

'What Must I

Do To Be Saved?' - Vance A. Stinson

God's Word teaches that salvation is a free gift! But does that mean there is nothing a person must do to receive salvation once it is offered to him?

Depending on God - Loren Chamberlain

It seems to happen to all the people God calls out of this world to Jesus Christ: a particular time in life when depending on our own skills and abilities to solve problems won't work. We often depend on ourselves when life seems easy, but when overwhelming troubles arrive on our doorstep-and we know we are unable to help ourselves-we are forced to depend on God.

Question&Answer - Vance A. Stinson

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Upcoming Events

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Does God Love the World Enough to Save It?

Every day thousands of human beings die unsaved. Millions have yet to even hear the name of Jesus Christ, which

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is the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Are you a Christian who fears for the unsaved souls of your departed loved ones? Do you feel guilty for not having successfully "witnessed" to them?

Learn the profound biblical teaching of God's ultimate plan of redemption for all mankind by requesting our FREE brochure, Does God Love the World Enough to Save It? Order today!

You will learn...

- that there is more than one resurrection.
- that the "unsaved dead" will have a future chance at salvation.
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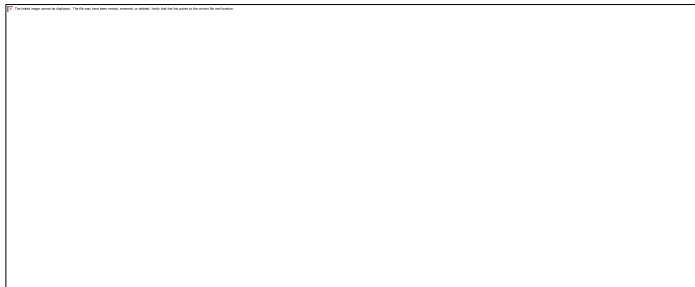
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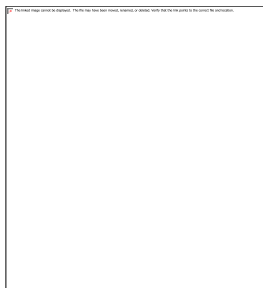
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February 1999
Vol. 3 No. 2

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[The Angel of the Lord](#) - Vance A. Stinson

In times past, God has communicated with man through various means. He frequently spoke through the prophets. Sometimes He spoke by way of a "still, quiet voice." At other times He communicated His will through dreams and visions. But one of the most remarkable ways He interacted with His creatures was through the agency of someone known as the "Angel of the Lord."

[The Lord Jesus Christ](#)

[How Well Do You Know Him?](#) - Lloyd W. Cary

Eternity will not be adequate to fully appreciate the personage and character of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Consequently, in this short Bible study we will seek to understand His immeasurable worth by considering just a few of the metaphors and parables the Bible uses to declare Him.

[Question&Answer](#) - Vance A. Stinson

Feature

Upcoming Events

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The Church of God, International has many congregations and we always welcome visitors and newcomers. We hope you'll join us for fellowship soon.

Is Jesus Really God?

This month we are offering you a brand-new booklet that deals with the all-important subject of whether Jesus Christ is truly God--one of the most controversial theological issues of Christian history. It answers the question of who, and what, Jesus Christ was before His human birth, and demolishes the major arguments put forth by "unitarian" groups that deny the deity of the son of God. If you have friends who tell you that Jesus Christ existed as Michael the Archangel or some other created being before His human conception, then you don't want to miss reading this one! You will see proof positive that Jesus Christ is truly God, yet distinct from the Father. You can equip yourself with a sure, biblical foundation by asking for our FREE booklet *Is Jesus Really God?*

Learn the profound biblical teaching of God's ultimate plan of redemption for all mankind by requesting our FREE brochure, *Does God Love the World Enough to Save It?* Order today!

- Believe it or not, New Testament saints addressed Jesus Christ in prayer! Does the Bible authorize praying to anyone other than God?
- In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is given titles which, in the Old

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- Testament, belong exclusively to God!
- Biblical scholars affirm that the apostles and early Christians called Jesus God!
- Jesus Christ is called (in Scripture) "the beginning of the creation of God" and "the firstborn of all creation"--but neither of these descriptions imply that Christ was "the first to be created," as many unitarians claim.

