

RECIPE FOR BEING RIGHT

Studies in Bible Doctrine

by

Mark Bullen

Living Faith Christian Fellowship

www.thefaithoncedelivered.info

Living Faith Christian Fellowship
27216 Ingel Rd.
Brookfield, MO 64628
680-258-2201

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Someone once said to me, when I was discussing my position on doctrine, "You can make the Bible say whatever you want it to say". Now, that is a true statement, *if* you are approaching the Bible with bias. You can wrest the Scripture to "prove your point", and you can seem to prove many heretical ideas from over emphasis of one verse above another. But, does that mean we can never really *know* if we are right? Does that mean Scripture means different things to different people, and all are right? God Forbid! This is a lie of Satan that is floating around today because of our passive "everybody is OK" society. God's Word is of no private interpretation -- *you can't have it your way*. If you want to find truth, you can. You don't have to be wrong. God wants you to be right, and you can be.

"knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Peter 1:20,21

When people are not obeying ALL Jesus taught, they are building on the sand, and have no firm foundation; Therefore, they can't point their finger at anyone else - so suddenly, "everybody is OK". If I am trying to avoid too much scrutiny, I surely am not going to be calling for any spiritual audits.

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"They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them." Prov. 28:4

Now you know why people have a problem with "contending for the faith". They don't like that "contending" word, because they are on sand. Those who are guilty of compromise and transgression are the first to vote for "liberty" and the casting out of "rules" or "law". Gospel Liberty is freedom *from* sin and satan's world system, not freedom to partake of sin and the world.

In laying foundation stones for this study, this matter of *personal interpretation* cannot be overlooked. God meant one thing when he wrote scripture, and you must find what *that* was, not make up your own meaning. There are grave warnings to those who tamper with God's revelation. II Peter 1:20,21 make it very clear that you cannot rightly have your own private interpretation of scripture. If you and I disagree on doctrine, only three things can be true: I am wrong, you are wrong, or we are both wrong -- we cannot be both right, and holding to conflicting doctrine.

When brethren discuss doctrine, they should never have to fight or get hot over it. When tempers flare it is proof that we are not seeking truth together, but fighting for personal pride and opinion. The concept that "brethren should not dispute over doctrine" is a false piety, and placing "acceptance", "peace" or "passivity" over "the work of Christ", and "Truth". If brothers cannot hash-out doctrine, and find truth, then they are not right with God.

The Apostles settled their doctrinal questions by getting together and discussing the issue, not avoiding each other and assuming themselves to be right. People who say, "I just don't want to argue", actually mean, "I don't care if the other person is wrong or deceived", or "I don't want my opinion confronted with the facts". Both are wrong, and thus we should be willing to argue for Jesus. He didn't avoid it on earth. Paul didn't avoid disputing over doctrine - he went to all the synagogues in every city he visited for this very reason. He "reasoned" and "disputed" with the Jews continually.

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A. CONFESS AND FORSAKE ALL KNOWN SIN.

You cannot claim to have the Holy Ghost illuminating your heart and mind until all sin is forsaken in the heart and confessed (Acts 5:32). A

person cannot have Holy Spirit illumination, and discern doctrine if their "flesh" (carnal, selfish nature) is ruling their choices. The flesh must be crucified, or it will sway our view of things every time. It will cause us to choose the easy road, not the right road. **THIS IS SO IMPORTANT!** God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. We must be humbled in the dust, willing to lose our life, will, desires, ambitions, family, friends, money, ease, dignity, --everything!

**"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple....So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
Luke 14:26-33**

Jesus said many times, that we could not follow him until we were willing to take up the cross (instrument of death), and lose our own lives! Our love for temporal things; man's applause; bodily comforts and pleasures; riches; fame; friend's acceptance; family unity; or anything that stands in the way of obeying God's Word must be amputated from our life. Jesus proverbially made this clear in the following verse:

Mt 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

B. DILIGENTLY SEEK AND OBEY ALL KNOWN TRUTH

Jesus promised if we would ask the Father for bread, he would not give us a stone. When God knows you are sincerely seeking His will, with no hidden motive; and have confessed and forsaken all sin; he will definitely lead you into "all truth" through his Word, by his Spirit. The principle of having a "single eye" in order to be full of light applies here (Matt 6); as well as the law of illumination, which we spoke of in the first chapter (John 7:17 see book 1). Jesus knew exactly why the religious leaders weren't convinced of who he was -- because they didn't want to be convinced. As the old saying goes, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still".

