



S.T.U.D.Y.

NEWSLETTER #3

(February 2003)

“And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Give your answer at: www.Response-Able.net

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“THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD”

A. **S.T.U.D.Y.** the Principles

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be **the first principles of the oracles** [word] **of God** ...” (Hebrews 5:12). Considering the amount of time that you have been a Christian, the apostle Paul said, you should now be a teacher; but instead of that, you need to be taught yourself—and not only taught: you need to be taught the very basics, or start all over at ground zero, and learn again the “first principles” (the A-B-C’s) of the Word of GOD. A sad but true statement of the condition of Christians, not only in Paul’s day, but also in our day; in fact, many who actually are teachers today need to be taught these first principles—because they don’t understand, and/or they don’t apply, these principles.

What is a principle? A good definition, which fits the context of Hebrews 5:12, is found in *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (by Noah Webster, original 1828 version): “6. A general truth; a law comprehending many subordinate truths; as the *principles* of morality, of law, of government, &c.” So the principles of the Word of GOD, are general truths—most of which apply to many different specific truths.

The “First Principles” of the Response-Able System

The first principles of understanding the Word of GOD correctly, will also be the first principles of the Response-Able system (for those who are not aware of this system, please see the first two S.T.U.D.Y. newsletters—available on the Website, or via regular mail; see above for contact info). In fact, this subject of “first principles” will be the first subject incorporated into the Response-Able system (it is not operating yet, but the current plan is to have it running by the time the next newsletter comes out). There’s little value examining specific truths, especially areas where there is a difference of belief—until we understand the basic principles that apply to all truths, and the basic principles involved in resolving differences of belief.

As mentioned in Newsletter #2, the Response-Able system is designed for everyone; therefore, the system will be available to those who don’t believe everything in the Bible. However, even for them, the first step of the system will be the “first principles” of understanding the Bible correctly (which is the subject of this newsletter). Then the next step (and the next newsletter) will be the beginning of many studies, questions, answers, etc—regarding whether the Bible is true and reliable (of course there will also be many other subjects). To some, this sequence may seem backwards; but there are important reasons for this sequence.

Although this newsletter will include many details regarding these “first principles”, it will not by any means be a comprehensive analysis of all Biblical principles; but it will cover some of the more basic and fundamental (first) principles of understanding the truth—especially the principles that are most important, and/or most neglected. Other Biblical principles will be brought into the Response-Able system later, as needed.

The Principle of Conditions

Actually, the very first principle we should look at: is the principle of conditions. A condition (like every other principle) is something that is not stated everywhere (though it is stated somewhere); and yet it does apply, even in places where it is not specifically stated—in fact, many conditions and principles apply everywhere. Conditional statements can be described in many different ways; “if”, “unless”, and “except” are some of the more common and simple words, which are used to describe a conditional nature.

A simple example, that most people should be able to comprehend, is speed limits. The law states that you are not to exceed a certain speed; the law also states that official emergency vehicles, on official emergency missions, may exceed the speed limit. The exception to the law is not stated on every speed limit sign (but it is stated somewhere, probably in the law books); and yet it does apply everywhere—even where it is not stated!

Many conditions are found at various places throughout the Bible. The word “if”—a very small, and yet a very significant word—is used about 1,600 times in the Bible (KJV), and is found in almost every book of the Bible. Other conditional words are also used in the Bible. So far, it’s pretty simple.

But here is where many people get off track: they do not realize that conditions can apply—even in places where the condition, or the conditional nature, is not specifically stated! Just one example is in the well-known story of Jonah and the whale. Read the entire book of Jonah, and you will find not even one single conditional statement regarding the destruction of Nineveh (at the end of the forty days); yet the prophecy was obviously conditional: because the people repented, and GOD did not destroy their city at the end of the forty days. The unstated condition was: if you don’t repent, or unless you repent (Nineveh will be destroyed).

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost ... he shall **teach you all things** ... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide you into all truth** ... and he will **show you things to come**.” (John 14:26; 16:13; see 1 John 2:27; etc). Wonderful promises, indeed! But some people seem to think that these promises are unconditional, merely because the conditions are not specifically stated in these verses. However, there are many conditions that must be fulfilled, before we should expect to be guided into all truth; and although they are not stated in the above verses, they are found elsewhere (throughout the Bible). Therefore, we need to STUDY the principles of understanding the truth, and fulfill the conditions, so that we may be guided into all truth!

B. Why S.T.U.D.Y.

This section will cover some of the main reasons why it is so important to: STUDY To Understand Doctrines Yourself. And it is important to STUDY not only various specific doctrinal subjects, but it is also important to STUDY the general principles of truth—and the conditions for being guided into all truth (which, once again, is the purpose of this newsletter).

