phrase "that is just your interpretation" sounds like a conversation stopper, but it points to a real and important question. Whose interpretation is it? If two people read the same passage and arrive at contradictory conclusions, both cannot be right at the same time. The solution is not to retreat into personal opinion but to search the Scriptures more carefully. As demonstrated by tracing the word Leviathan from Job through the Psalms and Isaiah into Revelation, the Bible interprets itself when you are willing to do the work. God has not hidden His meaning from those who seek it. He has hidden it from those who will not search. The treasure is in the Book. The Spirit is your guide. The only requirement is that you show up.

Reflection: Is there a passage of Scripture you have avoided because it seemed confusing or uncomfortable? What would it look like to approach it this week with fresh humility and a willingness to let the Bible speak for itself?

Practical Application: Commit to a consistent daily Bible reading plan for the next thirty days. Use cross-references, look up unfamiliar words, and write down at least one observation each day about what God appears to be teaching through the passage. Let the Word of God illuminate the Word of God.