

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here is the final installment in our four-part series dedicated to helping our readers develop sensible traits and habits of understanding the Bible.

PART FOUR OF FOUR

Five points to consider when studying Scripture:

1) The meaning of any word is itself not the final determination as to what that word might mean. You might tell a friend that when you went to a gathering of old friends, you had a *ball*. You might be watching a baseball game and the umpire calls a pitch a *ball*. While playing a game of golf you might be looking for a lost golf *ball*. You may read the story of Cinderella to your child or grandchild, describing how she went to a *ball*. In each case, the context of the word itself determines the meaning of the word.

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THAT JESUS IS THE FOCUS AND THEME OF THE BIBLE, THEN THE CLEAR AND PLAIN TEACHINGS ABOUT HIM ARE OBVIOUS.

2) Remember the principle of progressive revelation. The New Testament explains and interprets the Old Testament, not the other way around. The New Testament fulfills the Old Testament, the Old Testament points to the New. The message of the Bible thus builds, brick by brick, from the elementary beginning in the first book of Genesis to the grand climax contained in Revelation, the last book.

3) Remember that the applications and teachings

Reading and UNDERSTANDING the BIBLE SENSITIVELY and SENSIBLY

of some passages are timeless and universal, while others are local and culturally bound. We do not believe we MUST greet each other with a kiss but we intuitively harmonize with Jesus when he instructs us to love our neighbor and to treat them as we would have them treat us.

4) Remember that while the central truth of the Bible (Jesus) is *actually* true, not everything in the Bible is *literally* true. The Bible says that God the Father has a hand, fingers, mouth, a nose, ears and feet. Is this literally true, or are such passages speaking metaphorically? Jesus taught that

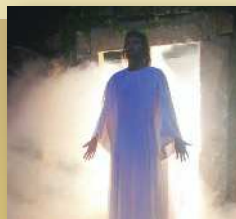
if our right hand offends us we should cut it off and throw it away (Matthew 5:30). Not everything in the Bible is literally true—but points to the truth.

5) When studying unclear or obscure passages, always ask what this passage means from a Christ-centered perspective, and how this passage might be more easily understood by clear, unambiguous passages addressing the same or a similar topic. This process is often spoken of as allowing the Bible to interpret itself—looking for all passages on a particular topic rather than confining your study to just one or two.

When the entire Bible is studied from a Christ-centered perspective, then many obscure passages will remain somewhat obscure—but we will see that while we might speculate on obscure passages, they are peripheral to the primary teachings of Scripture—which is Jesus and his gospel. When we understand that Jesus is the focus and theme of the Bible, then the clear and plain teachings about him are obvious. From a Christ-centered perspective, we can say that the *plain* things of the Bible are the *main* things and the *main* things are the *plain* things. □



Will the real
"Word of God"
please stand up!



Jesus alone is the infallible
Word of God (John 1:1).

During our CWR/PTM 2015 "Year of the Bible" we will study and examine the Bible (the lower-case word of God) from a Christ-centered (the upper-case Word of God) perspective. The *word* of God is inspired by the *Word* of God. But by God's divine plan, humans have been profoundly involved in writing, editing, translating, preserving and publishing the Bible. Touched by human hands, the Bible cannot be seen as infallible or inerrant. Jesus alone, the Word of God, is infallible and inerrant. Stay tuned during our "Year of the Bible" for Christ-centered perspective, teaching and insight.

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