GOD Has Told Us to S.T.U.D.Y.

“**Study** to show **thyself** approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the **word of truth**. ... the **holy scriptures**, which are able to make thee wise **unto salvation** ... **All scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and **is profitable** for **doctrine**, for reproof, for **correction**, for **instruction** in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17). “For whatsoever things were **written** aforetime were **written** for **our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the **scriptures** might have **hope**.” (Romans 15:4; see 1 Corinthians 10:11).

“... Master, what shall I do to **inherit eternal life**? He [Jesus] said unto him, What is **written** in the law? how **readest** thou?” (Luke 10:25,26). “**Search** the **scriptures**; for ... [they] testify of me. ... the **words** that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are **life**. ... If ye **continue** in my **word** ... ye shall **know** the **truth**, and the **truth** shall **make you free**. ... **Sanctify** them **through thy truth**: thy **word** is **truth**. ... these [words] are **written** ... that believing ye might have **life** ...” (John 5:39; 6:63; 8:31,32; 17:17; 20:31; see Psalm 119:1-176).

Even JESUS Himself used “It is written”, to win the battle: “And **Jesus** answered him [Satan], saying, **It is written**, That man shall not **live** by bread alone, but **by every word** of God.” (Matthew 4:4,7,10; Luke 4:4). “My little children, these things **write** I unto you, that ye **sin not**.” (1 John 2:1). “**Blessed** is he that **readeth**, and they that hear the **words** of **this prophecy**, and **keep** those things which are **written therein** ...” (Revelation 1:3).

GOD has told us about the positive consequences (underlined above) if we will STUDY; and He has also told us about the negative consequences (underlined below) if we won’t STUDY. “He that **turneth away his ear**

from **hearing** the law [GOD's Word], **even** his **prayer** shall be **abomination**." (Proverbs 28:9). "... **Hearing** ye shall hear, and shall **not understand**; and **seeing** ye shall see, and **not perceive**: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their **ears are dull of hearing**, and **their eyes have they closed**; lest they should **see** with their **eyes**, and **hear** with their **ears**, and **understand** with their heart, and should be **converted**, and I should **heal them**." (Acts 28:26,27; see Matthew 13:9-23). "And this is the **condemnation**, that **light** is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their **deeds were evil**. For every one that doeth evil **hateth the light, neither cometh to the light**, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." (John 3:19,20; see 3:21).

"But ye have **set at nought** all **my counsel**, and would **none** of **my reproof**: I also will **laugh** at your **calamity**; I will **mock** when your **fear** cometh; When your **fear** cometh as **desolation**, and **your destruction** cometh as a **whirlwind**; when **distress and anguish** cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, **but I will not answer**, they shall seek me early, **but they shall not find me**: For that they **hated knowledge**, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would **none** of **my counsel** they **despised** all **my reproof**. Therefore shall they **eat of the fruit of their own way**, and be **filled with their own devices**." (Proverbs 1:25-31). "**My people are destroyed** for **lack of knowledge**: because thou hast **rejected knowledge**, I will also **reject thee** ..." (Hosea 4:6).

GOD Has Warned Us Against Error

Some people think that it really doesn't matter what you believe. But if this were true, then why did GOD tell us to STUDY? In fact, why did GOD even give us the Bible—if indeed we don't need to STUDY and understand it? Furthermore, GOD has given us many warnings against error (see below); these warnings would be pointless, if indeed it really makes no difference what we believe.

"For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**; but after their **own lusts** shall they heap to themselves **teachers**, having **itching ears**; And they shall **turn away their ears** from the **truth**, and shall be **turned unto fables**." (2 Timothy 4:3,4). "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart** from the **faith**, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and **doctrines of devils**; Speaking **lies** in hypocrisy ... **Take heed** unto thyself, and **unto the doctrine**; continue in them: for **in doing this** thou shalt **both save thyself, and them that hear thee**." (1 Timothy 4:1,2,16). "... he which **converteth** the sinner **from the error** of his way shall **save a soul** from **death** ..." (James 5:20; ; see Daniel 6:4; Ezekiel 14:14,20).

"[The] ... unlearned and unstable **wrest** [or twist, the] ... **scriptures**, unto their **own destruction**. ... **beware** lest ye **also**, being led away with the **error** of the wicked, **fall** from your own stedfastness." (2 Peter 3:16,17; see 2:1-3). "Who **changed** the **truth** of God **into a lie** ... **receiving in themselves** that **recompense** of their **error** ... even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge** ..." (Romans 1:25-28).

