

## Questions

Question: I listen to preaching all the time from different people and it sounds like they say different things. Who is it that we are supposed to listen to? Can they all be right?

Good question. I hope you like the answer but chances are you may not. To set all this up we need to first read *Jude*, *2 Peter chapter 2*, and *2 Timothy 2:2-4* to see that there are false teachers (not false prophets) who we are to be aware of and how they operate. Remember that these letters are to the body and about things going on within the body. “*These men*” as Peter calls them, are people who bring in “*destructive heresies*” (*2 Peter 2:1*) and “*fabricated stories*” (*2:3*). “*These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit*” *Jude 19*. Notice that these men do not have the Spirit (of God) which means they are not saved, but they are in positions to greatly influence the body of Christ at the place where they are. Note: denominations have played a huge role in dividing the body. It is reasonably concluded that these men are pastors and teachers (elders) within the body of Christ and, again, unsaved. Now read *1 Corinthians 2* and pay special attention to *verses 10-14* where we see that anyone without the Spirit cannot understand spiritual things (the mind of God) as they are foolishness to him. In *2 Timothy 4:3-4* Paul tells Timothy that “*For the time will come when man (the body) will not put up with sound doctrine...*” and *verse 4* “*They will turn their ears away from the Truth and turn aside to myths*” and the time has come where this is exactly what is happening.

Today, in many cases, not all, people are moving toward assemblies that make them “feel good” and gather with teachers that can do that, rather than teachers who help them understand the will of God. They are taught that we are to “love everyone” because we don’t want to offend anyone regardless of whether the things being taught are sound or not. Most people today, not all, don’t want to check out (study the Scriptures) whether someone is telling the truth or not. They just want to be told what the Scriptures mean so that they can feel good about it.

It is important to understand the things discussed above because without knowing what is happening today, we can be enticed to listen to anyone who sounds good, has a large following or seems to be very sincere. So, how do we know?

The Word of God is how we know. He is right 100% of the time and if you don’t know what He says about any particular subject, in context of what He says about it, you put yourself in a position to be deceived. It ultimately comes down to you being responsible for the knowledge you have of the Scripture so that when you hear someone, anyone, say something about the Word you can, by the Spirit within you and the knowledge of God’s Word you have, discern if what that person is saying is accurate or not. Just because a man has been to seminary does not necessarily mean he has a lot of understanding. Some have a great deal of understanding about some subjects and other subjects they may have almost none at all and it is up to you to investigate everything that you hear to determine the truth by comparing what they say to the Word of God. Read *Acts 17:10-12*.

Today, for whatever reason (refer back to the passages above), most elders do not want people to ask questions about what is said, what is believed, why things are done any certain way and so forth. In other words, they don’t want to be challenged about how they do things. If you observe something, an action, statement, belief, program or anything else that you don’t understand, by your knowledge of the Scripture, you should ask about it or challenge it. Be warned though - false teaching has so permeated the body that when you do ask questions you may be the one labeled as rebellious and a troublemaker as very few elders want to be questioned about their beliefs and the way they do things. I know because I’ve done it and have been there.

We will give one example of a very common false teaching today. If you ask me “What must I do to be saved?” and I give you the “ABCs” which is Admit (that you are a sinner), Believe (in Christ) and Confess (sin), have I told you the truth? No. As one studies the Epistles which are given to all of Mankind after the cross, we find that we are told to believe in Jesus the Christ’s death, burial and resurrection to eternal life for the forgiveness of sin, which is the gospel or good news that Christ’s sacrificed blood on the cross now can remove sin. We are saved by the grace of God through faith, not the ABCs. Nowhere in the Epistles is anyone directed to admit that they are a sinner or to confess their sin to be saved. The Scriptures simply do not exist! See the Salvation tool in the toolbox. But if you don’t know this, it could be very convincing because ABCs is a nice catchy phrase that sounds good but is as false as anything else that is contrary to the Word of God. Read *Galatians 1:6-9* for what the Holy Spirit says through Paul

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about a false gospel. Anyone who gives a false gospel I personally will not listen to at all and this is only one of several things. God's Words are absolute Truth, where man's interpretation and opinion is not.