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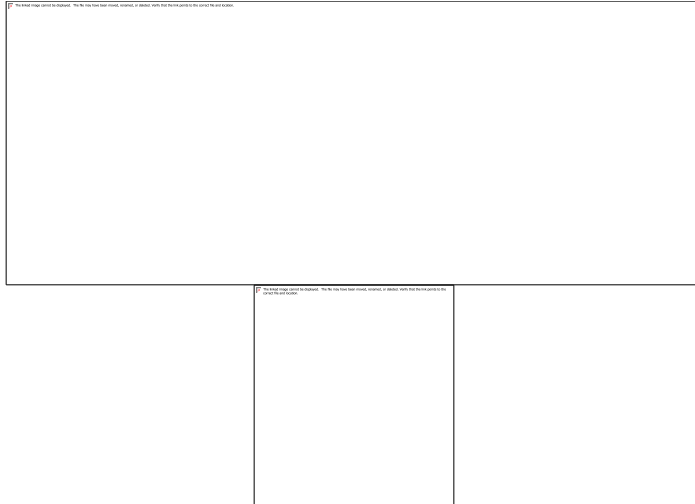
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March 1999
Vol. 3 No. 3

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[How To Improve Your Skills of Overcoming](#) - **Bill Watson**

In this day and age we are bombarded by all kinds of information, conditions, and circumstances that are counterproductive to developing the Christian attributes our Lord expects of us. Advertisements on TV and in magazines usually appeal to the "lust of the eyes," the "lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life," the very things the apostle John warned us about (1 John 2:16).

[Question&Answer](#) - **Vance A. Stinson**

[Reading the Bible With Comprehension](#) - **Lloyd W. Cary and Darren M. Cary**

"I just can't understand the Bible!" How many times have you heard that said? Why is it that so many people seem to have a "mental block" when it comes to reading the Bible, yet they have no problem reading a mystery, novel, or even a complicated technical treatise?

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Bending the Twig

Parenting is an enormous responsibility which requires care and patience. A child is like a young plant that begins its life tender and pliable, but without proper attention and care, its growth can never reach its full potential.

Parents, like farmers, who do their part in preparing, tending, and putting the right combination of nutrients into the "ground" of their families, have a much better chance of producing a good crop. When the bad times hit, parents' preparation and hard work can make the difference between success and failure.

Get solid, common-sense advice on child rearing by sending for our FREE brochure, Bending the Twig. Order for yourself or for a friend TODAY!

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Bible Study Weekend in Tyler

1999 Bible Study Weekend
April 2-4

Jesus Christ declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35, NKJV). We want you to partake of that eternal Bread of Life--that's why the theme for this year's Bible Study Weekend is "Led by the Bread," which will tie into the timeless truths of the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Every year during the spring holy day season, the Church of God, International sponsors this fun-filled weekend of spiritual rejuvenation, and now it's just around the corner. You and your family and friends are invited to attend this FREE event!

If you have any questions about the 1999 Bible Study Weekend, call us immediately at (903) 825-2525. Make your plans now!

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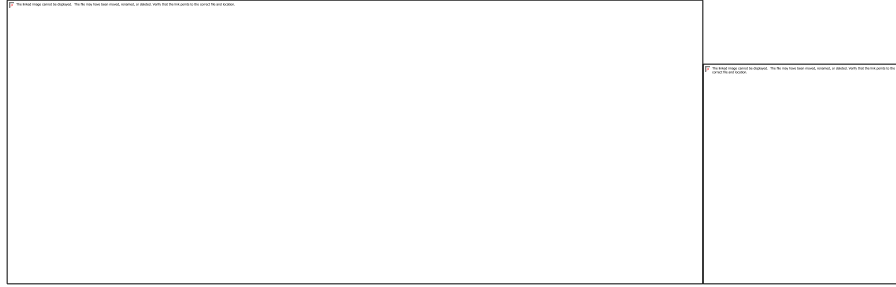
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How To Improve Your Skills of **Overcoming**

by Bill Watson

In this day and age we are bombarded by all kinds of information, conditions, and circumstances that are counterproductive to developing the Christian attributes our Lord expects of us. Advertisements on TV and in magazines usually appeal to the "lust of the eyes," the "lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life," the very things the apostle John warned us about (1 John 2:16).

Though it is difficult, and may even seem futile for some, God our Father and Jesus Christ our Savior expect us to overcome. They expect us to grow (enlarge, increase) in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). They expect us not to draw back (Hebrews 10:38). They expect us to please them. That can be accomplished by having faith (Hebrews 11:6). But as mentioned before, it's not easy.

A variety of things may limit our ability to improve, grow, and develop. Some of us have used the word baggage to describe these difficulties.

