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Introduction: How Can I be Sure What the Bible is Saying?

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness [...]"

- Teaching and correction = right thinking
- Reproof and training in righteousness = right action

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV) "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

- If there is a correct way to handle the word of truth, then there are also many ways to incorrectly handle God's word.
 - #1 Mishandling: Explain away a literal explanation by an in-between the lines interpretation.
 - Correct handling: "The Bible should be interpreted literally. We are to understand the Bible in its normal or plain meaning, unless the passage is obviously intended to be symbolic or if figures of speech are employed" (GotQuestions.org).
 - #2 Mishandling: Take a verse or passage out of context.
 - Correct handling: "Interpret a verse or passage in light of "the verses immediately preceding and following, the chapter, the book, and, most broadly, the entire Bible" (GotQuestions.org).
 - #3 Mishandling: Read our culture into the text.
 - Correct handling: "Seek to understand the culture, background, and situation that prompted the text" (GotQuestions.org).
- Word of Caution: God doesn't just want to be studied; He wants to be worshiped - known - loved - and in a PERSONAL relationship where we TRUST Him, need Him, talk with Him, and CONNECT with Him.

Goal: That your accurate study of God's Word would grow your love for God and others, and help you to live rightly in His world.

These questions are coming from two areas:

1. People need to know what box top (what is reality) looks like...
 - People that just don't know what the bible says and therefore need to be told.
2. People need to know how the pieces fit together.
 - People that know what the bible says but don't know how to live it out.

#1 - Having Questions is a Normal Part of the Christian Life

1 Corinthians 12:1 (NLT) "Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this."

- We're finite beings trying to comprehend and have a personal relationship with an Infinite being.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV) "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

- There is this gap.
- But there is much for us to know and live out because we can know what God has revealed to us... He speaks!

Deuteronomy 29:29 (NLT) "The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions."

- There will be things I won't understand and never will this side of glory.
- But there is much I can know and the goal is faithfulness with those things... obedience -- for me and my kids, my community -- us!
- The Bible is not an answer book, but He has given us what we need for life on Earth.
 - Keep the main thing the main thing.

#2 - How We Deal with Questions is Key

2 Timothy 2:22-26 (NIV) “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

- v 22 - Deal with your stuff first.
- v 23 - Some conversations are not worth getting into.
- v 24 - How we have these controversial conversations - patience, kindness, etc. - matters.
- v 25 - Some conversations are worth having, and correction (back to Truth) needs to happen.
- v 26 - There is a spiritual fight - key word: captive. So make sure we are fighting the right enemy -- not people -- realizing that here they are called “captive” by the devil.

#3 - The Basics of Biblical Interpretation

1. What did it mean for the original audience?
2. Are there any timeless principles to extract here?
3. How does it apply to my life?

Conclusion:

1. Don’t forget: God doesn't just want to be studied; He wants to be worshiped - known - loved - and in a PERSONAL relationship where we TRUST Him, need Him, talk with Him, and CONNECT with Him.
2. The goal today was that your accurate study of God’s Word would grow your love for God and others, and help you to live rightly in His world.
3. Call to action: James 1:22 (NIV) “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

For Small Group Discussion:

- **Icebreaker:** What single question would you most want God to answer for you if He would?
- **Questions:**
 1. What was something that stood out to you from the sermon this week?
 2. What were some of the guidelines to follow to help us interpret the Bible accurately?
 3. Would anyone be willing to share a Bible study tool that they find helpful?
 - Cross-referencing, commentaries, word studies, Bible maps, online tools, etc...
 4. Reread 2 Timothy 2:22-26. What does this show us about our part when people ask questions?
 5. What stands out to you in this passage?
 6. What has it looked like when you have or have not lived this in your life?
 7. What are you challenged to think/believe/do differently because of this passage and our discussion?
 8. How can you use this to disciple others?

Tips and Resources:

- *77 FAQ's About God and the Bible* by John McDowell and Sean McDowell
- Jim Putman’s podcast on hermeneutics

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