



Understanding

*“Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things”
(2 Timothy 2:7 NKJ).*

Wouldn't that be wonderful—to have understanding in all things? Paul, who was writing to Timothy in today's verse, certainly expected God to do big things. Throughout his New Testament writings, Paul makes large requests to God and speaks fantastic blessings to his readers. Sometimes I forget nothing is impossible with God and I can ask Him for great things. I believe I will personalize this verse for myself:

“May the Lord give ME understanding in all things.”

Have you ever heard someone (maybe yourself) say: “I just don't understand”? There are a lot of circumstances, events and people's behaviors that can be very puzzling. Even God's ways can puzzle us at times. Often *why* seems hidden from us. Understanding answers the *why* question. If we are puzzled by something concerning God's ways or His will, we should search for understanding. Solomon wrote: “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2 NKJ). We can seek understanding; God grants understanding to those who seek it.

To understand is also to be able to relate ideas, thoughts, and facts in a way that they make sense. Paul wanted Timothy to have complete understanding of the doctrines which he had taught him. Timothy was a young man and Paul was his mentor. Paul took pains to teach Timothy what he needed to know. Receiving instruction is one way to seek and to grow in understanding.

Solomon wrote that “the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10 NKJ). Anyone who knows God personally as Savior has made a very wise decision, first of all.

Secondly, that person has received the indwelling Spirit of God who is called “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding” (Isaiah 11:2). A person may gain understanding in various areas of life; but without the indwelling Holy Spirit, one does not have the ability to understand the things of God.

Jesus told His disciples in His last hours with them before His betrayal and crucifixion: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now [or grasp them]. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. . . .” (John 16:12, 13). Jesus' disciples would receive the Holy Spirit whom Jesus would send and He would teach them, reveal things to them and help them to understand God's Word. Often they had been confused by Jesus' teachings during His three-plus years with them. After they received the Holy Spirit, they received understanding which they previously lacked.

Understanding is a valuable ability. Solomon wrote: “How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding than silver” (Proverbs 16:16 NKJ). Again, “Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it . . .” (Proverbs 16:22 NKJ). “For by me [understanding] your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you” (Proverbs 9:11 NKJ). In fact, because Solomon had asked God for wisdom and understanding instead of wealth, God not only gave him his request but also added unprecedented wealth and prosperity. Solomon knew he needed more than his own understanding in order to rule Israel well. So he asked God, the Source of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding, for it. A very wise request!

It was Solomon who warned us not to lean on our own human understanding. He wrote: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways

acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJ). Our own understanding is faulty, but how often we lean on it!

I believe even as Christians we lean far too often on our own understanding or someone else’s when we are making decisions. We must actively seek God’s direction in order to have Him direct our path. We must acknowledge to Him that we do not have the understanding He has and that we need His help. We must also trust Him with all our heart in each circumstance. God may direct our paths in surprising ways that require trust. He’s been known to step out of the box!

I am well aware that I am capable of making a big mess of my life without God’s help, His wisdom and His understanding. I’m not young anymore and hopefully God has granted me a little more understanding than I used to have, but I’m taking no chance. I want to totally eliminate leaning on my own understanding from my life! I want God to direct my paths. I think you probably want the same. By seeking God’s understanding and following it, we can live better lives. God *will* direct our paths if we seek Him and trust Him.

There’s another issue regarding our understanding that Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4. He was writing to Gentile believers who lived in Ephesus. Paul wrote that his readers “should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts” (4:17, 18).

Even as Christians it is possible to understand only from our minds, which alone is futile. We who have been made alive through believing in Jesus now must “walk” or live our lives by the understanding that comes not only from our mind but also and primarily from our heart of faith. We must understand differently from unbelievers. We do not abandon the mind; we love and serve God with all our faculties. Faith, however, is of the heart.

Not only can God give us understanding, but we are also instructed to seek understanding. Solomon commanded: “. . . Get

understanding! . . .” (Proverbs 4:5 NKJ). “. . . And in all your getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7 NKJ). He also wrote: “Happy is the man who . . . gains understanding” (Proverbs 3:13 NKJ). Paul wrote to Timothy, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV). Timothy would be a teacher of the Word of God, and he needed to study in order to teach accurately and well. That Word—“study”—is to each of us, not only to teachers.

Another helpful instruction is—“grow up” (Ephesians 4:15 NKJ). Paul wrote to the Ephesians that “we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Ephesians 4:14). It is through knowledge and good understanding of God’s Word that we are protected from the many dangers and snares that lie in our path.

We cannot afford to remain children in our understanding or always depend entirely on someone else to teach us. Apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers help us. They have an important place; however, each of us must be maturing in Christ and growing in our understanding of God’s Word. Each of us must study the Word for ourselves!

As Paul said to Timothy, “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” (And to me, too, Lord!) **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY

Teaching Letter 33

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