

Twelve Rules for Handling God's Word

Rule Number One:

Do not add or take from His Word.

Proverbs 30:6 NKJV

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Deuteronomy 12:32 NKJV

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

1 Corinthians 4:6 NKJV

. . . that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written . . .

Don't even think beyond what is written. WOW. This requires us to pay attention to details and not be careless in our reading of the Word. Restraining ourselves from leaving out uncomfortable truths that do not conform to our preconceived theological perspective would be a practical application of this rule.

Rule Number Two:

Have two or three witnesses.

Matthew 18:16 NKJV

. . . by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

2 Corinthians 13:1 NKJV

By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.

Deuteronomy 19:15 NKJV

. . . by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

This rule admonishes us not take one verse or passage on its own to make a doctrine from. As you may be aware, many heresies are based on isolated passages or single verses from the Bible.

Rule Number Three:

Get all the Scriptures on the subject.

Proverbs 18:13 NKJV

He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 NKJV

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Without the whole counsel of God on any matter we can easily come to wrong conclusions. Many false teachings arise from the unfortunate practice of omitting or overlooking scriptures that are relevant to the subject. It's like having a handful of pieces missing in your jigsaw puzzle.

Rule Number Four:

Do not attempt to interpret God's Word. Simply believe the plain reading.

2 Peter 1:20 NKJV

. . . no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

2 Peter 3:16 NKJV

. . . untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

Deuteronomy 29:29 NKJV

The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever,

Obviously there are passages that are highly symbolic and for us to understand the meaning we would have to have an interpretation. However, this is where many people stumble. Attempting to interpret any vision or dream, metaphoric passage or parable from God's Word that does not have an interpretation given in the Word itself is a sure way to open the door to private interpretations.

If God hasn't given the meaning in His Word, leave it alone! Remember, it is His prerogative to keep some things to Himself. "The secret things belong the Lord our God." It is the things that are revealed that are for us. Our response is not to interpret His Word, but to understand and believe it, or should I say: believe it, then you will understand it. There is a huge difference between interpreting God's Word and understanding God's Word.

To speculate on the meaning of a symbolic passage of Scripture may be acceptable in some circumstances, **provided** we do not become dogmatic about our musings and attempt to make doctrine from it. This tendency to interpret God's Word is THE major stumbling block to understanding what it is that He actually intends for us to comprehend.

Genesis 40:8 NKJV

Do not interpretations belong to God?

Rule Number Five:

Do not take a verse out of context.

This rule is actually covered in the above but for clarification I have added it as a rule on its own. The tendency to take verses out of context is something I call Cut and Paste Theology. (Since taking up this phrase I have discovered others use it too.) With it you can even 'prove' that suicide is how we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin. Matthew 27:5 says that Judas hung himself and Luke 10:37 says that we should do likewise.

One of the primary laws of comprehension used in language translation is that the meaning of anything is found in its context. That's how you learnt your mother tongue. Therefore, do not take any verse or passage out of its historical and grammatical context and thereby alter its meaning. This would result in a twisting of the Scriptures and as they say, "A text out of context has become a con and not a text." Remember how the devil tempted Jesus with out of context Scripture quotations.

Rule Number Six:

The hidden meaning does not negate the plain reading.

This rule may seem obscure, but it has implications as to how we understand many prophecies. For example: the promise concerning Samson becoming a Nazarite in Judges 13:5 is fulfilled in the natural during his lifetime AND it is also applied to Jesus being brought up in Nazareth in Matthew 2:23. The fulfilment in the life of Jesus does not negate the fulfilment in the life of Samson. And so it is with many other Scriptures.

Another example of this principle is found in this verse: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Hosea 11:1) In its natural context it applies to Israel and in particular the leading tribe of Ephraim. Yet in Matthew 2:15 we find it applied to Jesus as a child with Joseph and Mary returning from Egypt after having fled there from the evil plans of King Herod.

In various places in God's Word we will come across prophecies that have dual meanings. Some promises made to Abraham have one meaning for his natural descendants and another meaning for those who follow in his faith. What we must remember is that whilst the spiritual hidden meaning is revealed in the New Covenant and is positively okay to be applied to the people of faith, the natural prophetic proclamation still stands and will also most certainly come to pass.

Rule Number Seven:

Do not expect a dual fulfilment unless God indicates it is so in the Word.

This is the inverse of the previous rule. Not all prophecies have dual fulfilments. False prophets abound and one of the ways they deceive is to pronounce dual fulfilments for things that God has not revealed are so. The legitimate dual fulfilments are revealed as such by Scripture, not by man. Some prophecy pundits have gone so far as to declare that there is a law of dual or even multiple fulfilment. This idea makes the way for all sorts of proclamations that are just not true. Here's just one example that completely refutes that so called law: The prophecies about Jesus coming and His death being a once and for all sacrifice for sin definitely have no dual fulfilment.

