

TEXT: 2 Ti 2:15.

INTRODUCTION:

1. God speaks to us today through Jesus.
2. Jesus speaks to us today through the word of truth.
3. The word of truth reveals everything Jesus wanted to say to us and everything He is going to say to us until He returns for the day of judgment.
4. For us to understand what Jesus is telling us today we must accurately handle the word of truth, something the Holy Spirit tells us we absolutely can do. 2 Ti 2:15.
5. He also tells us that if we choose to inaccurately handle the word of truth we do so to our own destruction. 2 Pt 3:16.
6. So in this morning's lesson let's talk about what we must do to accurately handle the word of truth.

DISCUSSION: There are at least two things we must do to accurately handle the word of truth.

The FIRST THING we must do is to have PROPER MINDSETS. Ro 12:2. We must be ...

1. **Reverent.** We must give the word of truth the profound respect it so richly deserves. 2 Ti 3:16-17; Jn 12:48.
2. **Objective.** We must strive to learn what the word of truth actually says and not what we want it to say.
 - A. We find what we are looking for, so we had better be looking for the truth. 2 Th 2:8-12.2.
 - B. "Years ago, a preacher, Jacob Ditzler was debating J.S. Sweeny on 'The Scriptural method of baptism.' Ditzler didn't believe one had to be immersed in water to fulfill the Biblical command, 'Baptized for the forgiveness of sins.' (Acts 2:38) He went to great lengths to show that a secondary meaning of the Greek word 'baptize' is to 'wash' or 'sprinkle.' Sweeny's reply was classic. He explained that a secondary meaning of the word 'saved' was 'to be pickled'; a secondary meaning of the word 'believe' is to 'have an opinion.' Sweeny then read Mark 16:16, 'He that hath an opinion and is sprinkled shall be pickled.' Sweeny asked, "is it our aim to see what we can make out of the scriptures, or is it to find out what God said?" (David Lusk).
3. **Optimistic.** We must believe it is possible to understand the word of truth the one and only way God expects it to be understood. Ep 4:4-5; 5:17.
4. **Conservative.** We must be moderate, cautious, and careful when we interpret the word of truth, i.e., not liberal, loose or approximate. Illustrations:
 - A. We must not presume to know what God thinks if he has not told us what He thinks in the word of truth. De 29:29.
 - B. When faced with two paths of understanding or application it is better to be safe than sorry so whenever possible we must choose the way that cannot be wrong.
5. **Open-minded.**
 - A. "Having a mind receptive to new ideas, arguments, etc.; unprejudiced" (Collins English Dictionary).
 - B. 1 Th 5:21-22; Ac 17:10-11.
 - C. Are we open-minded? How do we react when people challenge our understanding of the word of truth? Do we listen carefully allowing for the possibility that they may be right or do we cut them off and start arguing with them because we know could not possibly be wrong? Pr 18:12-13.
6. **Deliberate.**
 - A. The adjective means "unhurried in action, movement, or manner, as if trying to avoid error." The verb means "to consider (a matter) carefully and often slowly, as by weighing alternatives."
 - B. If we do not know the answer to a Bible question we must admit it and take whatever time is necessary to find the answer. Pr 29:20; Ja 1:19.
7. **Diligent.** Understanding what Jesus is saying to us through the word of truth is a marathon, not a sprint. Yes, the word of truth is simple enough that anyone can understand it and be saved, but to remain saved we must constantly recognize our ignorance and be growing in the knowledge of the Lord. Thus to accurately handle the word of truth we must be committed to a lifetime of learning. 2 Ti 2:15; Pr 2:3-5.

The SECOND THING we must do is to follow PROPER PROCEDURES. We must ...

1. **Personally study the word of truth.** 2 Pt 1:19; 2:1
2. **Use reliable translations.**
 - A. I recommend the KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, and the ESV.
 - B. I do not recommend the NIV and most other "versions" as study Bibles.
 - 1) The NIV and most other "versions" use "dynamic equivalency."
 - 2) This means they often "translate" words and phrases, not as they were originally written, but as their "translators" believe we would express the same thought if we wrote it today. This is interpretation not translation.