Life is like a many tunneled cave: The only way to find the right tunnel, and make it to the other side, is to obey and follow every bit of Truth the Father brings us with fear and diligence. To use self will and

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violate one small command of scripture, will cause us to veer off on a wrong tunnel. Those who rebel in the least, will surely be led astray of their own deceitful heart. We must hate and fear rebellion, pride or self-will being in our heart.

Heb. 3:12-14 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matt. 5:6

"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" James 1:22

Only those who are humbly seeking and obeying all the light they have are safe and pure before God. They are the only ones who are being filled with righteousness. A promise from Psalms that I have claimed many times in my life is **Psalms 32:8,9:**

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding:"

We need to pray, not only that God would teach us and instruct us in the way which we should go; but that we would not be as a horse or a mule, which have no understanding.

C. BE AN IMPARTIAL JUDGE.

What judge in any courtroom in the world could be thought just if he made a decision about a case after only hearing the defense? Or only hearing the prosecution? So, people who do not become neutral in their minds, and investigate all the evidence about a doctrine, cannot come to the truth; because they are seeking more than just God's truth. They are seeking to prove a certain side true, and so are not interested in the conflicting evidence --"Don't want to be confused with the facts".

You cannot build doctrine on emotion, or sentimental feelings. Just because Grama or Grampa believed this way, doesn't make it right. Just because you have good childhood memories in that denomination, etc. ; doesn't make it right. Just because believing some teaching

would shake your hope in loved ones being in heaven, you must seek truth alone and judge the teaching by the Word of God - no matter what it ultimately means. Believing a lie does not make it true! Believing you are safe does not make you safe! Believing someone went to heaven does not put him there. If you wish to be saved, you cannot hold to error because it is easier.

Bias is a wicked thing. It is pride. It is the unwillingness to be taught of another, whom you wish to think yourself superior to, or at least equal to. Bias says, "I saw one Christian who was dishonest, so Christianity must be wrong". It says, "I knew a boy who was spanked, and grew up hating his parents, so all parents who spank their children, like the Bible says, will lose their children". Bias says, "If you don't believe in eternal security, then you must be a Jehovah Witness". Bias says, "I like it, so it must be right".

People believe what they want to believe, and will usually always be quick to believe an evil report about someone who is living better than they are, or trying to get them to live better. This is bias, and will burn hot in Hell. Listen to Jesus' own testimony on this point:

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me." John 5:30

Jesus' judgment was **just** because he had no personal selfish bias, He only sought the will of his Father. If you cease to seek your own will, and just seek the will of the Father, you will also find truth. If you don't, you won't.

D. ONLY BUILD DOCTRINE ON PLAIN STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE...

1. ...WITH BIBLE DEFINITIONS FOR ALL WORDS.

You need to allow the Bible to define its own terms, such as:

- GRACE (Titus 2:11-14);
- FAITH (James 2; Hebrews 11:6);
- SALVATION (I Peter 1:9; Rom. 13:11);

...and every other term. You cannot **assume** your definition of that term, which you have **always** understood, is correct. This is usually why people cannot understand why their doctrine is wrong, because "it sounds like the Bible teaches it"; However, when you change the

definition of a term, it changes what the Bible verse says! If you have a faulty definition of *faith*, like the modern easy believism, then *faith* is simply a passive, dead *trust*, without obedience. This is not what the Bible means when it says, *faith*. The Bible defines *this faith* as *dead faith* (James 2).

GRACE is not that which **reduces** God's demands of man, and **allows** us to live worldly, selfish, and carnal without penalty. GRACE is that which **teaches** us and **empowers** us to live more holy and righteous than those in the Old Testament. This modern lenient "grace" is the turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness - Jude 3. If a father is gracious toward a child that is *trying* to please him, then it is noble and right. However, if that father is gracious toward a child who has a rebellious spirit, and is not trying to obey; then the father's action toward the child is not grace, but lasciviousness. Grace never makes sin less sinful. Grace never covers unrepentant sin or a rebellious spirit. God's grace is toward the humble repentant who never wants to sin again.

We will cover many other words along with these more extensively in later chapters.

2. ...WITH PROPER TENSE OF VERBS.

There is much heresy being taught and defended from the Bible due to a wrong tense of a verb. In your King James Bible, most of the time (not always) when you see an "eth" on the end of a word, it is PRESENT PARTICIPLE or PRESENT CONTINUOUS action. BELIEVETH doesn't mean one act of belief, but present continuous belief -- "IS BELIEVING". HEARETH would be "IS HEARING". This makes a big difference in verses like John 3:16, 5:24. Those who teach this "one act of faith" salvation, erroneously use such verses, thinking they are defending their dogma. Nowhere does the Bible teach we are eternally justified by one act of faith in praying the "sinners' prayer". The Bible teaches we much "continue in the faith", "hold fast our confidence unto the end", etc. We are to believe with an obedient faith until we die or are raptured.

