

## Reacting to the Scriptures

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In his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul explained how the Scriptures make readers wise to salvation through faith in Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15-17). The Scriptures come from God. They convict us of our sins that made the death of Jesus necessary. They correct us by showing us how to live morally and ethically. They train us to become useful in the service of Jesus.

When we read the Scriptures, how do we react? When, like a two-edged sword, they pierce our hearts, how do we respond (Heb. 4:12)? Often, we react defensively. We might reject the teaching of the Scriptures. We might try to twist the Scriptures to justify our sins.

There are people documented in the Bible that reacted to the Scriptures. There are important lessons we can learn from them regarding how we must respond and react to the Scriptures.

### How to React to the Scriptures

**1). Inquiringly.** When we have questions about our lives, where do we search for answers? Early in the life of King Josiah, he wanted to learn how to rule righteously. His father and grandfather had been wicked kings. Their idolatry had brought grave consequences to them and their nation. Josiah did not want to repeat their mistakes.

In time, Josiah would lead a restoration. During this process, the book of the law was discovered. Learning of this discovery, Josiah commanded the priest Hilkiah, “Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us” (2 Kings 22:13).

With an inquiring heart and mind, Josiah was determined to seek God and obey God’s law. This required repentance and renewal. In time, Josiah would use the Scriptures to reconcile the nation to God.

**2). Discerningly.** How we interpret the Scriptures matters. We must be warned about the danger of imposing our worldview on Scripture. Too often, we investigate the Scriptures to defensively respond to someone’s criticism or to justify our sins. We ignore the context and/or reject what the Scriptures teach.

Paul told Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We must

be careful how we use the Scriptures. If we can handle them rightly, we can handle them wrongly.

The apostle Peter wrote about how some of Paul's writing could be difficult to understand. Peter wrote, "...There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability" (2 Pet. 3:16-17).

**3). A ready mind.** The apostle Paul traveled to the town of Berea. He went to the synagogue and began explaining how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. No one could explain the Law, the Psalms, and Prophets like Paul. The Jews in Berea were excited to learn how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Luke recorded, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Bereans wanted to learn the truth. They wanted to believe and obey the truth. They were not willing to simply accept what Paul said about the Scriptures. They wanted to know if the Scriptures supported and validated what Paul was teaching.

Ready minds ask, seek, and knock (Matt. 7:7-8). Ready minds find answers. Ready minds discern the difference between sin and righteousness. Ready minds will learn the truth and obey the Gospel.

**4). Desperately.** Jesus taught, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted... Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:3-4, 6). Jesus is for those who are desperate, hopeless, and remorseful.

Why do people impose their worldview on the Scriptures? Why do people twist the Scriptures to justify themselves? One word: pride. The desperate have given up their pride. They want Jesus on His terms. Readers can almost hear the desperation in the voices of those who cried out to Peter, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). These people did not want to give excuses for their actions. They did not want to argue. They desperately wanted to be saved from their sins.

**5). Gladly.** Desperate people will gladly receive the Gospel. They will lay down their pride and obey. When Peter told the people to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, when he told them they could receive the gift of the Spirit, when he urged them to save themselves from their corrupt generation, those who gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:41).

## **Conclusion**

The Scriptures are the method through which God has expressed His will to us. When we read the Bible, we can learn how God has provided for our salvation through Jesus (Eph. 3:1-4). When we take the Scriptures to heart, we will become equipped to serve God (2 Tim. 3:17). If we twist or blatantly disregard the Scriptures, we will pay a price that no one wants to pay.

Always remember, the Scriptures are for our good. They are designed to make us wise and lead us to salvation. They most certainly challenge us; however, the challenges of Scripture can be met by faith.