

Pastor Ray's Bible School #1

“How to Approach the Bible”

Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.
For you will go out with joy, and be led forth in peace...
Isaiah 55: 6-11 NASB

I. How to Approach the Bible

A. The Bible for Dummies

1. We approach the Holy Bible in the same way we buy one of the books “For Dummies”.
2. The idea is that, though we don’t really think we’re stupid, when it comes to the subject in question, we’re ready to admit that we:
 - a. Need to learn it
 - b. Need someone to make it simple
 - c. Are ready to start at the bottom
3. This is called “humility” or “meekness”. The idea is to be teachable!

B. Preview of Next 12 Weeks

1. This course of Bible studies will be different from anything you've ever had.
2. We're starting from scratch and seeking a "holistic" understanding of the Bible, how to see it as a whole from a "big picture" perspective.
3. Instead of seeking to understand the "whole" from studying the "parts", we're going to seek to grasp an understanding of the "whole", so we can understand the "parts".

C. Presuppositional Themes

1. The Bible is not so much a truth to be understood as it is a revelation to be believed.
2. The "Dummies" books work because we come to them with humility and a teachable spirit.
3. We accept them as an "authority", and we believe in the author, even though we usually don't know his name!
4. We ought to take the same approach to Scripture.

II. Belief: A Function of the Will

A. Belief=Faith

1. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we all have a code or a creed, a system of beliefs.
2. We buy a book believing it will help us. We suspend all presuppositions and take the posture of a genuine seeker, a learner, or a disciple.
3. This is the presuppositional approach we must take to this course.

B. Why Some Never Learn

"If any man is *willing to do His will*, he will *know* of the teaching, whether it is from God..."
Jesus in John 7:17

1. Jesus said that being "willing" to believe and act on what is taught precedes "knowing" or understanding what is taught!
2. We can't seek to understand it first, so we'll believe it.
3. When we believe it, Jesus says we will understand it!

4. The height of arrogance is to read the Bible so *you* can judge *It*.
5. Belief is, primarily, a function of *the will*.

C. The Bible is a Revelation

1. The Bible is not a truth to be understood as much as it is a revelation to be believed.
2. God is a person who has chosen to reveal Himself.
3. In the same way, we can never really know another person unless he chooses to reveal himself to us; so it is with the person of God.
4. However, in the case of God, the “person” is the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful Creator!

D. Everybody Believes Something

1. We *choose* to believe what we believe. That’s why we say belief is, ultimately, a function of the will.
2. Evolution is a theory about how the world came to be what it is; creation is God’s account of how the world came to be what it is. Since neither position can be “proven” in an empirical sense, the issue is settled in the will of each person!
3. Evolutionists seek to “prove” things through science or empirical proofs. The Bible is a *revelation*, graciously given by God, and meant to be believed.*

*This does not mean that the Bible is irrational or meant to be accepted without empirical evidence; there is a literal mountain of “proofs” confirming the Bible record. The point is that nobody can finally and absolutely prove what happened in the beginning. The evolutionists try to figure it out by study; the Bible simply reveals how it was done according to God.

4. It is important to understand that whatever we believe, we believe it because we have *chosen* to believe it, an act of the *will*.
5. When we *choose* to believe God’s word, and are willing to *do* what we find there, understanding will come!!!

III. Two Kinds of Grace and Two Kinds of Revelation

A. Common Grace and Saving Grace

1. Common grace is the term that describes how God grants favor to all men everywhere, regardless of their “goodness” or what they deserve.

a. Many scriptures describe how God’s providence supports all living things. (Psalm 104)

b. God commands us to show “common grace”, even to our enemies!

“Love your enemies...do good to them that hate you...that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven...for He makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and the unjust.”
Jesus, in Matthew 5:45

2. Common (or “universal”) grace causes us to understand that all good things come from God, and that:

a. We can’t equate God’s blessing with God’s approval!

b. Evil is not usually punished immediately

“The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment;
for others, their sins follow after.”
I Timothy 5:24

c. God’s incredible grace toward the ungodly, in forbearing from instant punishment, actually becomes a reason for men to continue in their sinful ways!

“Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.”
Ecclesiastes 8:11 NASB

3. The other kind of grace is “special” grace, or “saving grace”.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”
Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB

4. Everyone receives common grace; saving grace is a gift!

B. General Revelation and Special Revelation

1. General or universal revelation is the term that describes how God reveals Himself to all men through His creation.

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
and their utterances to the end of the world.
Psalm 19:1-4 NASB

2. Unfortunately, this universal revelation is insufficient for salvation.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, *because God has made it plain to them*. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”
Romans 1:18-20 NIV

It's not what men don't understand about God that condemns them; it's what they do understand and yet *suppress* about God that condemns them!

3. Salvation requires “special” or “particular” revelation, and whoever receives it enters into the kingdom of God.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples,
"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"
They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah;
and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah,
for *this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven*.
And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church,
and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."
Matthew 16:13-18 NIV

4. While everyone has a general revelation of God that comes through the senses, only those who are saved have received “special” or “saving” revelation of the true identity of Jesus Christ.

"All things have been committed to Me by My Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, *and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.*"
Luke 10:22 NIV

“No one can come to Me *unless the Father who sent Me draws him*, and I will raise him up at the last day.”
John 6:44-45 NIV

IV. Conclusion: How to Approach the Bible

1. The Bible is not a truth to be understood; it's a revelation to be believed.
2. General revelation is not sufficient for salvation; we must receive saving revelation.
3. Common grace is not sufficient for salvation; we need saving grace.
4. Our only proper posture is humility and meekness! We must ask God for grace and revelation now!!!