It is acknowledged that God may 'quicken' a verse to you concerning a situation, even out of context for you personally, but that is not a licence to extrapolate doctrine or prophecy.

Rule Number Eight:

Scripture interprets Scripture.

This rule is likewise covered above, but again for clarification it is added as a rule on its own.

2 Peter 1:20 NKJV

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness . . .

When we combine 2 Timothy 3:16 with 2 Peter 1:20, it reveals this important rule for our consideration. If a Scripture is not understood, and there is a need to be taught its meaning, allow the rest of Scripture to bring the understanding. Sooner or later, if you stay in His Word with the Holy Spirit leading you into the Truth, you will get the revelation that you desire. All Scripture is suitable for doctrine; that is teaching. So let ALL Scripture teach us what Scripture means. If this one rule was adhered to it would put away most, if not all, of the present day deceptions.

Rule Number Nine:

Let the witness of history confirm prophecy.

Jeremiah 28:9 NKJV

As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent.

Deuteronomy 18:22 NKJV

When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

To discover which prophecies have or have not been fulfilled requires us to do the necessary historical research. With the aid of the internet this is no longer a major difficulty. When I was at school, I never had any interest in history and did not consider it a worthwhile subject for me to study. Once I became a Christian and discovered that the Bible is entirely rooted in history, my attitude towards this subject completely changed. I found that an accurate knowledge of history is absolutely essential for one to ascertain what has been fulfilled and what is yet to come. The testimony of history is God's 'acid test' on prophecy. When history and prophecy kiss, you get reality.

Rule Number Ten:

Make Jesus the Cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:20 NKJV

. . . the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone* . . .

When seeking to understand any portion of scripture, what Jesus says about that subject needs to be our starting point. This principle is illustrated to us in the passage about Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus had to show them all the things that the prophets had said regarding His first coming. What He said opened their eyes. In like manner, the prophecies given by Jesus in the Gospels and the proclamations of the Apostles in the Letters will shine the necessary light on the rest of scripture. Very difficult and often impossible trying to do it the other way around. It's like putting the cart before the horse. You can do it, but it goes nowhere.

Certain prophecies have been misunderstood because they were not able to shine the full light of the Gospel onto what they were reading. If there is a lack of understanding regarding the Gospel of Christ; what it means to be crucified with Christ; to be a new creation in Christ; to be made the righteousness of God in Christ; to be dead to sin and alive to God, then the light of the Gospel is not yet shining fully into the heart and mind and a darkened mind has great difficulty understanding the things of God.

A proper understanding of the Gospel and all that it has done for the man or woman of God, who has been born again, will preclude certain assumptions being made about the nature and destiny of the Kingdom of God and its manifestation in this earth and age. In like manner, this understanding will also keep us from deceptions regarding the fulfilment of God's promises for the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel.

This is probably the most important rule of all in understanding God's Word. First let Christ be the Cornerstone of our whole being and then Jesus can be the Cornerstone of our prophetic understanding. Amen.

Rule Number Eleven:

Know that God does not contradict Himself or His Character.

Numbers 23:19 ESV

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

James 1:17 NKJV

. . . the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

If we have an understanding of a particular verse or passage that doesn't fit with other passages on the same subject, it is our understanding that has to change. The Spirit of God who inspired the Scriptures is the same yesterday, today and forever. As a new believer, one of the first things that I realised about the Kingdom of God was that it was completely logical and without contradiction.

Rule Number Twelve:

Speak the Truth in Love.

This rule I have inserted is not so much to do with how we understand God's Word, but how we deliver it. However, if we are lacking in our delivery, it will affect our ability to understand.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2 NKJV

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Ephesians 4:15 NKJV

. . . but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

James 1:22 NKJV

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

It is simply not good enough for us to speak the truth. If we try to convey the Word of God to those around us without the fruit of love, we actually become an unpleasant noise and a stumbling block to that very same truth. And as the verse from James points out, if we fail to become doers of the Word (by not speaking the truth in love) we ourselves will become deceived. Want to avoid deception? Be sure to walk in love.

With the Twelve Rules for Handling God's Word, the diligent disciple can approach any doctrinal subject or prophecy with confidence and not be deceived. I believe it's time for some 'let us' salad.

Let us not add to the plain meaning of the Word. Let us not try interpreting the Word according to our own understanding and end up twisting the Scriptures. Let us gather all the Scriptures on the matter and thereby avoid jumping to wrong conclusions by failing to hear the whole story. At a minimum; let us have two or three witnesses to establish any doctrine. Let us also be careful to examine Scriptures in the light of the context wherein they are found. And to establish whether we are to expectantly look to the future for the fulfilment of a prophecy, let us consider the historical records and see if the prediction has already come to pass. Let us make the words of Jesus the foundation of all our knowledge and let us always be ready to grow in our understanding, especially when we find what appears to be a contradiction. Let us not lean on our own understanding and read into God's Word things He has not put there. And last but not least, let us speak the Word in LOVE. You will find that I have been diligent to hold fast to these precepts.