We all have baggage. It comes in many forms. It can be related to our age, weight, height, background, culture, education, gender, race, or how we were brought up.

It may stem from whether we were brought up by two parents or one, or whether our parents were divorced, or whether they abused us. It appears that a portion of the next generation will have to deal with having been brought up by "parents" of the same sex! We think we have problems now-wait until we add that piece of baggage to the little minds of our youngsters!

Nevertheless, Jesus Christ expects us to overcome. It is incumbent upon all of us to come out from this world's values and not be partakers of her sins (Revelation

18:25). Even our Lord prayed, in the night He was betrayed, that we would be set apart (sanctified) by His truth, which would minimize and hopefully eliminate the evil that so easily persuades us to sin in this world (John 7:1419).

It is a challenge for all of us to allow God's Spirit to develop new behaviors in us. But we are assured that all things are possible, regardless of how impossible it may seem, through Christ Jesus our Lord (Philippians 4:13).

Here are four simple points to keep in mind that will help you improve your overcoming skills:

1. Develop the habit of prayer (Matthew 6:915). Pray for God's kingdom; pray for your loved ones, and even your enemies.
2. Learn to think bigger than yourself (Colossians 3:13). Learn to view the world and life through Christ from God's perspective.
3. Look on the needs of others. Notice what the apostle James considers pure religion (James 1:27), and who our Lord considers the righteous (Matthew 25: 3146).
4. Do nothing for vain glory (Philippians 2:3). Notice Paul's admonition to do nothing through strife and vain glory.

Keep these four points in mind. If applied and practiced, you can be assured of improved skills in your efforts to overcome and change carnal habits to godly attributes.

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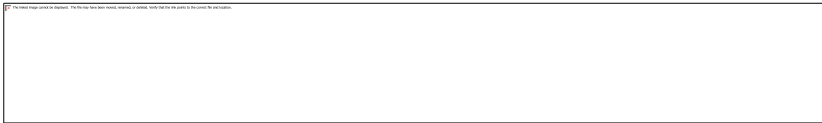
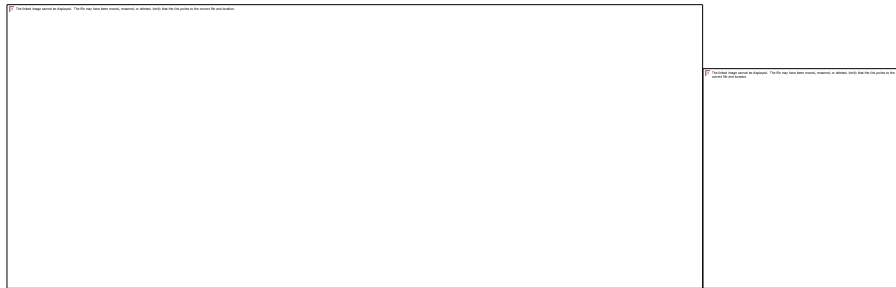
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by Vance A. Stinson

Who Is Michael?

Question: Since "Miyka'el" [Michael] means "one who is like God," who else can fit this description? No one other than Jesus! ... Do you agree that you were in error [in a recent television program] in stating that Michael is an archangel, when there is no biblical basis for this Catholic/Protestant presumption? [Editor's note: Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses, this writer believes the preincarnate Christ was God, and that "Michael" was one of His names.]

R.R., E. Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada

Answer: According to the book of Jude, Michael is an archangel (Jude 9). Jude tells us that even a strong angel like Michael refuses to pronounce judgment upon the devil, but the "Lord" (Christ, not Michael) will come "to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way..." (verses 14,15). Michael the archangel and Jesus the Messiah are clearly contrasted in this passage. Of course, this proves nothing if you reject the book of Jude.

You asked, "Since 'Miyka'el' means 'one who is like God,' who else can fit this description?" Check Numbers 13:13; 1 Chronicles 5:13,14; 6:40; 7:3; 8:16; 12:20; 27:18; 2 Chronicles 21:2; and Ezra 8:8, and ask the same of the "Michael" named in each of these verses. There is one angel and several humans named Michael. The name means "Who is like God?"

In Daniel 10, Michael comes to the aid of the good angel (possibly Gabriel) to fight with the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Michael is "one of the chief princes," or guardian angels. There are good and evil "princes" (angelic principalities) at work behind the scenes in the affairs of this world. Michael is Israel's "prince," or special guardian. As "one of the chief princes," he is in the same class as the other ruling angels. His battle against supernatural evil is described here, in Jude 9, and in Revelation 12. Jesus Christ is not one of several ruling angels; He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). He is the One of whom it is said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6). The angels-and this surely includes the ruling "princes" of Daniel 10-are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). They are contrasted with the Son (read Hebrews 1:5-14).