"Let **no man deceive you by any means** ... the **working of Satan** with all power and signs and **lying** wonders, And with all **deceivableness** of unrighteousness **in them that perish**; because they **received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved**. And for this cause **God** shall send them **strong delusion**, that they should **believe a lie**: That they **all** might be **damned** who **believed not the truth**, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. ... **salvation through** sanctification of the Spirit **and belief of the truth**." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-13; see Acts 20:26-32; Jeremiah 10:14,15; 6:21; Ezekiel 3:16,20; Isaiah 8:13-15; 28:7-18; Romans 9:31-33; 1 Peter 2:4-8; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 10:4; 3:11; Matthew 7:24-29; Luke 6:46-49; Psalm 18:2,31; etc).

Not only have we been warned against error—and the consequences of believing error—but we have also been warned that the vast majority of all people, throughout all time, are not followers of GOD's truth. "And we know that we are of God, and the **whole world** lieth in **wickedness**." (1 John 5:19). "... for **wide** is the gate, and **broad** is the way, that leadeth to **destruction**, and **many** there be which go in thereat: Because **strait** is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto **life**, and **few** there be that find it. **Beware** of **false prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matthew 7:13-15; see Luke 13:23-28).

"... **Take heed** that **no man deceive you**. For **many** shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall **deceive many**. ... And then shall **many** be offended ... And **many false prophets** shall rise, and shall **deceive many**. And because **iniquity** shall **abound**, the love of **many** shall wax cold. **But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved** ... For there shall arise **false Christs**, and **false prophets**, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, **if it were possible**, they shall **deceive the very elect**." (Matthew 24:4,5,10-13,24; see Genesis 7:1,7,23; 19:15-26; Numbers 14:2,22-30; Deuteronomy 31:27,29; 1 Samuel 17:24,32; 1 Kings 18:17-22; Daniel 3:7,12; Matthew 2:1-3; 23:13,15; 24:30,37-39; 26:31,56; Mark 13:5,6,22; Luke 11:52; 21:8,35; John 6:66,67; 1 Corinthians 1:26; Galatians 1:2,6; 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:15; Titus 1:10-14; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 1:7; Revelation 1:7; 3:4; 12:9; 13:3,8; 14:8; 16:14; 18:3,23; Ecclesiastes 1:9,10; etc).

In fact, even of those who do accept Biblical truth: many do not continue to advance in the light, as GOD reveals more truth (see Proverbs 4:18); they accept former truths, which may be popular—but they fail to accept “present truth”, which may not be popular (2 Peter 1:12). Thus it was in CHRIST’s day; they accepted former prophets (see Matthew 23:29-31), but they did not accept the Messiah (JESUS was the “present truth” for that time).

Many people wonder how it is possible that only a few will be saved, if it’s really true that “God is love” (see 1 John 4:8-16; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 13:11; etc). In short, GOD will not allow sin and suffering into heaven (see Nahum 1:9; Isaiah 25:8,9; Revelation 7:17; 21:4; etc); therefore, He will only save those who trust Him enough to follow what He says (see Romans 2:12,13; James 1:22-26; etc). Those who rebel against GOD here on earth, would also rebel against Him in heaven—if they were allowed to enter; and if there was even one single rebel in heaven, it would not be heaven anymore. A similar question, that many people have, is why a GOD of love would even allow evil and suffering in the first place; the answer to this will be covered, in future studies.

GOD Has Warned Us Not to Trust in Man

Another reason why it is important to: STUDY To Understand Doctrines Yourself—is that it’s not safe to trust the understandings and conclusions of others. GOD has given us many warnings against trusting in man (and once again, these warnings would also be pointless, if it really doesn’t matter what you believe); considering the quotes in that last subsection above, it should be obvious why it is not safe to trust in man.

The LORD wants us to trust in Him. “**Blessed** is the man that **trusteth** in the **LORD** ...” (Jeremiah 17:7). “O taste and see that the **LORD** is good: **blessed** is the man that **trusteth** in **him**.” (Psalm 34:8; see 2:11,12; 4:5; 37:3-5; 40:4; 64:10; 115:11; 125:1; Proverbs 16:20; 29:25; 2 Chronicles 20:20; James 1:5; etc).

But the LORD does not want us to trust in man. “... **Cursed** be the man that **trusteth in man**, and maketh **flesh** his **arm**, and whose **heart departeth** from the **LORD**. ... The **heart is deceitful above all things**, and **desperately wicked**: who can know it? I the **LORD** search the **heart** ...” (see Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalms 20:7; 33:16-22; 118:8,9; 146:3-6; Isaiah 2:22; 30:1-7; 31:1; etc).

This includes not trusting the man in the mirror. “**Trust** in the **LORD** with **all thine heart**; and lean **not** unto **thine own understanding**. In **all thy ways** acknowledge **him**, and **he shall direct** thy paths. **Be not wise in thine own eyes**: fear the **LORD**, and depart from evil. ... He that **trusteth** in his **own heart** is a **fool** ...” (Proverbs 3:5-7; 28:26; see 23:4; Jeremiah 9:23,24; Hosea 13:2; Luke 18:9; Romans 12:16; etc).

