

Proverbs 4:7 says:

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding.”

Importance of understanding:

Understanding matters because response to God’s voice cannot exist where meaning is unclear. One cannot walk in God’s will while misunderstanding His words. Misunderstanding leads either to disobedience or to false confidence—both are condemned.

Understanding guards truth, directs obedience, and prevents self-deception before God. Without it, hearing alone is insufficient.

Therefore:

Proverbs 4:7 establishes the priority: above all else, pursue understanding.

Question?

How do we get understanding?

Paul says to Timothy, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (**2 Timothy 2:15**)

- This verse matters because it defines fidelity to God not as emotion, tradition, or inherited belief, but as careful, honest engagement with His word.
 - It calls us to labor in Scripture, to handle it accurately, and to live before Him without shame.
 - Thus, obedience flows from hearing, understanding, and rightly handling what He has actually said.
- Thus to Respond to His voice requires understanding, because without understanding we cannot live in alignment to God’s word.
 - Failure to do so carries consequences.
- And among those consequences we find.
 - Self-deception
 - Divergence from the path He wishes us to walk
 - Destruction because we don’t know what is right or true
 - Unknowingly practicing lawlessness
 - A form of godliness without power
 - Service that ignores God’s word

- Hardened hearts
 - Fruitlessness
 - Judgment for altering His word
 - Shame rather than approval before God
 - And ultimately separation from Him.
 - **Peter says it this way:** “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16)
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There are four passages in Scripture that establish a boundary directed specifically to us:

- **Deuteronomy 4:2**
“You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”
 - **Deuteronomy 12:32**
“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”
 - **Proverbs 30:5–6**
“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”
 - **Revelation 22:18–19**
“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
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The **boundary is simple:** Nothing is to be added to the Word, and nothing is to be removed. This protects the integrity of what God has spoken.

Deuteronomy 30:11–14 Explains Why That Boundary Matters.

- **Deuteronomy 30:11–14** “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say,

‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

Meaning that God’s Word is already complete, accessible, and understandable. It does not require hidden knowledge, heavenly ascent, or distant retrieval. Because the word is *near*, it does not need supplementation. Because it is *clear*, it does not need reduction.

- **Deuteronomy 30:11–14** teaches that God’s command is not secret or hard to find. It is not far away, not in heaven, and not across the sea. God says His word is near—already in the mouth and in the heart—so it can be heard and obeyed.
- **Deuteronomy 4:2** (and the other three passages) protect that same command by warning not to add to it or take anything away from it.

The Results Of Compliance Is Started In Deuteronomy 4:6:

- **Deuteronomy 4:6** “You must keep and do them, for it is your wisdom and understanding
 - Tying us back to our opening Scripture – Proverbs 4:7: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding.”
 - As a side note: keep and do in Deuteronomy 4:6 are the words shamar and asah

Together, These Passages Show A Consistent Message:

1. God’s word is close, clear.
2. Because it is already complete and understandable, it must not be changed.
3. When the word is kept (guarded and allowed to accomplish its goal) as God gave it, it produces wisdom and understanding.

The Simple Logic Is This:

If God’s word is not hidden and not far away, then:

- Nothing needs to be added to explain it better.
- Nothing should be taken away to make it easier.
- Obedience comes from hearing and doing what God said, not from changing His word.

Other Scriptures Reiterate This:

Isaiah 28:10

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:”

Joshua 1:8

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but you shalt meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.”

Psalm 119:160

“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endures for ever.”

Matthew 15:6

“Thus you have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

Romans 3:4

“God forbid: yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.”

2 Corinthians 4:2-3

“Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”

The Sermon On The Mount In Matthew Chapter 7 Adds Details To This Train Of Thought:

The Sermon on the Mount: Ask, Seek, Knock

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is *there* among you, *if* his son will ask him *for* bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or also *if* he will ask for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 Therefore if you, *although* you^{*n2}are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? 12 Therefore *in all things*, whatever you want that people should do to you, thus also you do to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

The Sermon on the Mount: The Narrow Gate

13 “Enter through the narrow gate, because broad *is* the gate and spacious *is* the road that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it, **14** because narrow^{*n3} *is* the gate and constricted *is* the road that leads to life, and there are few who find it!

The Sermon on the Mount: Recognizing False Prophets

15 “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inside are ravenous wolves. **16** You will recognize them by their fruits: they do not gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, *do they?*^{*n4} **17** In the *same* way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. **18** A good tree is not able to produce bad fruit, nor a bad tree to produce good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** As a result, you will recognize them by their fruits.