In Revelation 12, the "male child" who is "caught up to God" is Christ. Then, a couple of verses later, Michael and his angels are seen fighting with the dragon and his angels. The text tells us that Michael, not the male child, fought with the dragon. This leaves the clear impression that the "male child" and Michael are two different persons. One cannot use the argument that the name Michael is used because it would seem too unnatural to have a "child" waging war against the dragon, for elsewhere in Revelation the "Lamb" wages war and expresses His wrath. A war-waging, wrathful "lamb" seems every bit as unnatural.

The evidence tips the scales in favor of the view that Michael is not Christ, but is one of the ruling angels who, with other supernatural "princes," battles the forces of supernatural evil that are at work behind the scenes in this world.

Who Creates Evil?

Question: In the January 1999 issue of your newsletter, you stated (in the Q&A section) that God does not create evil. [Doesn't this] contradict Isaiah 45:7, which clearly states that God creates evil?

Mr. O., Fort Smith, Arkansas

Answer: The problem lies in the definition of the term "evil." The term can refer to (1) ungodly behavior, or to (2) calamities that befall individuals, groups, and nations. The answer given in the January 1999 newsletter pertained to the former definition-ungodly behavior.

In Isaiah 45:7, God does not say that He is the Author of ungodliness. The New King James Version correctly translates the verse as follows: "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity, I, the Lord, do all these things."

God brings calamity upon ungodly men, but He does not make men ungodly.

The kind of evil God does not create is mentioned in James 1:13-15: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

God gave humankind the power to choose whether to obey Him. He therefore created the potential for ungodly (evil) behavior, but is not the Author of ungodliness.

Should Christians Keep Sabbaths and Festivals?

Question: I can usually follow the teachings supplied by the tapes and booklets to a full understanding of the Scriptures. However, at times I am unable to satisfy myself. I am at one of those times now. I have read of the church keeping the feast days as well as the Sabbath days, and have accepted these teachings. After reading Galatians 4:9,10, I am having trouble with why we are to keep [these days]. Is Paul saying we are not to be bound by [the festivals and Sabbaths] set forth under the law if we are in Christ?

K.D.W., Concord, VA

Answer: Paul writes, "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (Galatians 4:8-11).

Since the problem was that some of the Galatian believers were being persuaded to adopt some form of Judaism as a means of salvation or spiritual perfection, many have thought that the "days and months and seasons and years" were the Sabbaths, new moons, festivals, and sabbatical years described in the Law of Moses. But let's remember that Judaism is not precisely the same as the Law of Moses, or religion of the Old Testament. Some forms of Judaism revised the Law considerably, and picked up certain pagan elements along the way.

Daniel G. Reid states, "From Second Temple Judaism there comes ample evidence of speculation about the universe and how the heavenly bodies were related to

angels. The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries in 1 Enoch 72-82, a work dating from perhaps the first century B.C., testifies to Jewish astrological ideas and the association of an angel, Uriel, with the stars. This is set within a context in which particular attention is paid to times and seasons" (Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, 1993, p. 231, emphasis added).

These astrological beliefs were probably held by some Jewish sects during the time of the apostles. In all likelihood, the astrological "times and seasons" are the "days and months and seasons and years" Paul has in mind in Galatians 4:10. The apostle warns these former pagans that those who were taking up astrological observances common to certain Jewish and pagan religious sects were returning to the base and worthless elements they had served before they became believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul fully recognized the Christological significance of the weekly Sabbath and annual holy days. By no means was he condemning the observance of these divinely ordained institutions.

Two Laws?

Question: James speaks of the "law of liberty" (1:25; 2:12). Paul speaks of the "yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). What two laws are they talking about?

R.M., Muldrow, Oklahoma.

Answer: James writes, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." James cites two of the Ten Commandments, and then speaks of being judged by the "law of liberty" (James 2:10-12). This "perfect law of liberty" is something a person "looks into" and "continues in" (1:25). Obviously, it includes the Ten Commandments. James calls it the "law of liberty" because he understands that true freedom is possible only in the framework of law.