This also includes not trusting religious leaders and teachers. “O my people, they which **lead** thee **cause** thee to **err**, and **destroy** the way of thy paths. ... Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel **head and tail**, branch and rush, in one day. The **ancient and honourable**, he is the **head**; and the **prophet** that **teacheth lies**, he is the **tail**. For the **leaders** of this people **cause** them to **err**; and they that are **led of them** are **destroyed**.” (Isaiah 3:12; 9:14-16; see Jeremiah 5:31; Matthew 15:1-14; 23:1-39; John 7:14-18,45-48; etc).

While some people trust in man, and religious leaders—others go to the opposite extreme, and think that all teaching (on religious subjects) is wrong. However, the Bible speaks also about good religious “teachers” (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:11-15; Hebrews 5:12; etc). GOD does not condemn all teachers; instead, He condemns those who teach lies and error! So how do we know whether someone is teaching truth, or error? We must STUDY. But it’s not enough merely to read the Word of GOD: we must know how to STUDY!

C. How to S.T.U.D.Y.

Knowing how to STUDY, definitely qualifies as one of the “first principles” of understanding the Word of GOD: because if we don’t know how to STUDY, then it is almost certain that we never will be guided into all truth—regardless of how much time we spend reading the Bible and other religious materials, watching religious videos, listening to sermons, etc. It requires much STUDY to know how to STUDY.

How Much S.T.U.D.Y.

If it requires much STUDY, then we ought to know how much STUDY. “... God ... is a **rewarder** of them that **diligently seek him**.” (Hebrews 11:6). “And ye shall **seek me** [the LORD], and **find me**, when ye shall **search for me** with **all your heart**.” (Jeremiah 29:13). “... apply thine **heart to understanding**; Yea, **if thou criest after knowledge**, and **lifest up thy voice for understanding**; **If thou seekest her as silver**, and **searchest for her as for hid treasures**; **Then shalt thou understand** ... and **find the knowledge of God**.” (Proverbs 2:2-5).

“These [Bereans] were **more noble** than those in Thessalonica, in that they [the Bereans] **received the word** with all readiness of mind, **and searched the scriptures daily**, [to see] **whether those things were so.**” (Act 17:11; see Proverbs 8:32-35). “... **Except** ye **eat** the flesh of the Son of man, and **drink** his blood, ye have **no life** in you. Whoso **eateth** my flesh, and **drinketh** my blood, hath **eternal life**; and I will **raise him up** at the last day. ... thou [Lord] hast the **words of eternal life.**” (John 6:53,54,68; see 6:1-71; 15:4-7; Job 23:12; Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 2:7-10; 3:1-4; Matthew 5:6; etc).

It’s not enough to nibble and sip upon the Word; instead, we must eat and drink—symbolic of the amount of time involved. You wouldn’t live very long, if you ate and drank only once a week! Nor would you survive—even if you ate and drank every day—if it was for only five or ten minutes a day. So it is with spiritual life.

“Oh”, but some people say, “I’m just too busy to spend very much time studying.” What would happen if they were too busy to literally eat and drink? Everyone has the same twenty-four hours per day; the problem is not a lack of time, the problem is mixed up priorities. “But **seek** ye **first** the **kingdom of God**, and **his righteousness**; and **all these things** [food and clothing] shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33; see 6:25-34).

And just as we should thank GOD for our literal meal, and ask Him to bless it (see Matthew 14:19; 15:36; 26:26,27; Luke 9:16; 24:30; John 6:11; etc); even so, we should thank GOD for our spiritual meal, and ask Him to bless it (see Psalms 55:17; 119:18; Luke 18:1-14; 11:1-13; John 14:26; 16:13; Colossians 1:3; 3:17; 4:2; etc).

“Live ... By **Every Word** of God”

“And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word of God.**” (Luke 4:4; see Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Proverbs 30:5). “O **fools**, and **slow of heart to believe all** that the **prophets** [of GOD] have **spoken.**” (Luke 24:25; see 16:28-31; Psalm 119:6,86,128,151,172; Matthew 28:19,20; 24:35; etc). “**All scripture** is given by inspiration of **God**, and is **profitable** ...” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Word of GOD is actually many words—and “every word” is “profitable”. GOD does not merely fill space, with vain and idle words: “... **every idle word** that men shall speak, they shall **give account thereof in the day of judgment.**” (Matthew 12:36; see James 1:13). This means that when we are studying GOD’s Word, we need to give due consideration to “every word”; we need to think about the purpose for each word.

