

How to Understand the Bible

(condensed)

Understanding the Bible as it is Written

1. The Bible is a Jewish book – written to Jews by Jews primarily for Jews.
2. Every Bible writer from Moses to John assumed / believed that the people to whom they were writing understood the context, culture, language, customs, idioms, and illustrations of that day.
3. The Bible is not complete in details.
4. The Bible is not written as a movie script with editor's notes.
5. The Bible is inspired verbally and is confluent / plenary in its inspiration.

Basic Presuppositions

1. The Bible is the Word of God.
2. The Bible is complete in its revelation of God and its purpose.
3. Only Scripture is Inspired: not Bible Study notes, dictionaries, teachers, or preachers.
4. The Bible is profitable or advantageous for:
 - a) **Doctrine** – Doctrine is a codified set of beliefs or belief system.
 - b) **Reproof** – The Bible objectively gives instruction as to when and where one is wrong.
 - c) **Correction** – The Bible objectively gives instruction as to how and why to get right with God.
 - d) **Instruction in righteousness** – The Bible gives instruction on how to live righteously and please God.

Guidelines for Reading and Understanding the Bible

1. If the plain *sense* make *sense* – let that be the *sense* lest it all becomes *nonsense*.
2. Always interpret a passage within the context (Immediate, Book, Corpus, Testament, etc.).
3. Always interpret an unclear text/verse (one that could be interpreted more than one way) by a clear one (one that can only be interpreted one way).
4. Always interpret an experience by the Word of God, not the Word of God by an experience.
5. The Bible is a spiritual book and can only be understood by a person who has the Holy Spirit living in their life.

God Speaks Through the Bible in Three Primary Ways: Principle, Precept and Pattern

1. **Precept** – A commandment or direction given as a rule of action or conduct; a law or procedural directive.
2. **Principles** – A guideline or rule derived from one or more precepts which is a fundamental, primary, or general law or truth from which others are derived.
3. **Patterns** – An original or model considered for or deserving of imitation made up of a combination of acts, tendencies, etc. that form a consistent or characteristic arrangement.

Modern Sectioning

The modern Chapter Divisions that are now like those in our present English Bible were introduced in 1227 A.D., by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton. The Wycliffe Bible was the first English version to make use of these divisions. Modern verse divisions of the English Bible came into use in 1551 A.D., by Robert (Estienne) Stepanus. He used the pattern of Rabbi Nathan, a Jewish Rabbi, who had divided the Old Testament into verses a hundred years earlier in 1448 A.D. Our modern sectioning, divisions, book order and names of the Old Testament books are derived from the **Septuagint**, the Greek translation of the Old Testament from original Hebrew to Greek in Alexandria, Egypt by 72 Hebrew scribes in the mid-third century B.C.