It makes all the difference in Hebrews 7:25, when you realize that "come" is present participle - IS COMING. It is not a one time act of "coming to Christ", but continuous "coming" to confess sin, and find grace to "endure to the end" that this verse is speaking of. There would be no relevance in Jesus' continued intercession if it were speaking of us "coming" to Christ only once. Compare with I John 1:7

3. ...WITH PROPER HISTORICAL SETTING.

This makes a big difference on issues such as the women's prayer veil in I Cor. 11. You can argue all day long whether it is the hair, or a separate covering; but you can't argue with history. How did the believers of Paul's day understand this? Obviously they who knew Paul, and understood the common practice of "all the churches of God"; will also know what Paul is talking about.

This also affects such things as "modest apparel" -- What is it? What did the first century believers think was modest? Calvinism Vs. Arminianism is an issue that history affects. How did the early church understand "predestination", and "free will"?

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage is also affected by historical setting. What was the controversy Jesus and the Pharisees were speaking of. What did the Apostles do with remarried converts? How did Paul understand Jesus' teaching?

We see many "winebibbers" today justifying their use of alcoholic drinks because "Jesus made wine"; but what kind of wine did Jesus make? If they would look, they would find the upright Jews only drank a wine-water mixture. One part wine to three parts water was commonly accepted, but greater dilution was also used. Only Barbarians drank wine undiluted or with a 1-to-1 dilution. J.W. Shepard says: , **“Jesus made real wine out of the water. But there was a great difference between the Palestinian wine of that time and the alcoholic mixtures which today go under the name of wine. Their simple vintage was taken with three parts of water and would correspond more or less to our grape juice. It would be worse than blasphemy to suppose, because Jesus made wine, that He justifies the drinking usages of modern society with its bars, strong drinks, and resulting evils”**

Historical setting is very important. Learning how ancient people's, especially the Jews, understood and used different terms and phrases can be very helpful.

4. ...IN AGREEMENT WITH ALL OTHER PLAIN STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE.

Most heresy builds on an obscure statement of scripture and twists plain statements to fit the obscure statements. If you take all plain statements of scripture concerning any one topic, and put them

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together, they will always agree, and all obscure statements will then agree with this agreement of the plain statements. This is an easy way to find the truth on any issue. All heretical doctrines agree with **some** statements (on first glance); but **not** with all statements on that subject. Those that seemingly agree will be found only to agree based on mis-defined words, wrong verb tenses, etc.

The big argument about when the Holy Spirit was given, could be easily understood to be Pentecost, rather than John 20:22, if people would just listen to Jesus in John 16:7, and Peter in Acts 2:32-33, and 11:15-17. To push your opinion of John 20:22 as the giving of the Holy Spirit, instead of the "promising" and "instructing" concerning the giving of the Holy Spirit, makes it contradict plain statements of scripture. You must compare scripture with scripture, but only with a humble hunger to know the truth SO YOU CAN OBEY JESUS PROPERLY.

You can never pick a verse out here or there and expect to understand doctrine. You must follow the general tenor of Scripture, not play this "my verse can beat up your verse" nonsense. All truth runs parallel, and there is not one verse that contradicts or cancels another verse -- they all fit in the program God intended.

5. ...WITH PROPER CONTEXT.

This is so important. Hebrews and Romans are very often abused on this, not to mention James and Galatians. I've heard some say that all the warnings of falling away in Hebrews were really warnings to lost people to "really" get saved, or to professed believers to make sure they "really" had it. This ignores the obvious context of warning "brothers" to "hold fast" what they **already had**. I've heard some foolishly say Hebrews was only written to Jews; but they fail to understand Jewish Christians were Christians! They were saved the **same way we are!** In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. All that applies to Jewish Believers also applies to us -- as far as faith and salvation principles.

I've heard Romans abused and twisted to teach a "dead faith" salvation in chapter 4, because they missed the context and Paul's definition of FAITH and WORKS in 2:4-13; 6, 8, 11, etc. Most people who interpret Romans to teach Calvinism or Antinomianism are ignorant of the Jew-Gentile dilemma that Paul is dealing with. The legalities and dynamics of the merge of Jewish Christians with Gentile Christians in one body is a major factor in Romans - You miss this, you miss it all.