Actually, the purpose for any word—whether in the Bible, or in secular writings, or wherever—is to convey a meaning. So if we take the words which were Inspired by GOD’s prophets, or spoken by JESUS Himself, and ignore them—or treat them as if they had no meaning whatsoever—then we might as well forget about being guided “into all truth”, because it just won’t happen.

It is true that a word can have more than one possible meaning (but not no meaning whatsoever). If you look up any word in a dictionary, you will probably find more than one definition listed. Words are finite, and it is impossible to convey an infinitely perfect meaning in one little finite word; so in order to make a concept come across more clearly, we have to use a combination of words. Actually, even a phrase (a combination of two or more words) can have more than one meaning. So when studying a word, or phrase: how do you know which meaning is the correct one? You must apply all the principles of understanding truth.

Just one of those principles, is what we are examining right now: the various possible meanings of a word. Although there is usually more than one possible meaning for each word, there is also a limit to the possible meanings for each word. Some people just fabricate their own meaning for a word, in order to make it fit what they want; but something more substantial, than just a wishful desire, needs to be applied.

The possible meanings for a word need to be determined, by established usages of the word. First, see if (and how) the same word is used elsewhere in the context (of the word being examined); second, see if (and how) the same author used the same word in a different context; third, see if (and how) another Biblical author used the same word; and last, see how the word is used in non-Biblical sources.

It is possible that a Bible version may have translated a word poorly; but even in that case, the original Inspired word still has a meaning—and the possible meanings can be determined, by looking at the usages of the original Hebrew or Greek word (use Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Hebrew and Greek lexicons, etc).

Some people don’t worry about the meaning of “every word”; they think that such details are too minor to bother with. However, a big picture is made out of many little details; it is true that if one or two small details are out of place, it probably won’t harm the big picture very much—but the attitude, that small details don’t matter, WILL almost certainly ruin the big picture! “He that is **faithful** in that which is **least** is **faithful also in much**: and he that is **unjust** in the **least** is **unjust also in much.**” (Luke 16:10; see Matthew 25:14-30).

If You Take the “TEXT” Out of “CONTEXT”, You Have: “CON”!

In spelling, if you take the four letters “TEXT” out of the seven-letter word “CONTEXT”—you have only three letters remaining: “CON”! And in the Bible, if you take the “text” out of “context”—you have the perfect formula for: a spiritual con! Yes, beware of any teacher who says: “GOD says thus and so ...”—and “The Bible says thus and so ...”—and yet he doesn’t bother to give you the reference. There is a good chance that he is a spiritual con artist, and is taking the text out of context (and he probably isn’t even stating the words accurately). And even if the teacher does give the reference, that is still no guarantee against a spiritual con job.

The story is told of a preacher, who did not like women to wear their hair in a bun on the top of their heads (also known as a “top knot”). So one day while preaching, he warned the women: “The Bible says, ‘Top knot come down!’” However, those who checked it out for themselves found that the preacher had not only taken the text out of context—but he had even split the word “housetop” right in two (and he also had the wrong kind of “knot”). “Let him which is on the housetop **not come down** to take any thing out of his house:” (Matthew 24:17; see 4:6; Luke 4:10,11; Psalm 91:11,12; etc). The story might not be true; but even if not, the point is still clear.

In the above example, it is quite easy to recognize the con job; usually, though, spiritual con jobs are much more subtle (see Genesis 3:1). Some spiritual con artists will compile a wide array of Bible quotes, and make a fairly impressive case; but if you look at each individual text in context, you will find that things have been taken out of context. However, those who are too lazy to STUDY, and check things out for themselves, will most likely fail to recognize the con jobs—and the con artists will succeed in deceiving them.

In looking at the context of a word or phrase: it is important to look at the rest of the verse, and even the verses surrounding it (the narrow context); but it is also important to consider the wide context: the whole chapter, and maybe even the whole book. Understanding the author of the book, who it was originally written to, when it was written, and why it was written (the circumstances existing at the time), etc—these should all help to improve the overall picture, and make it much easier to grasp the original intended meaning of each word and phrase.

“Let God Be True, but Every Man a Liar ”

As we search for the truth on any particular subject, we should (as noted above): STUDY “every word” of a statement, as well as the (narrow and wide) context of it. However, it is also very important to STUDY every statement that is related to the subject (at least directly related, and maybe even indirectly related). It is not safe to base any doctrine on only one verse (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Hebrews 10:28,29; 1 John 5:6,8; John 15:26; 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:19-21; etc).

