

Back to the Basics

Absolute Truth: Handle With Care

Over my military career I have been blessed to travel all over the world and to interact with people of many different cultures. While it is always interesting to visit some exotic land for a short period of time and “taste” their culture, what I have found truly revealing and valuable to my education and perspective is those occasions I have lived in a foreign culture with my family for extended periods of time. When I was living there – not just “visiting” – I found myself with an intense desire to learn more about how the natives live, think, and act in order to break down barriers to daily living. I would attempt to learn their language, customs, and traditions to show respect for their culture and try not to be the “ugly American.” I very purposefully studied and tried to live more like the natives to better understand them and be a good neighbor. One of the many things I learned from my German brothers was that America is a litigious nation. We sue for everything and provide disclaimers that the rest of the world chuckles at. Because of our deep-seated fear of legal action, we provide ludicrous warnings for product use. Here is a short list of some of my favorite warnings:

Warning: Never iron clothes on the body. **Rowenta Iron**

Warning: Do not use while sleeping. **Unknown Blow Dryer**

Warning: Do not ignite in face. **Zippo Lighter**

Warning: Cape does not enable user to fly. **Unknown Batman Costume**

Warning: May cause drowsiness **Nytol Sleep Aid**

Do not use as an ice cream topping. **Unknown Hair Coloring**

Caution: Contents may catch fire. **Unknown Matches**

Warning: Do not attempt to swallow **Unknown Mattress**

Made in America. Parts from Japan. Assembled in Mexico. **Fender Guitar**

While we laugh at how ridiculous the warnings are, we have missed a warning label on a product which could have far more devastating effects than anything else – perhaps we need a label for the Bible. Something like, “CAUTION: Failure to follow directions precisely and accurately may cause spiritual blindness and lead to

Eternal damnation.” Or, “Contents are Highly Powerful – any use of this product for unintended purposes may result in the Wrath of God.”

No, I am not REALLY advocating that the Bible come with a warning label...but, I do want to stress a point that we need to treat the Holy Scriptures with the respect due the Word of God. To give that kind of respect to the Bible, we have to do more than just lip service and a casual reading of it. We must study it with fervor and diligence to ensure we grasp not just the words, but the meaning of Scriptures.

Last week I presented an argument for why the Bible is Absolute Truth and the importance of that fact to our Christian faith. Today, I want to very briefly expand on that idea by discussing how to handle the Scriptures accurately so that their true meaning is discovered and their truths are applied to our lives. In short, we have absolute truth – what should we do with it?

The possession of this invaluable treasure is wasted if we don't use it correctly. Just knowing what the Scriptures say is NOT ENOUGH! Jesus made this point with the Pharisees on several occasions in the New Testament. The Pharisees were learned scholars who prided themselves on their *knowledge* of the Scriptures, but Jesus continually condemned them for *misinterpreting* and abusing the Scriptures. I refer you to the 15th chapter of Matthew as a prime example of Jesus' rebukes to the Pharisees and ask you to take some time this week to read and enjoy that passage. The problem that Jesus had with the Pharisees is the same problem we still face today; “learned experts” who use the Scriptures for unintended purposes by taking them out of context or missing the meaning behind the passage of Scriptures. Maintaining the accuracy of the Scripture's message is critical to understanding God's will and carrying out The Great Commission for we have to

“tell” correctly if we are to convince others to believe. I want to offer you four observations relating to accurately handling the Scriptures:

1. *Accurately handling the Scriptures starts with the reading of Scripture.*

This may seem like a blinding flash of the obvious, but I emphasize it because I want you to know that the focus should be upon the Book of God not the reader. If we are going to handle the Bible accurately, then the Scripture must form the basis of our thoughts – not someone’s idea, not the teacher’s lesson plan, not even the preacher’s opinion. Let Scripture speak for itself. If we begin our discussions about Scripture by first reading the Scripture, we will start off on an accurate footing.

