**Love for Truth: Understanding God’s Will**

2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 warns that some will be susceptible to being deceived by false doctrine for one reason: a failure to receive the love of the truth. No other human pursuit is more urgent or consequential than to present oneself approved to the God who created us and by whom we will one day be held accountable. Paul told Timothy that the key is diligence in service and in “accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15).

God’s power has granted to us “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3), but how do we handle His word accurately so we can “understand what the will of the Lord is” Ephesians 5:17? I would suggest that deficiency in a person’s love for truth may lead to some distorted ideas of what Bible study is all about. Here are a few for your consideration.

**Proof Text Search.** Step one: Decide what I believe. Step two: Look for verses and phrases that seem to support my predefined position. Step three: Minimize or ignore any passages of Scripture that call into question the validity of my presupposition. Nearly every statement in God’s word was made in the context of a larger argument or teaching. If I have a sincere love for truth, my goal will be to understand the concepts the inspired writer is conveying, not to justify my preferred position. We all have our biases, but the truth lover will do his or her best to begin with a blank sheet of paper and look to the Scriptures to fill it.

**Shallow Dives.** Some people spend very little time in their Bibles and many of their views on its teachings are based on snippets encountered during the rare casual excursion into its pages. The Bible is not written like an NCAA rule book. The inspired writers touched on similar topics, yet in different contexts. To truly understand God’s will concerning a given subject, we must consider everything He has revealed that bears on the topic. One may say, “That sounds like a lot of work!” and one would be correct! But we’re not talking about understanding the fine points of college basketball, we are talking about the salvation of our souls. Jesus prayed to His Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” Diligent Bible study is worthwhile.

**Failure to consider the source.** Jesus recognized that, in the realm of religion, everything fits into one of two categories: from heaven or from men (Matthew 21:25). Scholars can offer valuable input on translating issues. Commentators can help us ensure we don’t overlook relevant relationships between passages. But Jesus made it clear that He has all authority (Matthew 28:18), that the Holy Spirit ensured that Jesus’ apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13) and that the Scriptures they wrote contain everything we need to equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). That means one thing: the opinions and doctrines of men carry absolutely no authority whatever. None.

The only way we can inoculate ourselves against the soul-destroying condition of gullibility is to cultivate a deep and abiding love for the truth of God’s word, invest our complete trust in it and expend the diligent effort necessary to understand what it teaches. Jesus said it best: “You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:32).

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