You must understand "to whom" he is speaking; "what" is the topic; "what" is the problem; "what" is the solution given; and what is the train of thought from the beginning of the book? The context of Hebrews 11 is "saving faith"; and is set by 10:35-39. The context of James 2 is "saving faith"; and is set by the question in 2:14. The "context" is the foundational thoughts on which an argument is built -- "where is he coming from, where is he going, and what is he trying to prove?"

As I think about this, an example comes to mind. Once a preacher was trying to convince me of his "eternal security" doctrine. Because he was building on the sand, his points were sinking quickly. In desperation he turned to Ecclesiastes 3:14, "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever:" and tried to say that since God saves us, it will be forever. However, the context has nothing to do with salvation; and if the proper definition is used for "salvation" (I Peter 1:9), none of us has really received the full product yet. This is a perfect example of heresy built on mis-applied context, and wrongly defined words.

Many confuse Romans 7 to be the experience of a believer; but they miss the context for chapters 7 & 8, which is set in 7:5 & 6 respectively. Sometimes it would be great if people would trash their college education or mental vaccination and just read what the Bible is saying.

6. ...WITH PROPER PLACEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The best example for this point is in the comparison of Calvinism and Arminianism. Calvinism focuses on verses where the responsibility is God's, and by reasoning about them, they destroy the responsibility put on man in other verses. We should emphasize and meditate more on the verses where the responsibility is ours, to make sure we are fulfilling our God given responsibilities, before we sit and ponder about verses where the responsibility is God's. If you hold to Calvinistic interpretations of verses that speak of God's responsibility; yet are honest enough to also look at the verses where God puts the responsibility on man, and fulfill your God given responsibilities, then you will live and preach like an Arminian anyhow. You will have a contradiction in your belief and life, but still will be living right. For example: If you interpret the verses that speak of predestination to mean that God "unconditionally predestined" some to Heaven and some to Hell, so man has no part in his own salvation; yet, you fear God enough to obey, and believe the verses that plainly say we must make our calling and election sure, continue to the end to be saved,

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overcome to be saved, obey Christ to be saved, etc. then you will still live right, even if you interpret wrong on the predestination point.

God will not judge us for being too finite to understand all he does, but he will judge us for disobeying what he has given us to do! If God commands you to do something, YOU CAN DO IT with His grace and strength. If God commands all men everywhere to repent, then all men everywhere CAN repent and had better get started quick. Do not wait for God to do something He has told you to do. Do not tell people that God will do something for them without them doing what God has told them to do. God helps those who are striving to help themselves by obeying His Word.

7. ...WITH PROPER PLACEMENT OF AUTHORITY

The Word of God must be the authority; not your EXPERIENCE; not your DENOMINATION; not your COMMENTARY; not your OPINION or IDEAS. If you have an experience, and then try to fit it into Scripture, or try to make the Bible teach it; then your experience is the authority, and you are using it to interpret the Bible. Maybe your experience is not of God! Maybe it is your imagination? Then the Bible, when studied properly, would expose your error -- are you willing to be humbled in this respect?

If your experience is legitimate--great; but it still doesn't become authoritative -- the Bible taught it before you had it, and the Bible still teaches it. Jesus never taught us to put weight on an experience for building doctrine.

The foundation for doctrine is the Word of God. If you are not obeying all the New Testament, then the Bible is not your true authority -- though you claim it is. You cannot study doctrine, and be sure you are right, until you wholly yield to the Bible as sole authority, crucify your ideas, and obey it all.

Peter makes a very interesting statement that applies here. In II Peter 1:16, Peter says: **For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**

Now, after saying this, Peter proceeds to tell of his experience on the mount of transfiguration. After telling of his eyewitness experience, he says this in verse 19:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed,..."

Isn't it interesting that Peter put more authority on the Word of prophecy than on his eyewitness experience? He was an apostle, he was with Jesus Christ in person, and he still said the Word of God was more authoritative than his experience. You are not an apostle, you are not with Jesus, and you had better not build doctrine on your experience; but on the Word of God. Some have foolishly taught that we are to "follow the Spirit" above the written Word of God. Does the Spirit ever lead contrary to the Word of God? Some have used the verse, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the Law" to mean, "If ye be led of the Spirit, you are not under the written Word of God". This is terrible heresy and foolishness; but is what happens when people violate laws of Bible interpretation.

E. ...BEING IN YOUR PROPER PLACE UNDER AUTHORITY

Ladies, you need to take heed here. You have not been given the position of studying, preaching, and leading the Church of Jesus Christ doctrinally. Ladies are more easily deceived, and tend to build their beliefs on emotional feeling, not logical evidence. God put women under men in this respect, and calls only men to lead the Church doctrinally. Let us look at the Word of God on this topic.

