

Introduction: Studying God's Word

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According to Wikipedia:

2.5 Billion Christians

- Catholic Church: 1.285 billion
- Protestantism: 920 million
- Eastern Orthodox: 270 million
- Non-trinitarian Restorationism: 35 million
- Independent Catholicism: 18 million
- Minor Branches: 3 million

Within Protestantism:

- 37 branches of Baptists
- 35 branches of Lutherans
- 17 branches of Methodism
- 29 branches of Presbyterians
- Plus... Anglicanism, Congregationalism, Anabaptists (Mennonites, Amish), Hussites (Moravian), Quakers, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Restoration movement, etc.

Also, according to Wikipedia:

7.5 Billion People

So only 1/3rd of the world's population expresses any kind of "Christian" faith, and within the 1/3rd that does, there are countless false teachings.

Questions:

1. What are some commonly disputed teachings of Scripture?
2. If we only have 1 Bible (with a few exceptions), how are there so many different varieties of "Christianity"?
3. Are all interpretations equally valid?
4. How do we determine which is right?
5. Why is it important?

We will spend the next few months considering all of these questions. We will follow the outline on the next page, much of which follows many of the same topics covered in R.C. Sproul's "Knowing Scripture". I recommend this book as a supplement to our study.

Biblical Themes for our Study

Man is by nature, evil, and will, on his own, thinks wrongly about what is good

- Gen 6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
- Jdg 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
- Pro 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
- Pro 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
- Isa 5:21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

God is by nature, good, and his Word reveals his goodness

- Psa 25:8 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
- 2Ti 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
- Pro 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- Pro 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Good triumphs over evil

- Psa 1:1-6 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (3) He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (4) The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. (5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; (6) for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

God shows man the good way through his Word

- Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
- Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Man is responsible for obeying God's Word and teaching others to do the same

- Joh 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- 2Ti 2:1-2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2) and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- 2Ti 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Outline – Studying God's Word

1. Why?
 - Inspiration of Scripture
 - Sufficiency of Scripture
 - Authority of Scripture
2. How?
 - The Role of the Teacher
 - The Role of Confessions
 - The Role of the Student
 - The Role of Hermeneutics (Interpretive Principles)
 - The Role of Bible Study Tools
3. What?
 - Understanding the Canon
 - Understanding Textual Criticism
 - Understanding Translations