

## Characteristics of Scripture

### Clarity

#### Chapter 6 in Grudem

1. Introduction to the Clarity of Scripture
  - 1.1. The Scriptures are God's revelation to us, and as such they are given in a way that their essential teaching is accessible to normal humans, and not just to those with special training.
  - 1.2. ***The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.***
2. The Bible Frequently Claims It's Own Clarity
  - 2.1. The Bible expects that even children or the "simple" can learn its teaching and begin to understand it.
    - 2.1.1. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.  
***<sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them*** when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV
    - 2.1.2. The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, ***making wise the simple***; Psalm 19:7 ESV
  - 2.2. The epistles were not written to scholars or leaders but to the whole congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1). This is also true of the Law, the prophets and the writings - the Word of God is given to ALL believers and its essential teachings can be understood by all believers.
3. The Moral and Spiritual Qualities Needed for Right Understanding
  - 3.1. The real problem in understanding Scripture is not that it is difficult, but that people do not have the right moral and spiritual disposition to understand it. The message is essentially clear, but we often do not want to understand it!
    - 3.1.1. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV
    - 3.1.2. But ***their minds were hardened***. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read ***a veil lies over their hearts***. <sup>16</sup> ***But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed***. 2 Corinthians 3:14-16 ESV
    - 3.1.3. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:19-21 ESV

- 3.1.3.1.NOTE: This passage is speaking about people who willfully suppress the revelation of God found in creation, but this is also true of our response to God's revelation in Scripture. The point is that we do not want to hear the truth God reveals and so we suppress it.
- 3.1.4. "It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do understand." — Mark Twain
- 3.2. To properly understand Scripture, one must be spiritually and mentally open to receive its teaching, and willing to repent, changing ones mind and behavior to follow God's will as revealed in Scripture.
4. Hermeneutics and exegesis - Principles and practices to properly interpret Scripture
- 4.1. Although the essential teachings of Scripture are simple enough to be understood by all believers, there are difficult passages which must be handled carefully. This fact is taught in the Scripture itself.
- 4.1.1. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand**, which the ignorant and unstable **twist** to their own destruction, as they do **the other Scriptures**. 2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)
- 4.1.2. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 2 Timothy 2:7 (ESV)
- 4.2. One key issue in properly understanding more difficult passages is following the proper principles of interpretation. This is referred to as hermeneutics, a technical term derived from the Greek word ἐρμηνεύω "to interpret".
- 4.3. Hermeneutics is the study of correct methods of interpretation**
- 4.3.1. A study of hermeneutics is outside the scope of this lesson.
- 4.3.2. The basic issues in hermeneutics involve things like how to interpret various genres of Scripture, the relationship between the Old and New Testament, determining if there are multiple meanings in a text or just one, understanding the grammar and syntax of the original languages, and the relationship between the texts written by the same human author and those written by other biblical writers, and the interplay between interpreting an individual text and the whole of the biblical canon.
- 4.4. Exegesis is the process of interpreting a text of Scripture.**
- 4.4.1. Exegesis refers to the activity of putting the principles of hermeneutics into practice to actually interpret the biblical text.
- 4.4.2. Anytime we read and try to understand a biblical text, we are doing exegesis. The only question is if we are doing it well or poorly!
5. The role of teachers and scholars
- 5.1. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that we do not need teachers and scholars to teach the Church and help believers to understand Scripture.

- 5.2. Scripture is clear that God has given teachers to the Church, and that they have a critical place in developing a healthy church.
  - 5.2.1. And **he gave** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and **teachers**, <sup>12</sup> **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ**, Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV
  - 5.2.2. And **God has appointed in the church** first apostles, second prophets, third **teachers**, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:28 ESV
- 5.3. God calls certain people to study and proclaim the truths of Scripture so that others can more accurately understand and apply them.
  - 5.3.1. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. Ezra 7:10 ESV
  - 5.3.2. Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:2 ESV
  - 5.3.3. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Titus 1:9 ESV
- 5.4. Some of these teachers will be called to deeper, more scholarly study. These will need to learn Greek and Hebrew, and also to study theology, church history, and even culture to be able to accurately understand, apply, and teach God's Word (as Ezra did in his day - see Ezra 7:10).