

INTRODUCTION

We're currently in a series dealing with conflicts and issues with the Bible. -Issues from real people we see every day. Today's issue reads like this:

Shouldn't the *Bible be explicit* in meaning and reasonably explainable to a hermit living in the wilderness 200 years ago? Shouldn't the truth, cogency, and consistency be evident given a *total lack of outside resources?* ... I feel ... if it's God's *perfect* word, then it should be an utterly *stand-alone product*. ...I should not need Greek dictionaries and historical references to decipher the truth.

Our skeptic makes some extremely valid points:

- If the meaning requires an arsenal of **outside resources** to understand- it is closed to a significant part of humanity- such as **the poor or isolated** who can't access those "outside resources."
- If truth demands the **intellectual muscle power** to wade through ancient languages and detailed history- it is closed to a significant part of humanity- those with **lower education or the mentally challenged** would be locked out!

Scripture claims God's love extends to all humanity, so that would make God a liar, very sloppy in His planning, or the Bible is not really His Word.

So how do we address this concern?

Let's start with this: Video- *trapped in a fire*

In this 911 situation- It would have been great if the firemen could've saved everything. It would've been great if the operator could've spent more time discussing the layout and structure of the house- but there was only time for one, over-riding urgency; *saving the life of that disabled man*.

1. The essence of the Bible message is this:

It is a *911 call*- **All Scripture falls into one of two broad categories**. Half reveals how **we are in danger**. It illustrates our broken nature since Adam and the need for a rescuer beyond ourselves. The other half reveals the nature and **strategy of God's rescue plan**. ...The urgent message of Scripture is that the **house of humanity is on fire**, and we are all disabled.

Don't be surprised if the message **doesn't go into the details** on how our universe was built and how the plumbing and wiring works- *Hey! Our souls are in flames! Wake up, or we're going to die!*

The message tells us **the "fireman" is on the way**. And when He passes by, grab hold and don't let go. **Be willing to go wherever He goes**. The "fireman" is Jesus Christ, and what we grasp is His cross.

That is the core of the message. And it is **so simple**, the entire Bible can be summed up in a single sentence. In fact, we have our children memorize it:

"For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. -John 3:16

-The Bible is that **simple**. In its **core message**, it certainly **stands alone**. But is it explicit; readily understandable?

2. Consider this: **The Bible is the message of an infinite God, so it has an infinite nature about it. It is bottomless, and it is timeless. And there are infinite levels to the message.**

Humanity is a **vast spectrum of intelligence, desires, aptitudes, circumstances, and character**. Some of us are scholars, wired to plunge the deeper questions. Others; well we want to know just enough to get busy with our hands.

This 911 message is designed to reach all of us. Jesus told us this:

Matt 22

37. ... ``Love the Lord your God with all your **heart, soul, and mind.**'

38. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: 'Love **your neighbor** as much as you love yourself.'

The Biblical principle to Godly connection; is very simple: **Use everything you've got.**

For some, it is high-powered intelligence. For others, it's a lot of heart, but not much deep thinking. -And for most of us; we're somewhere in between. But God's principle of connection is: **You've got to use all you've been given.** ...And if you do; **there is a reward for the effort...**

Eph 3

17. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him.

May your **roots go down deep** into the soil of God's marvelous love;

18. and may you be able to **feel** and **understand**, as all God's children should, **how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is**; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself.

All God's children can feel and understand to some level. **But to those who have been given much, much is possible, and much is expected.** If you've been given the mind to question deeply; expect to dig deeply. That is your **gift**, and it is your **call**.

And **if you have been given the gift of the mind**; the more you use it faithfully; the **more enriched** your understanding of God will become.

Cor 1

4. I can never stop thanking God for all the **wonderful gifts he has given you**, now that you are Christ's:

5. he has **enriched your whole life**. He has helped you **speak out for him** and has given you a **full understanding** of the truth.

Here's the thing; **that enriched understanding isn't, just for you.** It is to edify the rest of your spiritual family. Jesus implies this in these words: "**love your neighbor as yourself.**"

Here's an example, in 1890, there was a professor by the name of **Dr. James Strong**. He was a professor at Drew Theological Seminary who had a brilliant and detailed mind. Coordinating more than a hundred colleagues, they put together Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. From this book, people can find the placement of nearly every word in the Bible. He also numbered all the original Greek and Hebrew words and listed them with their basic meanings. Strong's work **became a staple tool** for every serious student of the Bible.