Concluding with: False Followers

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many miracles in your name?’ **23** And then, I will say to them plainly „*n5 ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!’

The Unavoidable Conclusion — Understanding is not optional.

Without it:

- obedience is misdirected
- confidence is false
- service is rejected
- judgment is unavoidable

God does not judge based on what we *meant*. He judges based on what He **said**.

That is why wisdom begins — and ends — with understanding.

Part II — The Promise of the Spirit

- **John 14:15-18** – “If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows

Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

- **John 14:23 – 26** – “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”
- **John 16:13 - 15** – “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”
- **James 1:5 – 8** – “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
- **James 4:2 – 3** – “Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
- **John 7:16 – 18** – “So Jesus answered them and said, ‘My teaching is not mine, but is from the one who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he will know about my teaching, whether it is from God or I am speaking from myself. The one who speaks from himself seeks his own glory. But the one who seeks the glory of the one who sent him—this one is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him.’”

The Simple Logic Is This:

- Loving and obeying Yeshua opens the way for the Spirit to dwell with and guide believers.
- The Spirit teaches, reminds, and reveals truth aligned with God’s authority.
- Believers must ask God in faith and with proper motives to receive wisdom and guidance.
- True teaching is recognized by its source and alignment with God’s glory, not human self-interest.

Leading me to the conclusion that love and obedience, plus faithful asking through the Spirit leads to truth, wisdom and understanding.

Part III – Biblical Tools in This Pursuit

Foundation: Scripture Is Its Own Ultimate Interpreter

The meaning of a text must be derived from and consistent with the entirety of the biblical revelation. No external authority, framework, or tradition may override the text's own testimony.

I. Core Concepts

1. **Scripture is "breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16) and produced by men** "speaking from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (**2 Peter 1:21**). Therefore, it possesses a **unified intent** despite diverse human authors, styles, and historical settings.
2. **Scripture's central message of redemption is clear and can be understood by any believer**, as demonstrated by commands to read, teach, and obey it (**Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Joshua 1:8; Colossians 3:16**). Difficult passages are to be interpreted by clear ones.
3. **Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). It is the final authority for faith and practice (**Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Isaiah 8:20**).
4. **Scripture is given to reveal God, His redemptive work in Christ, and to bring people to saving faith and Christlikeness (John 5:39-40; 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:15)**. Interpretation must serve this ***telos* (goal)**.

II. The Process

Step 1: Context Context Context

- Nehemiah 8:8 demonstrates the basic components: "They read from the book, from the Law of God, **clearly** [making it clear-cut], and they gave the **sense** [meaning], so that the people understood the **reading**."
 - ✓ Torah is read from the written
 - ✓ It must be made clear
 - ✓ Its meaning must be explained
 - ✓ The people must understand what was read
- **Consider Grammar & Language**
- **Consider Historical & Cultural Context**
- **Consider the Context of the Passage itself, and surrounding paragraphs, chapters, sentences, words, etc.**

Step 2: Identify the Writing Form.

- God communicates through various forms of writings, each with its own instructive patterns. Scripture itself distinguishes between writings.
 - ✓ **Narrative/History:** Presented as true accounts of events (**Luke 1:1-4**).
 - ✓ **Poetry/Wisdom:** Uses parallelism, metaphor, and emotive language to convey truth (the Psalms, Proverbs).
 - ✓ **Prophecy:** Forthtelling (calling to covenant faithfulness) and foretelling. Apocalyptic prophecy (Daniel, Revelation) uses dense symbolism, which is often interpreted within the text (e.g., **Daniel 2, 7** where beasts = kingdoms).
 - ✓ **Parable:** A story meant to convey a central truth, often about the Kingdom (**Matthew 13:10-13, 34-35**).
 - ✓ **Epistle:** Didactic teaching addressing specific situations. Instructions must be understood in light of the letter's occasion and theological principles.

Step 3: Scripture Cannot Contradict Itself.

- This is the method of the New Testament authors.
 - ✓ **Acts 15:15-17:** James interprets the inclusion of Gentiles by appealing to the "words of the prophets" (**Amos 9:11-12**), showing the coherence of God's plan across Testaments.
 - ✓ **Hebrews 1:5-13:** The author proves Christ's superiority by compiling multiple, clear Old Testament texts.
 - ✓ **2 Peter 1:20-21:** "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation." It is part of a seamless whole borne of the Spirit.