**"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
I Cor. 14:34-35**

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam as not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." I Tim. 2: 11-15

Many heretical movements today stem from a dominant woman, or group of women. Dominant wives cause the home to derail in doctrine. Dominant wives produce sons with false doctrine. Many times when I meet families that are doctrinally in error, I also find a wife with a strong opinion. In fact, I can't think of one family that is doctrinally off, which has a submissive wife in her place. She is either fighting for her

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fashion, which keeps her husband away from Godly influences; fighting for her opinion, which tells her husband there will be strife if he begins to entertain possible other ideas; or she is wanting to take the lead, which causes him to hold opinions based on the desire to be independent and "the head", rather than holding opinions because he has been free to think it through without fighting for his position.

When seeking the truth, there will be times of great uncertainty -- shifting from one position to the next until all evidence has been tested and thoroughly examined. If a man doesn't have a patient and quiet wife, who will wait on him to thoroughly check it all out; then he will be forced to just settle for a position to end the uncertainty, and get his wife off his back. He may even take the "it doesn't matter" or "who cares" attitude to avoid his wife saying, "Why are you so wishy washy, I think such and such".

Generally a woman won't seek out all the evidence, but will jump to quick conclusions which bring security and are based on her emotional needs. This may be hard to hear, but it is true nonetheless. Granted, a humble sincere woman will understand spiritual matters better than a proud, insincere man; but this is not what we are comparing. We are talking about which one **God** has designed to lead, and which one **God** has designed to follow. What a shame that sometimes the follower must suffer because of a foolish leader. I've seen many wives wanting to follow truth, but hindered by a proud rebellious husband. MEN, God has given you responsibility and ability by His Grace to lead your home to heaven - Don't let your wife and children down!

Women need to be in their God ordained place, or they are sure to be deceived, and cause deception in their family. A woman in her place, with a godly meek and quiet spirit, willingness to be modest, and willing to follow her husband in the Lord, will actually encourage her husband greatly to seek the truth and patiently find it; knowing that she will be there when he gets done with the journey, and will appreciate and love his efforts, not fight against him. Nothing is more blessed than a godly submissive wife. Of course, this will only work with a godly, humble husband. Christian wives with unbelieving or apostate husbands will sometimes have to "let the unbeliever depart" (I Cor. 7) in order to follow Christ. In this case, the church presbytery is to act as her guide and authority.

With that said, Men, YOU must be under proper authority to be right with God also. You cannot be a Lone Ranger who can never submit to a church body or brotherhood; yet hope to find truth and please God.

God's program is the CHURCH program. If you wish to be in God's program, you must be a part of a local Biblical body where there is ACCOUNTABILITY. This is God's way to save your soul. You need it, and you need to LOVE all God's ways to be saved. Your wife will usually be glad to follow you when she see you humbly following God's program and willing to be under accountability yourself. She feels safe submitting to a man who is submitting to God's order.

Much of understanding doctrine is a "heart" matter, and has much to do with your "knowing God". However, there are many sincere people who seek God for years, and yet are ignorant on some important points because they have never been confronted by someone who is right on the subject. I know, I've been there. You can learn much in a short time by seeking conversation with other believers who are obedient to Scripture, and may be farther than you -- This is the way God planned it. The Holy Spirit could have done the Apostle's job in Acts, but He works through human agency. Don't think you can bypass this avenue, and find "all truth" by just staying home and praying. When someone brings something new to your attention, you need to search the Scripture like a good "Berean" to see if "these things are so". You need the body of Christ to perfect you. Jesus set up human church government by His wisdom and love for us. We need to honor Christ's design of human church government - provided it is being done according to the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:11-13 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN IMPARTIAL JUDGE?
2. WHY CAN'T PEOPLE DISCUSS DOCTRINE WITHOUT ANGER?
3. SHOULD BELIEVERS AVOID DISCUSSING DOCTRINE?
4. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF ROMANS 7?
5. WHAT IS THE TENSE OF THE VERBS "COMETH" & "BELIEVETH", IN JOHN 6:35 & 37? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE INTERPRETATION CONCERNING "ETERNAL SECURITY"?
6. IS IT PROPER TO CONTEND FOR RIGHT DOCTRINE? WHY?
7. WHY CAN'T I UNDERSTAND A VERSE "MY WAY", AND YOU UNDERSTAND IT "YOUR WAY"?
8. WHAT IS "HISTORICAL SETTING?" WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
9. GIVE EXAMPLES OF BIAS.
10. WHY MUST THE FLESH BE CRUCIFIED?

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