

“That’s Not In The Bible?” (Part 2)

Ryan Goodwin

Paul emphasized accuracy in his letters to the young man Timothy. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). *“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you”* (1 Timothy 4:16). It is imperative that we know what we are talking about when it comes to Bible matters. After all, how we handle the Bible can go a long way toward influencing those who hear our message, for good or bad (1 Peter 3:15).

- Avoid saying phrases like “The Bible says...” Give a scripture, not an idea. Often, our paraphrase of a verse simply does not do it justice – or worse, we misquote it altogether.
- Keep some kind of written log of important verses. This can be as organized as you need it, depending on how you recall information best. Either keep a journal handy, to write down verses on particular subjects, or make notations on the pages of your Bible. God intended for His book to be used, so avoid the misconception that your Bible is too sacred to scribble in. It is a tool, so “get it dirty.”
- When dealing with somebody who is mishandling the Bible, force them to provide quotations. “Where is that written in the Bible?” or “When did Jesus actually say that?” It is amazing how easily we let people “off the hook” when they are trying to argue that Jesus would have approved of various false doctrines. When Jesus debated His opponents, He forced them to confront their erroneous thinking (Matthew 21:23ff, Matthew 22:15ff).
- Look for the totality of a teaching in the Bible, not just an isolated passage. Mishandling the message of Jesus Christ is very easy when you fail to look at everything He and His apostles said on a subject. For example, Matthew 7:1 ought to be considered along with John 7:24, 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Corinthians 6:3, in addition to its own context. Understanding salvation also requires us to consult several different passages (Romans 10:9-10, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, Acts 22:16).
- Handling the Bible accurately means accepting what it says once you have thoroughly studied a subject. It is imperative that we mold our thinking after the message of God rather than manhandle the scriptures to fit what we want to believe. *“People prefer knowing biblical passages that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs, a Bible professor says. ‘Most people who profess a deep love of the Bible have never actually read the book,’ says Rabbi Rami Shapiro, who once had to persuade a student in his Bible class at Middle Tennessee State University that the saying ‘this dog won’t hunt’ doesn’t appear in the Book of Proverbs. ‘They have memorized parts of texts that they can string together to prove the biblical basis for whatever it is they believe in,’ he says, ‘but they ignore the vast majority of the text’”* (“Actually, That’s Not In The Bible”, John Blake, CNN.com).

Carry The Banner

“Christians, first and foremost, need to learn the foundational truths about their faith. This includes a basic knowledge of the contents of the Bible...We also need a

greater emphasis on the Bible as something worth learning about—people aren't motivated to study something that is increasingly viewed as a religious alternative to Grimm's Fairy Tales. While not the only factor, increasingly downplaying the function and status of Scripture as the Word of God logically means that fewer people will be interested in studying it" ("Pew Survey Reveals Basic Ignorance of Christian Belief", Bates and Cosner, 2 Nov. 2010, www.creation.com). Sometimes we act like we are ashamed to be Bible-believing people, when that book is our timeless guide to salvation. *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation"* (Romans 1:16).

We must show that we are different from the hypocrites and charlatans of the world. We must prove that the Bible is still God's message, *"inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must carry sound doctrine as a banner, never shying away from its penetrating truths. We are exhorted by God to *"stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you shall find rest for your souls"* (Jeremiah 6:16). There is no security in anything but the will of God, for it does not bend in the face of any storm. Matthew 24:35 *"Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away."*