The "yoke of bondage" Paul mentions in Galatians 5:1 is not the Law, but is a spiritual condition that resulted from the wrong use of the Law. Paul explains, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (verse 4). To be "justified" is to have one's sins blotted out and be given a right standing before God—a state of being that cannot be attained through any law. "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). Therefore, the Galatians who were seeking justification through law (which cannot provide it), and not through Christ (who can provide it), had "fallen from grace."

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Reading the Bible With Skills of

Comprehension

How many times have you heard it said, "I just can't understand the Bible"?
Here are some down-to-earth helps to aid your comprehension.

by Lloyd W. Cary and Darren M. Cary

"I just can't understand the Bible!" How many times have you heard that said? Why is it that so many people seem to have a "mental block" when it comes to reading the Bible, yet they have no problem reading a mystery, novel, or even a complicated technical treatise?

When they read a mystery, for example, they look for leads, clues, and evidences in hopes of solving the puzzle or crime. But when it comes to reading the Bible, it seems their minds freeze up and confusion sets in. Although the Bible is a large book (actually a compilation of sixty-six books), touching every major aspect of our lives, it embodies certain themes, principles, and concepts scattered throughout the book, much like a mystery or novel.

All truth is never found in just one verse in the Bible. The key to understanding the Bible is to recognize these clear recurring patterns or themes and put them (not force them) all together until we see the whole picture (2 Timothy 2:15). When detecting these themes or doctrines, we need to ask certain questions that will lead to further investigation, which will increase our understanding.

As you read your Bible through, look for these important recurring subjects and apply your mind diligently to the following questions:

The Nature of God: What is God like? Is He an impersonal force or a living Spirit Being who is concerned with our lives and hearts? Does He have emotions we can relate to? Can we piece together a mosaic description of God from the many separate accounts in Scripture? Can we understand what He wants from us? Is He one Person, two Persons, or a "trinity" of Persons?

Jesus Christ: Was Jesus merely a "good man" and prophet, or did He claim divinity? Did Jesus advocate the destruction of the law or did He uphold it? Did He preexist His earthly ministry two thousand years ago-and if so, why did He come to this earth? What were His teachings? What did He emphasize? What is His role in the lives of true believers today?

The Holy Spirit: Is the Holy Spirit a separate Person or an extension of God Himself? To what extent does the influence of the Spirit change our behavioral patterns? Is it something that one must work up, or is there a defined biblical procedure for obtaining it?

The Love of God: How has God demonstrated His love? What is love? If God is love, why does He permit war, crime, and sickness? Does God have a special plan for us-and if so, what is it?

Faith: Faith is defined in both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as belief in action. Who in Scripture acts positively on the promises, and what are the blessings? Who fails to act on the promises, and what are the consequences? How can we increase our faith?

Method of Worship: Does God care how we worship Him? Is He pleased as long as we are sincere or mean well? Are some methods of worship specifically forbidden? If so, what are they?

God's Laws: What are they? Is there anything wrong with them? What if everybody kept them? Are they reflective of God's character or man's? What happens if we break them? Are they done away for Christians today or are they to be kept forever?

Sin: What is it, as defined in the Bible? Why is it so bad? What must we do about it? What is the result of it? How can we be cleansed of it?

Repentance: It is described as turning from one thing to something else. Is repentance an emotion or a performance? What specific steps are required and what specific benefits are promised? What do we repent of? Do we only need to repent of really bad things? What happens if we do not repent?

Satan and His Demons: Who or what is Satan? Where did he come from? What is his fate? How does he influence us and what are his devices? How can we take a stand against him?

Atonement: It is defined in the Torah as a "kapporeth," or covering. What are the principles of atonement? Who or what needs to be atoned for? How is the transaction handled?

Grace: This simply means unmerited pardon or favor-something we receive which we did not earn. When you encounter this word, ask what specific kinds of people qualify for grace and what types of gifts these recipients of grace actually receive.

Sabbath and Holy Days: Periods of rest. How many different types of sabbath observances are described in Scripture? What does each type reveal? What is the specific symbolism of each? Why does God command them? Do they have prophetic significance? Do they refer to fulfilled or unfulfilled prophecies? Have God's sabbaths been changed or done away?

The Nature of Man: Who and what is man? Is he the end result of a fortuitous evolutionary happenstance, or a special creation of God? Are the personalities in the Bible described in a way that rings true to human nature as we observe it today? Can

we relate to these characters as flesh-and-blood people? Can we see some of our own tendencies in them? Would we have acted in the same ways?