“Whom shall he **teach knowledge**? and whom shall he make to **understand doctrine**? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For **precept must be upon precept**, precept upon precept; **line upon line**, line upon line; **here a little, and there a little** ... But the **word of the LORD** was unto them **precept upon precept**, precept upon precept; **line upon line**, line upon line; **here a little, and there a little**; that they might go, and **fall backward**, and be **broken**, and **snared**, and **taken**.” (Isaiah 28:9-13; see 8:13-20; 1 Corinthians 14:20,21; 2:13,14; etc).

If we do not want to be “snared” by deception, and be “broken”, etc—then we need to collect everything available that GOD has said on a particular subject, before jumping to any confident conclusions. Some sources for this include: marginal references (in most Bibles); concordances (to find where and how a word is used elsewhere in Scripture); thesauruses (to find synonyms); computerized search engines (most of these can even search for a specific phrase); compilations of verses (on specific subjects), compiled by others; etc.

Then, as we examine all of the statements on a particular subject, we need to realize and remember that it is “**impossible** for **God to lie**” (Hebrews 6:18; see Romans 3:4; James 1:13; Exodus 20:16; Revelation 21:8,27; 22:14,15; etc). Since “**God ... cannot lie**” (Titus 1:2), then everything that He says is true: “**thy word is truth**” (John 17:17; see Psalm 119:43,142,151,160; Daniel 10:21; etc); “... **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**.” (1 John 1:5; see John 1:1-9,14; Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19; etc).

There are no lies, and no errors, in what GOD says. So when we are examining all of the statements, on a particular subject: we need to come to a conclusion that harmonizes with every statement on the subject—in other words, there should not be any contradictions. Since there can be more than one possible meaning for a word, or a phrase: there can be more than one possible meaning for a statement, or even a whole verse; therefore, we should look for a meaning of each statement or verse, which fits with (not only every word in the statement, and the context of it, but also) every other statement on the subject!

Say for example you have found as many as fifty different verses, all related to one particular subject. Out of those fifty, forty-seven of them harmonize nicely with your conclusion—but the other three just won't fit; there is an irreconcilable contradiction between your conclusion, and those three verses. What should you do? Many people will just take the forty-seven, ignore (reject) the other three, and think that they have discovered wonderful truth—especially since they have so many verses which (seem to) support their conclusion!

But what about those other three verses? Did GOD tell us the truth those forty-seven times, and then lie to us the other three times??? Instead of (indirectly) accusing GOD of being a liar, by rejecting the three verses: we need to go back and reexamine all fifty verses, until we find a conclusion that harmonizes with all fifty of them!

The fact is, that GOD may give statements for the very purpose of correcting (see 2 Timothy 3:16) a wrong understanding of other statements. But how in the world are we ever going to be corrected by GOD: if we reject those three correcting verses, thinking that our own understanding of the forty-seven verses is absolute truth? Instead of trusting in self (our own understanding), and exalting our finite little minds above the Infinite GOD: we should say, with the apostle Paul, "... let **God be true**, but **every man a liar** ..." (Romans 3:4).

"Let Us Reason Together, Saith the LORD"

"Come now, and let us reason together, **saith the LORD** ..." (Isaiah 1:18). "And Paul, **as his manner was**, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them **out of the scriptures** ... And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and **persuaded** the Jews and the Greeks." (Acts 17:2; 18:4).

Here we see that GOD is reasonable; therefore, we should also be reasonable—since we should seek to be like Him (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:10; etc). GOD gave us a mind, and He expects us to use it: "... Let **every man be fully persuaded** in his **own mind**." (Romans 14:5; see 14:12; Matthew 23:14-30; Genesis 1:27; 5:1; Acts 17:27,28; etc). So when we STUDY, and are seeking to understand a subject correctly, we can rest assured that GOD does not expect us to believe a mountain of nonsense! He wants us to have spiritual sanity, and exercise good common sense.

The following is just one example of a principle (for understanding truth), based upon good common sense. If two verses seem to contradict each other—and one is directly related to the subject or point in question, while the other is indirectly related—we need to go by the directly related statement.

Even in using our common sense and reasoning powers, though, we are to be balanced—and "... **not turn** aside to the **right hand or to the left**." (Deuteronomy 5:32; see 17:20; Joshua 1:7; 23:6; Proverbs 4:25-27; etc). There are two extremes on many subjects, including this one. Some turn aside to the left, by using their (so-called) "wisdom" to conclude that what GOD said is just plain not true (see 1 Corinthians 1:17 to 3:23; 1 Timothy 6:20, 21; etc); while others turn aside to the right, by taking a mindless attitude: "GOD said it, and I believe it, so that settles it!" This latter class may appear to be very pious, having implicit trust in GOD; but the problem is that they are unwilling to consider more than one possible meaning of a word, phrase, or verse, etc.

