

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

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Even though the Bible is the all-time best-selling book, the world is still largely ignorant of the contents of the Bible. Why is there so much ignorance of this great book? Is it too hard to understand? Is there a special key that a person needs in order to understand it? Are you interested in understanding the Bible?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

The Bible is composed of 66 separate units which we call books. Each book has been divided into chapters, and chapters have been divided into verses. God did not divide the books this way, but humans did so because it made for easier access to the messages of the Bible. Sometimes the divisions of chapters and verses can cause misunderstanding, but for the most part, they have become very helpful to Bible students. You can become a Bible student. That's right! People who can read in their own language can understand the Bible written in their language. The world is blessed that the Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages and dialects.

Learning the Bible is like learning school subjects. Students can learn more quickly if they take a systematic approach to the subject like a textbook would lay it out. Furthermore, a student can learn more quickly if the student has a teacher to guide him or her in study of the subject.

Philip was a teacher of Jesus Christ. He met a man from Ethiopia out on a road one day. Philip approached the man's chariot and overheard the man reading from the Bible. Philip asked the Ethiopian man if he understood what he was reading. The man answered with his own question, "how can I except some man should guide me?" The Ethiopian could read; he knew the words, why couldn't he understand what the words meant? The reason Philip could understand those words was because he knew the "rest of the story." Philip knew the fulfillment of the prophesy that the Ethiopian man was reading.

The man in the chariot was reading from the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah lived 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Particularly the Ethiopian man was reading from the place we call chapter 53, where it was written, "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." Acts 8:32-33 (ESV)

The man asked Philip, "About whom...does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. Acts 8:34, 35 (ESV)

The thing that made Philip a teacher and reputable guide was the fact that he knew the rest of the story. Philip knew how that 700 year old prophecy had been fulfilled. He knew the good news about Jesus.

A teacher is a person who has also read the material and has had his own questions answered. A teacher has been over the road, and so he knows the way. He himself has been a learner.

Jesus invited people to learn about him. He said, ²⁷ **All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.** [Well, who will the Lord choose? Who will Jesus allow to know the Father?] ²⁸ **Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** ²⁹ **Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.** ³⁰ **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."** Matt 11:27-30 (ESV)

In the school of Jesus Christ there is found rest for your soul. There is peace in the heart that flows like a deep river. The knowledge of Christ enriches your soul, it gives you vision beyond your years.

As we read the Bible, friends, we will be like the Ethiopian man; we will have questions. But, we can rely upon Jesus to explain to us His teaching. In John, chapter 7, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

¹⁴ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵ The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them, "**My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸ The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.**" John 7:14-18

When a person wants to do God's will, not his own will, not anyone else's will, then that person will come to know what the will of the Lord is. He will come to trust that the teaching comes from God. Students of God's Word must get their motives in order. They must read and study the Bible while wanting to do the will of God above everything else. Jesus said ⁶ "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.** Matt 5:6 (ESV)

Paul encouraged Timothy 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." 2 Tim 2:15 (ESV)

We have a saying in America for those who have begun a new job. We say that the new person must "learn the ropes." That is, the new worker must have some time to become familiar with the job. They must learn to use their hands in a way that they have not used them before. Give a child a screwdriver and watch. The child has a difficult time working with the screwdriver. But give the screwdriver to a seasoned electrician or an experienced carpenter and you can see the difference between experience and no experience. The same thing is true about handling the Word of Truth, God's Word found in the Bible. It takes reading and study and practice in order to become a disciple, a learner of Jesus. Jesus said, "come learn of me." When we are heavy-hearted, burdened with our sins, Jesus invites us to come learn of Him. He is meek, that is, he is open and gentle. He is lowly in heart. Jesus does not have an ego problem. His yoke, his burden, that is, his requirements are easy and light. With Jesus we can find rest for our souls.

Paul encouraged the young man Timothy with the analogies of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer:

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 2 Tim 2:3-7 (ESV)

It takes three things to be good students of the Bible. It takes pure motive, dedication to the task: we must want to do the will of God, not becoming entangled in civilian pursuits. Secondly, it takes discipline (playing by the rules). The student must take the proper steps in order to learn from God's word. Thirdly, like farming, it takes hard work in order to have a crop. We must spend the necessary time that it takes to learn the knowledge of Christ.

Friends, the reason there is a Bible in the world is because God intended for it to be here, and blessing you and me.

The LORD says: "My thoughts and my ways are not like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours. "Rain and snow fall from the sky. But they don't return without watering the earth that produces seeds to plant and grain to eat. That's how it is with my words. They don't return to me without doing everything I send them to do." Isaiah 55:8-11

Friends, are you a student of these great words of God? You will find them in your Bible. You can understand them. Christ will bless those who have a will to do God's will. Do you have that desire?