3) Use the NIV and most other “versions” as commentaries, not translations.

3. Carefully define words.

- A. Words are the building blocks of verses, chapters, and books. We can only understand verses, chapters, and books as well as we understand the words which make up verses, chapters, and books.
- B. While it is helpful to define the English words versions use to translate the original Greek words, it is even more helpful and sometimes quite necessary (“baptism” for example) to define the meaning of the original Greek words.
 - 1) There are several excellent Greek dictionaries and word studies available.
 - 2) Most are very easy to use, especially with advent of computerization.

4. Study everything the word of truth says on a matter. Mt 4:4.

5. **Use sound reasoning.** Mt 22:29-30, 31-32. Sound reasoning demands several things. For example, we must interpret the word of truth:

A. In keeping with its context. Examples:

- 1) If the original recipients couldn’t have possibly understood it that way, it’s almost certainly not a proper interpretation.
- 2) Old Testament passages like Ex 20:8 were law for the children of Israel, not for Christians (Co 2:16-17).
- 3) Etc.

B. So it does not contradict itself.

- 1) I am not saying we should ignore apparent Bible contradictions.
- 2) I am saying truth is internally consistent so if our interpretation of one passage contradicts the plain meaning of another passage then either our interpretation is wrong or the Bible is not the word of truth.
- 3) So, if the Bible is the word of truth our interpretation cannot be Ro 10:9-10 or Ac 2:37-38. Rather, it must be Ro 10:9-10 and Ac 2:37-38.
- 4) We don’t ignore apparent Bible contradictions. Rather, we explore them and they always disappear because the Bible is the word of truth.

C. So we do not render any part of it meaningless. Mt 15:6.

D. Starting with simple things and building on them to accurately understand harder things. 1 Co 3:1-2.

E. Consistently.

- 1) If a conclusion requires us to change the way we would otherwise interpret and apply the word of truth, then it is probably the result of inaccurately handling the word of truth.
- 2) Yes, it could mean we need to change the way we interpret and apply the word of truth, but it more likely means we are distorting the word of truth to make it fit what we want it to say rather than respecting what it actually says.

F. Etc.

6. **Pray.** Col 1:9-10A. “Spiritual wisdom is *sophia*, which we could describe as knowledge of first principles.

Understanding is *sunesis*, which is what the Greeks sometimes described as critical knowledge, meaning the ability to apply first principles to any given situation which may arise in life. So when Paul prays that his friends may have wisdom and understanding, he is praying that they may understand the great truths of Christianity and may be able to apply them to the tasks and decisions which meet them in everyday living. A man may quite easily be a master of theology and a failure in living; able to write and talk about the eternal truths and yet helpless to apply them to the things which meet him every day. The Christian must know what Christianity means, not in a vacuum but in the business of living” (Barclay).

7. **Compare our conclusions to other people’s conclusions.**

- A. The placement of this step is very deliberate. Many people skip steps 1-6, draw their own conclusion, and then go directly to step 7 – usually choosing people predisposed to confirm what they have already decided to believe.
- B. Now don’t get me wrong. There is definitely a place for comparing our conclusions to the conclusions of other people. Acts 8:30B-31A. But the order is hear the word of God first and then and only then other people’s conclusions.
- C. Use reliable and multiple commentators. Ezra 10:3; Pr 11:14.
- D. Commentators’ conclusions come to us in many forms—live, written, recorded, etc.

CONCLUSION:

One of the biggest problems in relationships is the failure to accurately communicate, the transfer what is in the mind of one person to the mind of another person so the former is confident that the latter truly understands what he or she is trying to say. Since relationships are our greatest source of joy and sorrow, we must learn to accurately communicate especially with God. So I’ll close this lesson with an appeal from God to us that He repeats over and over again: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”