It is true that if GOD said it, then we should believe it; at the same time, however, we need to use all of our GOD-given intelligence—not to question the truthfulness of what He said, but to make sure that we understand the correct meaning of what He said! And the bottom line test, of whether or not we have the correct understanding of His Word, is this: "And be ready **always** to **give an answer** to **every** man that asketh **you a reason** of the hope that is in you **with meekness and fear**" (1 Peter 3:15).

D. The **S.T.U.D.Y.** Tests

Once we have applied all of the above principles, to a particular subject—and have arrived at a conclusion on the subject, that is in harmony with all of these principles: then it is time to put our conclusion to the test; or more accurately, three tests. They are: the understanding test, the humility test, and the final test.

The Understanding Test

This test is essentially the same as the STUDY motto: "ready always to give an answer"; the only difference (between the motto and the test) is that the motto is the verse itself (found in 1 Peter 3:15), whereas the understanding test is the actual application of the "give an answer" principle. This is really the bottom line test, as to whether or not you understand the truth on a subject—because if you can't answer the questions on a specific subject, then that is the strongest possible evidence that you don't understand it clearly.

There are numerous Bible verses, in support of this “give an answer” principle—including many verses which connect being unable to answer (or silenced) with being in error, being guilty, etc. “... And his brethren **could not answer** him ... And he said, I am Joseph your brother, **whom ye sold into Egypt.**” (Genesis 45:3,4; see 1 Kings 18:21; Psalms 63:11; 119:41,42; Proverbs 15:28; 24:26; Matthew 21:23-27; 22:12-46; Mark 3:2-4; 11:27-33; 12:13-17,34; Luke 2:40-47; 13:14-17; 14:1-6; 20:1-8,20-26,40; 22:67,68; Romans 3:19; 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:12; Colossians 4:6; Titus 1:9-11; etc).

Because of the fact that answering questions requires facing the evidence (facing not only the forty-seven verses, but also the other three): no doubt many will plead excuses, to try and avoid the understanding test. These objections will be addressed, within the interactive portion of the Response-Able system.

The Humility Test

If there are questions, regarding a particular subject, that can't be answered—and especially if there is another teaching, on that same subject, which does have answers to all the questions: then it is time to take the humility test. Are you humble enough to change your belief, on that subject (see 2 Corinthians 3:18); or are you too proud to admit that you were probably wrong? Which do you love more: the truth, or your own opinions?

“He that **refuseth instruction** despiseth his own soul: but he that **heareth reproof** getteth **understanding**. The fear of the LORD is the **instruction of wisdom**; and before honour is **humility**.” (Proverbs 15:32,33; see 22:4; 29:23; Matthew 18:1-4; Acts 20:19; etc). “... be clothed with **humility**: for **God resisteth the proud**, and **giveth grace** to the **humble**.” (1 Peter 5:5). “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall **burn as an oven**; and **all the proud**, yea, and all that do wickedly, **shall be stubble**: and the day that cometh shall **burn them up** ...” (Malachi 4:1); “... lest being **lifted up with pride** he **fall into the condemnation of the devil**.” (1 Timothy 3:6; see Proverbs 8:13; 13:10; 15:25; 16:5,18,19; 18:11-13; 21:4; 28:25; Isaiah 13:11; Romans 1:29-32; etc).

If you pass the humility test, by changing your belief to one that is a Response-Able teaching: then you will still qualify as being Response-Able (your response in that case is a change, rather than answers). And the S.T.U.D.Y. ministry is absolutely dedicated to passing either the understanding test, or else the humility test; there will be no excuses pleaded (by S.T.U.D.Y.) for not answering the questions—there will either be answers, or else a change of teaching and practice. What about you?

The Final Test: Practice What You Preach!

Last, but certainly not least, is the ultimate and final test: Do you practice what you preach? Of all the above-mentioned “first principles”: this one is probably the easiest to understand, and yet (frequently) it is the hardest to apply. Why? Because all too often, we don't want to do what GOD says.

“If any man **will do** His [God's] will, he shall **know** of the **doctrine**, whether it be **of God** ...” (John 7:17; see Daniel 9:13; etc). But if we refuse to do His will, we will be deceived: “... be ye **doers** of the word, and **not hearers only**, **deceiving** your own selves.” (James 1:22; see 1:22-26; Isaiah 28:9-13; Luke 10:21; Matthew 11:25; 7:21-29; John 12:47,48; 15:22; 1 Samuel 15:23-26; Jeremiah 8:8,9; etc).

Actually, the final test includes not only practicing what you preach—but it also includes preaching what you practice! In other words: you should share what you have learned, even if you are not a pastor or leader. “**Whosoever** therefore shall **confess me** before men, him will **I confess also** before my Father which is in heaven. But **whosoever** shall **deny me** before men, **him will I also deny** before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32,33; see 2 Timothy 2:12,13). “**Ye are** the **light** of the world. ... **Neither** do men **light a candle**, and **put it under a bushel**, but **on a candlestick** ...” (Matthew 5:14,15; see Revelation 1:20; John 3:11; 15:26,27; etc).

