

Rightly Dividing - cont.

These good Bible study habits, and others, will help us to handle accurately the word of truth. Many people today, however, do not handle God's word carefully. They are not careful because of:

1. Selfishness. Many read the Bible to justify their own personal actions and beliefs, not to transform their lives to be right with God (Luke 10:25-29). Many shoot first, then draw a target around their mark.

2. Laziness, carelessness, or a lack of discipline. Many do not want to work at being accurate with God's word. They do not want to search, ask questions, do word studies, examine the context, etc. (Acts 8:34). They want a quick-fix or easy answer to their questions and issues.

3. Misplaced loyalties. Many do not handle the Bible accurately because they are more loyal to men than to God (Matthew 15:3,6; John 5:39,44; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2). They read their Bible and then say, "But so-and-so says..."

4. Tolerance and pluralism. Many do not handle the Bible accurately because they view all religions and life-

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styles as equally valid. They read the Bible in such a way as to allow all people to have their own beliefs and practices.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Friend, not handling the Bible accurately will lead to your own personal destruction (2 Peter 3:16). But, handling the Bible accurately, carefully, and precisely will lead to your own salvation. Which will you choose? - *Chris Reeves*

Warfield Blvd. church of Christ
290 Warfield Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37043

Website
wbcoc.org

Assembly Times
Sunday: 9:30 am, 10:30 am, 5 pm
Wednesday: 7 pm

Everyone Is Welcome!
For More Information Call
(931) 647-1324

Published and Edited By
Chris Reeves
(615) 389-3250
chrisreevesmail@gmail.com
TheGoodTeacher.com

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.
- 2 Timothy 2:15 -

When the apostle Paul was writing his last words to Timothy in the book of 2 Timothy, he gave Timothy some important instructions concerning the Word of God that he (Timothy) was to carry out after Paul was gone. Timothy was instructed to do things like hold fast the pattern of God's word (1:13), pass on God's word (2:2), abide in God's word (3:14), and preach God's word (4:2)

One other thing that Paul told Timothy was that he was to be "handling aright the word of truth" (2:15). The translation "handling aright" comes from the Greek word ὀρθοτομέω. This word means literally "to cut straight." In other words, Timothy was to be accurate and precise with God's word as he read it carefully, examined it carefully, learned it carefully, and taught it to others carefully.

Consider some other popular Bible translations of this phrase:

- "correctly handles the word of

truth" (NIV)

- "rightly handling the word of truth" (ESV)
- "rightly dividing the word of truth" (NKJV)
- "accurately handling the word of truth" (NASV)

It is clear from these translations that the idea here is a careful handling of the word of God - the Bible. Let's see now how we can do this in our life. How do we as Christians today handle accurately God's word of truth -the Bible?

We Must Handle the Word of Truth Properly

First, we must handle the Bible according to the purpose in which it was given (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; James 1:18). The Bible was given to save mankind, not to satisfy curiosity (Acts 17:2, 11-12). We search the scriptures to learn how to be saved, not to speculate about things.

We Must Handle the Word of Truth Reverently

Second, we must handle the Bible with

respect and fear (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20). The Bible is God's very word, not a little book of man-made virtues, mottos, or maxims. We must take seriously what we are reading.

We Must Handle the Word of Truth Precisely

Third, we must handle the Bible with precision and accuracy (Genesis 6:22; 7:5; Joshua 11:15). Jesus and others used the Bible with precision and accuracy and so must we (Matthew 22:31-32; Luke 1:3; Acts 18:25-26). What are some ways that we read, study, and teach the Bible with precision and accuracy? Consider the following:

- Read slowly and read it again.
- Keep a verse in its context, both near and remote.
- Understand the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek words behind the English words.
- Recognize different kinds of Bible language, both literal and figurative.
- Use cross-references to let the Bible comment on itself. - *continued*