

## Two Essentials in Rightly Dividing God's Word 1 Corinthians 10:32-11:2

### Introduction:

1. Everything a believer needs is found in the Bible. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
2. But you must know how to study it in order to get the profit out of it that God intended.
  - You must follow God's prescribed method of study. God has given us this in **2 Timothy 2:15**. "Rightly dividing" literally means "to cut straight."
3. If we read the context, we learn that there were two men that were erring in doctrine. How were they erring?
  - They were saying that the resurrection was past. What did this result in? The overthrowing and subverting of other believers.
  - These guys did not leave and abandon the Scriptures, yet they were clearly teaching false doctrine. It isn't that they were unscriptural, but they were simply failing to rightly divide God's Word.
  - By simply misplacing the time period of the resurrection, they were involved in false doctrine. If the resurrection was past, we are no longer in the time of grace, but in the last days of prophecy.
4. Here in our text, we find two essentials that are absolutely necessary if a person is to rightly divide God's Word.

### First, you must know who God is addressing.

1. Whenever you are attempting to understand a passage of Scripture, the first question you should ask is, "Who is God talking to in this passage?"
2. Notice how Paul divides humanity into three groups in **1 Corinthians 10:32**.
  - Jews - those who are members of the nation of Israel
  - Gentiles - anyone that is not a Jew - all other nations and people groups
  - The church of God - those who are members of the body of Christ in this present dispensation of grace - **Ephesians 1:22-23; Galatians 3:26-28**
3. God's Word is always directly addressing one of these groups, or individuals within one of these groups.
4. Remember this: the entire Bible is written **for** us, but it is not all written **to** us.
  - The command to build the ark
  - The command to build the temple
  - Christ's command to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Spirit
  - The Sabbath day command to be observed specifically on the seventh day
5. Many of the events in the Bible are written for our example and for our practical application (**1 Corinthians 10:6, 11**). They are not written for us to build a doctrine around.
  - **Illustration:** A pastor says, "Every Christian should bring in gold and jewelry to help pay the bills for the church because that's what they did in the Old Testament to build the tabernacle."
  - This is false doctrine. Why? Because that Scripture wasn't written directly to us. It was never written for that purpose. Can we learn from it? Yes, but we don't build a doctrine around it. This was clearly for Israel.

6. Every passage has a **doctrinal** application for the group addressed and a **practical** application for people of all ages.
  - In **Acts 2:38**, who is God addressing through Peter? The context is clear - the house of Israel. vs. 36
  - Yet people have built an entire doctrinal belief system around this verse. Yet they conveniently ignore verses 44-45.
7. Dispensationalism is basically just a time line of history and recognizing God's instructions for mankind in those different time periods.
  - You recognize the differences of how God was working and you recognize where you are in the divine history of the ages.
  - God never changes, but His dealings with man change. God's instructions on how He desires man to respond to Him and what He would have them do have indeed changed throughout the course of history.
8. Those who fail to make a distinction in God's messages will end up confused and sometimes completely bewildered.
  - For example, we are not required to offer animal sacrifices that were required under the Old Testament law system.
9. The entire Bible is written for our learning, but it is presumptuous to think that the entire Bible is written directly to us. People in past ages have needed God's instruction, and people in future time periods (tribulation and kingdom) will also need God's instruction.
10. God's Word is a marvelous book that shows us God's Word to different people in different time periods under different circumstances.
11. We can learn from all of it, but it simply is not all written directly to us. As we rightly divide, we examine carefully who God is addressing and in what time period.