And if we have taught error in the past: we should have just as much or more zeal in promoting the truth, as we previously had in promoting the error. Saul the zealous persecutor, became Paul the most zealous apostle of JESUS CHRIST (and he wrote much of the New Testament); he is an excellent example of this principle.

Once you have passed the final test on one subject, then it is time to repeat the process with another subject. And if we apply all of the principles and conditions, on each subject that we STUDY: then, and only then, can we honestly claim that this wonderful and conditional promise will be fulfilled in us: “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide you into all truth** ...” (John 16:13).

The subject of the next newsletter will be one of the most amazing and important secrets in the entire Bible—and yet, at the time of this writing, it is known to only a handful of people in the entire world! Until then:

S.T.U.D.Y. To Understand Doctrines Yourself

Tim, Sonya, and Teilen Simkin

NEWS: THE 800 HIS-LOVE MINISTRY & **S.T.U.D.Y.**

THE 800 HIS-LOVE MINISTRY HAS MOVED!

Last summer Gordon and Joan spent several weeks in Arizona and some time in Oregon, trying to find a new “home base”. They did not find anything suitable that they could afford, so they came back to Tim & Sonya’s home, expecting to spend the winter there. After considering their needs, especially Joan’s need to be in lower elevation for her heart, they decided to look in western Washington.

Before long, they had three places that they wanted to look at. The first two were “junk heaps”! Certainly not a place for them to live. But the third was a repossession, in excellent shape. To make a long story short, they have purchased this 5-acre country property with a 1997 doublewide mobile home on it, and have moved in. Their last newsletter was printed just too soon to have any of this information in it.

So they have now closed their Florida address, and moved all their belongings to their new “home base”. Please note their NEW ADDRESS for ALL mail and correspondence: The 800 HIS-LOVE Ministry, P.O. Box 447, Glenoma, WA 98336. More information will be in their next newsletter, which will be out in early April.

New E-mail and New Logo for **S.T.U.D.Y.**

The S.T.U.D.Y. ministry has a new e-mail address: Mail@**S-T-U-D-Y**.org (be sure to use four hyphens between the five letters); this is also listed now in the newsletter heading, on page 1. The old e-mail address will still work, for now at least; but this new address will be the permanent one.

The S.T.U.D.Y. ministry also has a new logo now, although it is not quite ready for publication; it should be on the Website soon, and it will appear on all future S.T.U.D.Y. newsletters and materials. The reason for mentioning it now, even though it does not appear in this newsletter, is that the next S.T.U.D.Y. newsletter probably won’t have a special section for news (like this page).

The old logo was black and white, and made in 1997; it was made with clipart, and graphics generating software. The new logo is in full color, and is actually a high-resolution digital photograph; of course, the new logo looks much better—and yet it is still the same basic design: an open Bible, with S.T.U.D.Y. on the left, and Scriptures from 2 Timothy on the right (in a much smaller font size).

The purpose for updating the logo, is to provide a quality logo on the Website—and also because S.T.U.D.Y. is now going to be producing high-resolution digital videos on DVD (see below); therefore, a quality high-resolution logo was needed, to be used in the production of these high quality videos.

Wedding Video, and Other Videos, Available on DVD!

Although last September was set aside for the purpose of video editing: multiple computer problems, as well as extended illness, prevented any videos from being completed—and the wedding video didn’t even get started. The months since then have been occupied in getting the Website started, putting out newsletters, the new logo, and a few other things that couldn’t wait. At this time, however, editing on the wedding video has actually begun; and, unless there are other unexpected major problems, it should be ready to ship by the end of March.

For those who have already ordered the wedding video: we apologize for the long delay; yet there is a positive side. The months of delay have brought us to the time when a multi-format DVD burner has become available; this burner solves the problem of different DVD formats (similar to the VHS and Beta format problem). So we have now purchased one of these (Sony DRU-500A), and all new videos—including the wedding video—will be mastered in digital; furthermore, those who have DVD players will be able to get DVD videos from us!

If you have a DVD player, and order a DVD video from us, please let us know if your unit plays the “plus R” format, or the “minus R” format (or both formats); if you don’t know, check the unit itself, or the operating instructions, or contact the manufacturer. If all else fails, let us know what make and model you have.

Finally, if you don’t have a DVD player, you might want to get one. WalMart has them for no more than a new VHS VCR; and DVD videos take up less space, last much longer, have a much higher quality picture, and cost no more than VHS videos. For many reasons, DVD has become the fastest advancing technology in history.