The Glory of Discovering God's Word

Proverbs 25:2

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Shepherd's Community Church

If we all possess the Holy Spirit, and we all go to the same Bible, why do we come up with differences?

There are several reasons why men differ in interpreting the Scripture, multiple issues. Number one, we're sinful and therefore we have certain limitations on our understanding, right? No single person is so pure that in that person resides all truth. In fact, our sin indicates to us that we cannot have perfection, right? So they're going to be areas where we are incorrect.

Secondly, there are differences because people go to the Word of God with different presuppositions. In other words, they go with a lot of baggage that they've inherited from their past life. If you, for example, were raised in a Pentecostal church or you were raised in a Christian church which taught baptismal regeneration, faith plus water equals salvation, and that's the way you were raised and your mother and father believed that way and your grandmother and grandfather and your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and your pastor that you admired and so forth, it would be very hard for you to consign all those people to error and ignore that teaching.

Another problem we have interpreting the Scripture is because people don't always do what they ought to do and that's study, work hard. That's why Paul says to Timothy that the elders who labor hard in the Word and doctrine are worthy of double honor.

And there's a fourth area that's also important. And that is that we disagree a lot of times on things that don't have complete revelation. In other words, we don't have enough data to be dogmatic, so we take different options. Do you understand what I mean by that? There's a passage in 1 Corinthians that talks about the baptism of the dead. I read a thesis one time, 35 different views of that. Which one's right? I haven't got the faintest idea. I have an opinion, but it's only an opinion, because we don't have enough data to interpret that. We really don't.

Now, let me tell you something important: I think we could reduce the differences tremendously, if, one, we take care of the humanness thing by going to the Word of God in an attitude of prayer and attitude of purity of life so that we become a pure vessel. Seek the truth.

Secondly, if we would unload the baggage of our presuppositions and let it speak at face value. In other words, let it speak for itself. That's what's called exegesis or inductive Bible study. You let it say what it says and there are ways to do that. Open it up and let your presuppositions and let your traditions and let your heritage get shot to pieces if it has to.

And I think another thing is if men would go to the Word of God and work hard and really work hard and test what they believe against every text of the Word. I think what happens is you get your system and you stick in the passages that feed your system and you don't get out of your system.

(John MacArthur, Bible Questions and Answers, October 30, 1983, CD 1301-W)