Many of the original meanings of words and passages we know here are **because of the- intellectual gift, of this professor**. His gift enriches us.

The system God uses to reach and teach **people; is through people**. The Holy Spirit does speak directly- but the vast majority of the God-experience is **person to person**.

Eph 4

11. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12. **for the equipping of the saints** for the work of ministry, for the **edifying of the body** of Christ.

God has set up this system for a very good reason: God **doesn't simply want to bond us to Himself, but to each other**. God's ultimate goal is **unity**.

-So, **God's Word is explicit and consistent**- but for the sake of all humanity, **it comes in levels**. And for the sake of **connection, it uses the sources of divine and human help**.

And all of this leads us to a third insight of our skeptic's statement...

3. The statement infers that "perfection" means "autonomy" or in their words, an "utterly standalone product."

Let's take a look at the dictionary definition of the word, "perfect":

1. Lacking nothing essential to the whole; complete of its nature or kind.
2. Being **without defect** or blemish

Your car is made up of parts- *in the nature of their kind*. A transmission doesn't look anything like an alternator. It's everybody's hope, that when you buy a new car, it's made up of basically perfect parts. Your hope is you have a perfect alternator (*in the nature of its kind*) and a perfect transmission (*in the nature of its kind*). But those parts are not "standalone" products. **They are designed to be parts of a bigger system**.

The same principle applies to Scripture. The Bible is not the whole "system" of God. God also touches through the **Holy Spirit**. He incorporates **prayer**. There is the component of **human interaction** in mentorship and discipleship. There are lessons through **life circumstances**.

In God's perfect model, Scripture plays this irreplaceable role:

2 Tim 3

16. The whole Bible was given to us by **inspiration from God** and is **useful to teach us what is true** and to **make us realize what is wrong in our lives**; it straightens us out and **helps us do what is right**.

Here's an example of how Scripture works in the larger system:

Acts 8

27. ... a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28. was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. ...

30. So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "**Do you understand what you are reading?**"

31. And he said, "**How can I, unless someone guides me?**" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

...

35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

What are dictionaries, lexicons, and commentaries but the experience of other people put in print? That is how God has designed His "divine machine." It uses the achievements of those ahead of us to allow us to plumb the deeper levels. **It is a perfect component**, as part of a perfect system.

CONCLUSION

So, **is the Bible explicit?** Yes, but it is also infinite. **Can the Bible stand alone?** Yes, but the depths of its richness are part of a larger system. **Does the Bible require outside sources?** Yes, for the sake of uniting all humanity with itself as well as God.

Here's one last little story:

A few years ago, I had been talking with a family member, and he was debating all the rejected writings of the Bible. Like some of the new rages at the time such as "The Gospel of Judas." His feeling was, there is so much division about the Bible because, we're missing parts.

I confessed I didn't need any more parts because I was struggling to grasp the depths of what we already have. And he laughed and said, "*Yeah, but I want it all!*"

That line of thinking has haunted me for a couple of reasons. For one thing, **Scripture is infinite**. We couldn't possibly understand it all.

And secondly, **we want the deeper levels**, but we are so slow to give- even most of ourselves, let alone all of ourselves to attain it. In fact, many endeavor to be experts without even accepting the core message of salvation.

So, where do you and I fit in this morning? Is **your life on fire**, and your yet to grab hold of your rescuer? -

Let me share this: **For Jesus the Christ; you are a personal concern.**

-If so would you be willing to **take a first step?** As we bow our heads to connect with God- would you raise your hand and say, "Yeah, I want to let the 'fireman' in. I want Jesus to take up residence and make me like Him."

Are you longing for the deeper richness? -You're so ready for the next level. If so, would you raise your hand? Would you pray in your heart like this? "Lord, would you make me aware of the reality of my need for more of you? Please give me a clear vision of the next level of richness in your Word and in your experience."

That being said, let me leave you with one last question to take with you: **Are you willing to give all that you are, to attain what you've ask?**