Glorification of Man: Can we achieve God-likeness by diligent pursuit of knowledge and good works or by looking at our own inner self? Or does God have something else in mind? Are God's expectations within what we can do? What is God's ultimate plan for man?

Promises to Abraham: What promises does God make to Abraham? To his descendants? Has later Scripture revoked these promises? Have any of these promises come true? How can you be a recipient of the promises to Abraham?

The single most important ingredient to Bible study is reading with comprehension and discernment. If we do not understand what we are reading, we are wasting our time. But we can understand the Bible if we approach Bible reading and study with an open and inquisitive mind.

Proper Approach to the Holy Bible

One reason people have a tough time comprehending the Bible is their misunderstanding of how the Bible is "holy."

Of course, the leather covering of your Bible is not sacred. The ink, paper, scrawled notes, and church bulletins stuffed inside your Bible are not sacred or holy. Even the individual English words contained inside are not holy in and of themselves!

What's so holy about the Bible? The message of life-changing truth it conveys! For the Holy Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Unfortunately, many see the Bible as a collection of "holy verses," as if the biblical writers wrote one verse at a time in random order, and intended that their readers "piece" all these thousands of verses together just right, contriving unique interpretations through the power of the "Holy Spirit."

The result? Many erroneous and outright ridiculous conclusions!

How can you avoid these problematic results?

(1) Avoid "proof texting." Proof texting is the misapplication of various texts to "prove" a preconceived meaning of Scripture. A prime example is when those who are opposed to the seventh-day Sabbath point out the eight New Testament references to the "first day" of the week in an attempt to uncover a shift from Saturday to Sunday worship. But the references just don't hold up to scrutiny. For the sake of argument, suppose Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday, the first day of the week. What would that have to do with the Fourth Commandment? The contexts of

the "first day" scriptures have nothing to do with the Decalogue, do they? No, not at all.

Just like anything we would write today, the biblical authors wrote with purposeful context and story flow. There is a sequential pattern of ideas. Why not read them as he wrote them, and try to understand his writings as he intended them to be understood?

That's why it is a good idea to remember the next point.

(2) Read books of the Bible in their entirety. Just read them straight through! Take Paul's epistles as an example. He wrote each of his letters with a definite purpose in mind. Whether it was a problem or heresy infecting a church, or a perceived need for further instruction, he wrote with intent and deliberate sequence. Paul wrote full letters, not just a few random chapters and verses. Read an epistle as you would a love letter-following the thought patterns, picking up on implications and word choice. (But don't get too hung up on words and what a word "really means" according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, because words can mean different things depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the English word saved can mean different things: "He who endures to the end, the same shall be saved" and "I saved \$30 by making reservations through Priceline.com.")

(3) Read Bible passages in their proper context. You should be sensitive to their literary and historical context.

Know the immediate literary context of a particular discussion by reading the verses and chapters before and after the text you're reading. This, of course, includes the entire book's theme; again, that's why it is good to be familiar with the entire book.

You should also consult Bible dictionaries, commentaries, or "study Bibles" to learn more about the historical and cultural settings of the time. Find out why the book was written, what event or events sparked the writer to get out his pen. Learn the culture of the time, the place and date of writing, and other important insights to understanding the plain meaning of the text. This is often overlooked by new learners of the Bible, and in doing so they often make fundamental errors in their interpretation.

The Bible is not a crystal ball or a code book! It is a compilation of historical documents that should be viewed as such, even though it is a living book that has application for all time.

(4) Pray for understanding. This does not mean to ask God to send you a special or mysterious interpretation. Unique interpretations do not usually pass the test of sound biblical exegesis. Don't look for hidden meanings. Pray that God will open your mind and free you from biases and preconceived ideas so you can understand

the plain and simple meaning of the Scriptures.

Once you prayerfully read the Bible in all of its proper contexts-historical and literary-then you will come to comprehend the Bible as never before! Then you will be able to "piece" together all you have learned from the Scriptures-not just scattered verses here and there, but solid, biblical insights that are clearly taught! You'll come to understand and see clearly the plain themes and doctrines of the Bible until they all paint a beautiful, majestic picture.

The Holy Spirit, then, if you humbly accept the Word of God, will convict you of the truth that is plain to those with spiritual eyes, and you will be driven to obey the good and perfect will of God.

Pray that God will open your mind to His truth and teach you every step of the way as you read your Bible. Reading your Bible humbly with the right questions in mind will help you to recognize what God has to say to you. Nothing in this life will benefit you more than reading your Bible with comprehension.

End

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