Step 4: Recognize Messiah as the Center Focus of Scripture

Then I said, Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book **it is** written of Me; (Psalms 40:7)

Then I said, Lo, I come (**in the** volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7)

Note: Dual application

1. to Messiah Himself, and
 2. to His corporate body - the church
- **Principle:** The person and work of Yeshua the Messiah is the central subject and goal of all Scripture. The Old Testament anticipates Him; the New Testament reveals Him.
 - This is the hermeneutic authorized by Yeshua and the apostles.

- **Luke 24:27, 44-47:** "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."
- **John 5:39, 46:** "You search the Scriptures... and it is they that bear witness about me... He wrote of me."
- This is **not** allegorization. It recognizes patterns of **promise/fulfillment** (e.g., **Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4**), **typology** (as previously established), and **direct prophecy** (e.g., **Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6**).

Step 5: From Meaning to Application.

- **Principle:** Application is governed by the original meaning.
- Scriptural Basis:
 - **Romans 15:4:** "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."
 - **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11:** The events of Israel "took place as examples for us... they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come."

III. Prohibitions and Cautions

1. **No Private, Unconstrained Interpretation:** "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (**2 Peter 1:20**). Interpretation must be accountable to the text, the Holy Spirit's witness through the whole church, and the historic faith, not subjective impressions.
2. **No Adding or Subtracting: Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19.** This forbids imposing external philosophical systems, speculative frameworks, or traditions as necessary keys to understanding.
3. **Acceptance Without Judgment, And Allow For Growth**
 - **Romans 14:1, Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on his opinions.**
 - **Philippians 3:15 , Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on his opinions.**

IV. Ultimate Goal: Communion with God and Conformity to Messiah

- **Romans 8:29:** "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers."
- **2 Corinthians 3:18:** "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord."

- **John 17:17:** "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."
- **Psalm 119:130:** "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."
- Interpretation is not an academic exercise. Its end is to know God, be transformed by the renewing of the mind (**Romans 12:2**), and obey the Great Commandment (**Matthew 22:37-40**) and Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

Scripture is the final and self-interpreting authority, possessing a unified intent because it comes from God. Sound interpretation begins with careful attention to context, language, history, and literary form, following the pattern of Nehemiah 8:8 so that the written word is read clearly, explained accurately, and truly understood. Scripture must interpret Scripture, since it does not contradict itself, and all passages ultimately cohere around the person and work of Yeshua the Messiah, who stands at the center of God's redemptive purpose.

Interpretation moves from meaning to application without adding to or subtracting from what is written, rejecting private or speculative readings while allowing patience and growth among believers. The ultimate aim is not knowledge, but communion with God and transformation into the image of the Messiah, as the word enlightens, sanctifies, and equips God's people for faithful obedience.

Logical Progression:

- Scripture comes from God and therefore possesses a unified intent
- Because Scripture is God-breathed, it is the final authority for faith and practice
- Since Scripture is clear in its central message, it can be understood by believers
- Clear passages govern the interpretation of difficult passages
- Scripture's purpose is to reveal God and His redemptive work and to bring transformation
- Interpretation must begin with the written text itself
- The text must be read clearly and distinctly
- The meaning already present in the text must be understood — Understanding of what is written is the immediate goal
- Understanding requires attention to language, grammar, and context
- Historical and cultural setting must be considered
- Immediate and broader literary context must govern meaning
- The form of writing must be identified
- Each literary form communicates truth according to its own patterns
- Meaning must align with the nature of the style of writing

- Scripture must be interpreted in harmony with all Scripture
- No passage may contradict another
- Scripture interprets Scripture, as modeled by the apostles
- All Scripture ultimately centers on Yeshua the Messiah
- The writings anticipate, reveal, and testify to Him
- This focus follows promise, fulfillment, typology, and direct prophecy
- Application flows from original meaning, not from speculation
- What was written before was written for instruction today
- Interpretation must avoid private or unconstrained readings
- Nothing may be added to or taken away from what is written
- Believers are to show patience and acceptance as understanding grows
- The final aim of interpretation is communion with God
- Scripture brings holiness, illumination, and transformation
- Faithful interpretation leads to conformity to the image of the Messiah and obedient living

Paul sums it up like this: “My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death. (Phil 3:10 Net)