

A COMMON SENSE PRINCIPLE OF EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Turn in your Bible to Acts, chapter 16 -- and while holding your Bible open at that chapter -- turn to Matthew, chapter 7.

- a. Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 record Jesus' sermon on the mount.
 - ▶ The particular verse I want you to consider is v7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
- b. Acts chapter 16 records some of the events of Paul's 2nd missionary journey.
 - ▶ Of special interest in the chapter are the conversions of Lydia and her household, and the Philippian jailor and his household.
 - ▶ The particular verse I want you to consider is v31 where Paul tells the jailor what he must do to be saved: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
- c. So . . .
 - ▶ Matt 7:7 -- "Ask and it will be given to you . . ."
 - ▶ Ac 16:31 -- "Believe . . . and you will be saved . . ."

I want to do a comparison study of these 2 verses in order to illustrate a very important principle of effective Bible study that will help you in coming to an accurate understanding of any Bible verse.

- a. We need to appreciate and practice this principle of Bible study ourselves and we need to teach this principle to others.
- b. No one can understand the Bible who does not understand and practice this principle.

1. Before I state the principle of Bible study I'm talking about, I want to call your attention to the fact that these 2 Bible verses are similar in some ways.

These 2 Bible verses are not found in the same context, and they are not dealing with the same subject, but they are alike in some very important ways.

The teaching in both of these verses is the teaching of the Lord.

- a. **Matt 7:7** is a part of a sermon that Jesus Himself preached during His personal ministry.
- b. **Ac 16:31** is a part of what the Lord taught to His apostles that He commanded them to teach to others on His behalf.
 - ▶ **Jn 16:12-14**
 - ▶ **Matt 28:20**
 - ▶ **1Cor 14:37**

The teaching in both of these verses is in the form of a command.

- a. Jesus commanded the multitude: "Ask . . . seek . . . knock."
 - ▶ In both the English and Greek texts these words are in the imperative mood.
- b. And Paul commanded the Philippian jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. . ."

- ▶ In both the English and Greek texts the word “believe” is in the imperative mood.

In both of these verses a promise is attached to the command.

- a. In **Matt 7:7** Jesus commanded: “Ask.” And He promised: “. . . it will be given to you.”
- b. In **Ac 16:31** Paul commanded: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” And He promised: “. . . you will be saved.”
- c. In both verses, obeying the command is made a condition for receiving what was promised.

In both of these verses doing what is commanded is necessary for salvation.

- a. In **Ac 16:31** an alien sinner is commanded to believe on Jesus in order to be saved.
 - ▶ And in **Jn 8:24** Jesus said: “If you do not believe that I am He you will die in your sins.”
- b. In **Matt 7:7** Jesus commanded: “Ask, and you will receive.”
 - ▶ And in **Ac 8:22** the Christian who sinned had to repent and ask God’s forgiveness in order to be forgiven.

So there are some interesting similarities between these 2 Bible verses.

2. But these 2 Bible verses are alike in another important way, and it is this similarity that illustrates the principle of Bible study I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson.

These 2 Bible verses can be rightly understood only by considering all else the NT says on these subjects.

- a. No one could possibly draw accurate conclusions about “asking” and “receiving” from God if the only verse he considers is **Matt 7:7**.
- b. And no one could possibly draw accurate conclusions about “believing” and being “saved” if the only verse he considers is **Ac 16:31**.
- c. The teaching in both of these verses is qualified and explained by other verses in the NT that must also be considered.

“Ask, and you will receive” is qualified and explained by other NT verses; and it can be rightly understood only in the light of those other verses.

- a. I have never known anyone who believes that all anyone has to do in order to receive his request from God is “ask.”
 - ▶ No one believes that **Matt 7:7** is all we need to know about “asking” and “receiving.”
- b. **Matt 7:7** is qualified and explained by . . .
 - ▶ **Jas 1:5-6** -- ask in faith, without any doubting
 - ▶ **1Jn 3:22** -- we receive what we ask if we keep His commandments and do those things that please Him
 - ▶ **1Jn 5:14-15** -- we receive what we ask when we ask according to His will
 - ▶ **Jn 15:7** -- we receive what we ask if we abide in Jesus and Jesus abides in us

- ▶ **Jas 5:16** -- only the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (see also **1Pet 3:12**)
- ▶ **Jas 4:2-3** -- we must not ask out of selfish, sinful motives

In the same way, “**Believe . . . and you will be saved**” is qualified and explained by other NT verses; and it must be understood in the light of those other verses.

- a. The same common sense approach we use in understanding **Matt 7:7** must be used in order to understand accurately **Ac 16:31**.
- b. No one thinks **Matt 7:7** is all there is to asking and receiving; and no one should think **Ac 16:31** is all there is to believing and being saved.
- c. **Ac 16:31** is qualified and explained by . . .
 - ▶ **Mk 1:14-15** -- believe and repent (see also **Lk 13:3, Ac 20:21**)
 - ▶ **Rom 10:9-10** -- believe and confess Jesus (see also **Matt 10:32-33**)
 - ▶ **Mk 16:15-16** -- believe and be baptized (see also **Lk 7:30**)
 - ▶ **Ac 15:9 / 1Pet 1:22** -- believe and obey (see also **2 Th 1:8**)
 - ▶ **1Jn 3:23** -- believe and love one another (see also **1Cor 13:2**)
 - ▶ **Jas 2:14-26** -- faith and the works of faith (See also **Jas 2:17**)
- d. Even the immediate context surrounding **Ac 16:31** shows that there is more to it than just: “**Believe . . . and you will be saved.**”
 - ▶ The very next verse says: “**Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him.**”
 - ▶ And **v33** says after they spoke the word of the Lord to him, he was baptized.
 - ▶ So, **vs31** is not all he was told in answer to his question.
 - ▶ **v31** was the word of the Lord, but it was not all the word of the Lord that he needed to hear in order to be saved.

3. This comparison study of Matt 7:7 and Ac 16:31 illustrates the common sense principle of effective Bible study I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson.

The principle: The teaching of any one verse of Scripture must be understood in the light of all other verses of Scripture that deal with that same subject.

- a. What is said in one passage may be explained, qualified, or clarified by other passages.
 - ▶ We cannot arrive at the whole truth from a partial study.
 - ▶ We must consider all God has said on any subject.
 - ▶ **Psa 119:160** -- “**the sum of Thy word is truth**”
- b. Jesus used this very principle in answering the Devil’s 2nd temptation in **Matt 4:6-7**.
 - ▶ The Devil said to Him: “**If you are the Son of God throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge concerning you,’ and ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone’**” (**Psa 91:11-12**).
 - ▶ Jesus answered: “**It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’**” (**Deut 6:16**)

Conclusion

The sum total of all that God has said on any subject is the whole truth on that subject.

- a. It ought to be the earnest desire of every one of us to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth -- in order that we may do it.
- b. Are you trying to learn and do all of God's will for you?
- c. Are you ready to render complete obedience to Him now?