



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

WHAT YOU BELIEVE—DOES IT MATTER?

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:13-16 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 28:19-20 | John 14:6 | 1 Peter 1:1
2 Timothy 4:1-5

SUMMARY:

Statistics show that Americans question the authority of God's Word.

The majority of our young people are biblically illiterate. Why should they read Scripture when adults have told them it's out of date and inaccurate? Others in this country believe that the Bible is inspired, but not infallible. Thus, they pick and choose what passages to apply to their lives. These days, any belief is acceptable as long as it satisfies those who follow it.

The result is that people no longer have a clear sense of right and wrong. Immoral lifestyles have become acceptable. Violence, wickedness, and greed are rampant. However, God's standards haven't changed. The consequences of sin—now and in eternity—remain the same. It's vitally important that you and I base our beliefs on the the Word of God so that we can be a light to this dark world.

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

What do Americans believe?

Recently, a politician boasted that 92 percent of this nation believes in God. But because of the rise in cults and other religions, that belief no longer means very much. According to one survey, only a third of adults believe the Bible is the fully inspired Word of God and can be taken literally word-for-word. That means the majority don't feel they can place their confidence in it.

For instance, more than half of all adults

surveyed believe that a good person can earn a place in heaven. This is what many other religions teach. But if that is true, then the Father made a terrible mistake in sending His only Son to die on a cross. The reality is that each of us is born with a tendency towards rebellion against God. We may fill our lives with good deeds, but we can't change our nature. That's why Jesus' death was absolutely essential for us to enter heaven. Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

About 40 percent of adults believe the Bible contains error in some of its teachings. So more than half accept only certain biblical passages and reject the rest of God's Word. For instance, 42 percent of Americans believe Jesus was merely human—not divine—and that He rebelled against the Father during His lifetime. But Christ had to be absolutely holy for his death to pay the sin debt of humanity. Also, six out of 10 adults believe Satan doesn't really exist—that he is merely a symbol of evil. Imagine how this pleases the devil. Those who don't believe he exists are already deceived. They will find it almost impossible to identify and avoid evil.

The statistics for the next generation are even worse. The majority of those surveyed under the age of 25 think that all beliefs are equally valid. The hopelessness they feel is reflected in school shootings and other crimes committed by young people. Sadly, because some seminaries teach their students to doubt the Word of God, fewer and fewer pastors are grounded in biblical principles. It's not surprising that many people in our country are missing a Christ-centered, moral compass.

What does the Bible say about defending truth?

First Peter 3: 15 says, “Always [be] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” You and I should be prepared to explain what we believe. The apostle Paul warned Timothy, “The time will come when [people] will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Knowing the truth protects us from being influenced by unbiblical teaching.

Our values are vitally important because they affect every area of our life. For the most part, our *thoughts* determine our *actions*. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you should develop a belief system by which you will make decisions and live your life. This must be based on the authority of Scripture. If you don’t know the biblical passages that support what you believe, then you will have no real foundation when your viewpoint is tested.

How does knowing our beliefs help us?

■ **To prevent us from being misled:** Scripture predicts that there will come a time when people will be unwilling to hear the truth (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Unless believers know the truth, they can easily be swayed by an eloquent or charismatic leader whose teaching is not based on the Bible. When you and I know the Word of God, we have a defense against deception.

■ **To protect us from intimidation:** Notice that in 1 Peter 3:14, the apostle encourages believers not to fear. Those who are grounded in God’s Word can confidently stand against a world that mocks and attacks our faith. That’s why parents need to teach their children biblical principles.

When my kids were growing up, I found that the best way to teach them Scripture was to connect it to the issues they had faced that day. When questions came up, I pointed them to the Bible. They found out for themselves what God had said on a topic, rather than just hearing what

I thought. This way, they developed biblical views and were well established in their faith long before they went to high school.

It’s our responsibility to encourage our children and grandchildren in the truth. Teach them to respect God’s Word as the final authority, and they will be prepared for this life *and* the next.

■ **To prepare us to answer sincere questions:** Jesus said to preach the gospel to the entire world (Matt. 28:19-20). People may not want to hear the truth, but their eternal destiny depends on it.

I remember having discussions in college in which I was the only one who believed the Bible. But later, when those same guys were in trouble, they’d ask me to pray for them or help them through some situation or circumstance in their life. So let people criticize and talk badly about you. When they are ready to know the truth, they will come find you. And if your faith is firmly grounded in Scripture, you will be prepared to answer their questions.

CONCLUSION:

Do you know what you believe? Can you defend it based on the principles in God’s Word? If not, you are vulnerable to being led astray by false teachers, in greater danger of temptation or satanic attack, and unprepared to defend your faith or share the plan of salvation with the lost.

Whether they realize it or not, everyone has a belief system. Make sure yours is well thought out—not something you developed haphazardly over the years or adopted because it fit your lifestyle. Study the Bible to find out if what you believe has its basis in the Word of God. Prepare yourself to defend the principles you find there. Then you will be ready to make a difference in a world that desperately needs the hope found only in Jesus Christ. ✨



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