

How Can a Believer Avoid Being Deceived?

Wouldn't it be great if there was a vaccination against being deceived? Well, there is! It is what used to be, as a matter of course, taught to all new believers right after they accepted Christ. They would be handed a Bible and given the instructions to—

1. Read, Study and Meditate on the Word of God every day
2. Pray every day

The true method of Bible study, meditation and prayer comes from the Bible itself. Once you have this foundation, should you hear a fancy name for “prayer” such as Centering Prayer, Contemplative Prayer, Soaking Prayer, Lectio Divina, Breath Prayers, etc. you can be confident it's **not** Biblical prayer, or it wouldn't need a fancy name in the first place!

Also, be aware that not only are these “methods” not Biblical prayer, they aren't actually “prayer” at all, but Mystical Meditation techniques—which are definitely NOT Biblical Meditation. (See: Is Contemplative Prayer, Biblical Prayer?)

Search the Scriptures

It is essential that you never just believe what a Bible teacher or a Pastor teaches, no matter how much you trust them, or how popular or famous they are, but that you verify it for yourself by searching the Word of God.

Acts 17:11 is a well-known, and often used, passage regarding the Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul and Silas were teaching them was the truth.

“These (The Bereans) 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."

The question becomes, what does it really mean to "search" the Scriptures? Many people think that it simply means to go to the Scripture passages and read them, but if that were true, deception wouldn't be much of an issue.

The Greek word translated "searched" in this passage is "*anakrinō*" ἀνακρίνω. According to the Blue Letter Bible and Thayer's Lexicon, it means "*to examine or judge.*" More specifically, "*to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, and question.*" This often requires more effort than many believers are willing to put into investigating the matter themselves.

In **2 Timothy 2:15** Paul states "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" Hermeneutics is a fancy name for methods of interpreting Scripture to assist us in "rightly dividing the word of truth."

The ultimate goal is to determine the original writer's intended meaning of a Scripture passage. This is called "Exegesis (ek-si-jee-sis) which is attempting to "pull out" of the passage the actual intended meaning. What we **don't** want to do is Eisegesis (ayh-si-jee-sis), which is the **opposite** of exegesis. It is "reading into" a particular text a person's own ideas and interpretation of Scriptures that are not indicated by the text itself.

There are three main steps to thoroughly study Scripture (often referred to as the Historical-Grammatical Method of Interpretation):

- Conducting Word Studies: (The meaning of the word in the original language)
- Analyzing the Thought Structure: (The relationships of the words—Grammar and Syntax)
- Studying the Context and Co-text: (Immediate context

and considering the “whole counsel of God”)

Once we have determined the actual, intended meaning of the Scripture passage, we may be able to apply it directly to our lives, if appropriate, or indirectly by gleaning a principle from the passage. Or, it may have simply clarified a specific doctrine or event.

Avoid and watch for Divination (Bibliomancy)

There is an old joke that shows an exaggerated example of using the Bible as a divination tool:

A man needed guidance from God on what he should do regarding a certain situation in his life, so he took his Bible and let it fall open randomly. He closed his eyes and pointed his finger at the page. When he opened his eyes, he found that his finger was on the Scripture passage which said “Judas went out and hung himself.” The man thought, well, that doesn’t really apply to me or my situation, I better try again, so he did it the second time and he read “Go thou and do likewise.”

My first introduction to “divination” from Scripture was when I was around 10 years old or so. I saw a book by Oral Roberts, and out of curiosity, I flipped through the pages until I happened upon a statement where Oral Roberts stated something like “God tells us in the Bible that he wants us to ‘prosper and be in good health.’ ” Then I read the Scripture verse he was quoting and thought “Well, that’s stupid. God didn’t say that, it’s John speaking to some guy named Gaius. He’s just telling his friend that he hopes that he will “prosper and be in good health.” (3 John 1:1-2)

Most believers don’t do this as blatantly as the above examples (at least I hope not). However, there is a more subtle version that occurs quite frequently. An example of this occurs in the book “Preparing the Way.”

In one instance the author, Cal Pierce, points out an Old Testament story where Isaac “re-dug” the wells that his father had previously dug. This is simply a historical narrative describing what occurred. But Cal takes this as God telling him personally that he should, in a figurative sense, “re-dig” the wells of healing that John G. Lake had originally dug. This is not something anyone would understand from simply reading this passage. He has used the Bible as a divination tool to show him a special message from God meant only for him.

To allegorize or spiritualize Scripture is another method of Eisegesis. Allegorical interpretation is counter-intuitive, meaning, it is contrary to what one would normally expect. It assigns whatever meaning the interpreter chooses, using whatever rules he has predetermined. It sounds similar to “divination.” However, in this case, it is something that supposedly applies to everyone.

Extreme deception in the last days is already prevalent, now more than ever we need to be vigilant in “rightly dividing the word of truth” and testing any teaching against Scripture itself. It is our immunization against deception.