**Second, you must know who God's spokesman is for you today.**

1. In every time period throughout Biblical history, we see that God had a spokesman.
  - Noah was a preacher of righteousness and was God's spokesman in his day.
  - Moses was God's spokesman when Israel left Egypt.
  - John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles were God's spokesmen leading up to the cross.
  - Peter was God's spokesman on the day of Pentecost.
2. The responsibility of mankind in every dispensation is to **listen** to God's spokesman and **believe** his message.
3. As we approach God's Word, we must ask ourselves, "Who has God appointed as our spokesman for today?"
4. This is an extremely important question if we are to rightly divide God's Word. Let me give you an example of just how vital it is.
  - **Genesis 1:27-29** - mankind is given a strictly vegetarian diet.
  - **Genesis 9:1-3** - Noah was allowed to eat anything he could catch. This is a change to the dietary laws.
  - **Leviticus 11:1-11** - God establishes His covenant with Israel through Moses and lists things they could not eat. It wasn't just that they shouldn't eat these things - it was an **abomination** to eat them.

- What if a Jew would have said to Moses, "Thanks Moses, but I like Genesis 9 better. I like a little bacon with my eggs. It's Scripture, its Bible. Instead of Leviticus 11, I want to go by Genesis 9. All God's promises are mine, so I'm going to claim Genesis 9 and God will bless me"?
  - According to God's Word, this man would have been committing an abomination before God. A man could be quoting and obeying Scripture, yet be completely out of the will of God. Why? Because he failed to see that God had changed His program since Genesis 9. God had formed Israel and gave them His law.
- **1 Timothy 4:4-5** - Paul tells Timothy to eat anything he wants to eat - its all okay.
5. Can you see how people could look at these different verses concerning your diet and become confused? This is only one subject of many in the Bible. If you don't know who your spokesman is, you are in trouble! You don't know which set of instructions to go by.
  6. You must know where **you** fit in the plan of God and who **your** spokesman is. Who is our spokesman today for the dispensation of grace? Where can we go in God's Word and find specific doctrine and instruction for us today?
  7. Let's look at **1 Corinthians 11:1**. Who were the Corinthians to be following? The Bible is clear. The man who wrote this letter, the apostle Paul. Also read 4:16-17, 14:37.
  8. Some will try to say that the word "*followers*" should be rendered "imitators." This is very weak and inaccurate. You are not to **imitate** Paul or anybody else.
    - We don't even imitate Christ. An imitation is a cheap counterfeit. It's not the real, genuine thing. You are **not** to imitate God. God can't be cloned. The greatest imitator of God in this universe is Satan, and we know he is a counterfeit and fake.
    - You are to **follow** God. We take what He has instructed (His truth), and obey it, and follow Him by faith.
    - God desires for you to be who He has created you in Christ, and simply allow Christ to express Himself through you as you obey His Word by faith.
  9. So, if you are to follow Christ today, how do you do it? You do it by following Paul and the instructions God gave him to give to us. Paul said he was a **pattern** for all other believers today (**1 Timothy 1:16**), and what do you do with a pattern? You follow it.
  10. Paul's words are the words of Christ for us today (**1 Timothy 6:2-3**). Notice that Paul describes his teaching in three ways in verse 3.
    - He calls his doctrine "*wholesome words.*"
    - He calls his doctrine "*the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"
    - He claims that his doctrine is "*according to godliness.*"
  11. All of Christ's words are not in red in a red letter Bible. They only put in red the words He spoke during His earthly ministry to Israel. But Christ gave Paul direct revelation from heaven to give to the Gentiles. **Galatians 1:11-12; Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7**
    - In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the "*abundance of the revelations*" that he had received from heaven.

12. Paul's words in the books of Romans through Philemon are Christ's words for us today. If we are to follow Christ in the right way, we must follow Paul and the instructions and teachings that he has given to us. **Philippians 4:9**
13. Remember, all of the Bible is **for** us, but it is not all written directly **to** us. Sometimes you may read verses in other parts of your Bible that seem to contradict Paul's teaching for the time of grace today.
14. In reality, the apparent contradictions are simply different sets of instructions, given during different periods of time, under different programs.
15. Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:7**, "*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*"
16. As we study Paul's writings and consider what **our** spokesman says **first**, it will give us a greater understanding and appreciation for all of God's Word. We will be on our way to "*rightly dividing the word of truth.*"