2. *Accurately handling the Scriptures includes having respect for the Scriptures.*

The Scriptures ARE the Word of God so when we hear them, we should listen attentively; when we read them we should read them carefully showing reverence and submission to God’s Holy Word. There should be focused attention and full concentration on the Word of God. There is a sub discipline of engineering called Precision Engineering that focuses on designing machines, fixtures, or other structures with exceptionally low tolerances. These engineers measure tolerances with a nanometer scale to detect even the slightest variance. Not everything in life warrants this kind of precision and attention to detail, but certainly the Book which holds the mysteries of eternal life is worthy of our best efforts.

3. *Accurately handling the Scriptures means that the truth is explained so all can understand.*

In 2011 Websters added 150 new words to the English dictionary. Words such as “frankenfood, lookism, and prebuttall” are now part of the English language – I am

sorry about that. Even though we claim English as our native tongue, it is often difficult to understand everything that is said. The Scriptures are 2000 years old, written in three foreign languages from a different continent with vastly different cultures. While we enjoy the fruits of the labor of centuries of learned men who have painstakingly researched, translated and interpreted Scriptures, we must always remember that significant cultural and social differences exist between the time of the original writing and today. This is why it is important to always read the Scriptures in context extract the true meaning of the passage and apply it to our lives today. We need to be able to explain the Scriptures in terms of reference which our audience can understand.

4. Accurately handling the Scriptures leads to obedience to the Scriptures.

Bible Study, like any theoretical knowledge, is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. Accurately handling the Scriptures will lead to specific, personal acts of obedience to the Scriptures. If we handle the Scriptures accurately, we will more fully understand their meaning and be convicted to follow them obediently. The Scriptures are far more than the ancient words of historical accounts or a listing of dos and don'ts. The Scriptures are God-Breathed and, like the God that breathed them, they are still alive and calling for us to live with them by dedicating our lives to living for God. I pray that you will join me in the pursuit of this call.

In keeping with our new sermon series theme of, "Back to the Basics," looking at foundational Christian doctrines, I want to take a few moments this morning before we observe the Lord's Supper to discuss the origin and meaning of this event.

There are two and only two ordinances in the church – Baptism and The Lord’s Supper. These ordinances do not come from men – they are Divinely appointed.

I want to briefly point out a few things about the Lord’s Supper. It is an ordinance, not a sacrament. There is a big difference in the two words. A *sacrament* is a channel through which the saving grace of Christ is imparted. Therefore, a *sacrament* is necessary for salvation. An *ordinance*, on the other hand is a visible sign of an invisible grace. It is simply a symbol setting forth in visible, pictorial form the spiritual doctrine of grace. And so, when we say the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance and not a sacrament, we deny that it has any saving power whatsoever and affirm that it is a memorial of what our Lord did for us on Calvary.

Jesus instituted what we call the Lord’s Supper the night before He was crucified. The place was the upper room where He was eating the Jewish Passover supper with His disciples. That being true, it is easy to see the connection between Israel’s Passover feast and the Lord’s Supper. 1 Corinthians 5:7 calls Christ, “our Passover lamb that has been sacrificed.” So, whatever the Passover feast was to Israel, the Lord’s Supper is to the Christian.

The Passover marked the beginning of a new relationship between God and Israel. In the night when God killed the first-born children of Egypt, the Israelites put the blood of the lamb on the two side posts and on the upper door post of their houses. So the Lord “passed over” them, and thereafter the nation was looked upon by God as having been redeemed by this sacrifice. Each subsequent celebration of the feast of the Passover was a commemoration of a new beginning with God.

Carrying the lesson over to the New Testament, the observance of the Lord’s Supper is a commemoration of a new beginning with God based on the sacrifice of Christ. But, it is more than that; it is also a reminder of the difference between the

Christian and the world. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he used unleavened bread to represent His body. Symbolically, unleavened bread (bread without yeast) is not subject to mold and decay as is leavened bread. Yeast is often used as a symbol for sin in the Bible.

So when we the Christian partakes of the broken bread and the fruit of the vine, which symbolize Christ's broken body and shed blood on the Cross, he remembers the Lord and His death on the Cross. He also gives public testimony to the fact that the Lord's death is very meaningful to him personally showing public gratitude for Christ's personal sacrifice.

With that preparation, let us now join together in observing The Lord's Supper.