So, no, they are not all right if what they say contradicts God's Word and it is your responsibility to know what it actually says and means. This understanding will only come through diligent study, prayer and then the Holy Spirit will reveal the Truth. It's your job to "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (*Romans 12:2*) as we study for ourselves and test everything we hear and observe with what God says about it, not man. This is how we grow and mature in Christ and learn to distinguish good from evil as *Hebrews 5:14* tells us. Thank you for the question.

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Question: Are we as the body of Christ supposed to tithe? My pastor says that we are but I hear others say that we are not. He also says that we are not really giving unless we give an offering on top of our tithe. What do you say?

I have heard these things also. At one place I attended the elder who did the pulpit preaching proclaimed that we are to tithe and give an offering and that we were not giving unless we gave until it hurts. I've also heard men say, from the pulpit, that even though tithing is not taught in the Epistles it is a good place to start. This teaching is not isolated to the assembly that I attended and yours but very widespread among Christian denominational churches. In fact, most (not all) churches teach tithing as part of their doctrine or at the very least will not discourage the practice.

So, the real question is not about what is taught, but should be: "What does God say about tithing?" because man will come up with all sorts of practices and procedures claiming it came from the Bible, whether it is in context or not. What we will do here is look at the subject by "rightly dividing" the Word and put things in the context in which He gave it. In the toolbox there is a section called Doctrine where we have put together Scriptures about each subject: no. 19 is tithe/tithing and no. 20 is giving/sharing. Refer to this tool to see passages that will show each in its proper context. When we know what the Word says, that is the best teacher. I highly recommend you read those passages.

Some things that need to be pointed out about this subject:

1. Before the law was given to Israel, Abraham "*gave him a tenth of everything*" (of the spoils) after returning from war, to Melchizedek but note as you read the account that he was not commanded by God to do so, he did it on his own.
2. Jacob made a vow to the Lord "*...of all that you give me I will give you a tenth*" again before the law was given and was under no command of God to do so.
3. After the law was given to Israel, God made tithing a part of that law as a command to those under that law for a specific purpose. Read the passages in no.19 tithing for purpose.
4. Jesus came and died on the cross, fulfilling the law and nailed it to the cross (*Colossians 2:13-14*) and established a new covenant that is under the grace of God, not the Mosaic Law. He ascended to the right hand of the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers and a "new creation," the body of Christ, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, is now to be gathered. At this point we need to now move into the Epistles *Romans* through *Jude* and *Acts* to see how this new creation is to operate under this new covenant of grace.
5. As you read the passages under no. 20, pay attention to the emphasis given; we are to consider our possessions not our own and share/give to the needs of the body as the needs arise. Also notice that not one single time in the Epistles is the body commanded to tithe. As a matter of fact the only time tithing is mentioned in the Epistles is in *Hebrews* where it is talking about Abraham and Israel, not the body.

Ask yourself a question: if we, as the body of Christ, are commanded to tithe, why are we not told to do so? Some teachers go back to the Old Testament and the accounts of Christ coming (*Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*) to make justification for their teaching and to Israel under the Mosaic Law where they were commanded to tithe, but we are not under the Mosaic covenant of law, but under the new covenant of grace. If you will notice as you read how Israel was to give, that their tithing consisted of more than money. They were to tithe all sorts of things: grain, animals, wine, etc. Can you imagine what would happen if a chicken farmer showed up on Sunday morning at the church with a truck load of chickens or a pig farmer with a trailer load of pigs or what about a person who makes wine showing up at a Baptist church with barrels of wine. That would be interesting wouldn't it?

This subject, like so many others when taken out of context, where we put people who are under a new covenant of grace, under a covenant of law, is tragically deceptive. The sad fact is that many churches today want MONEY so that they can continue to have a job and support the building and all of the programs they promote, all under the guise of their "mission," and putting the body under a command of law is a very effective way to accomplish this. We recognize that many teach this command of the law out of ignorance, because they just don't know how to "rightly divide" the Word of God, but there are others who do know the difference and do it intentionally. I would not want to be one of these men, facing the Lord, having intentionally deceived His Body for personal gain.

To conclude: if a member of the body today wants to tithe, is it ok for him to do so? Yes, **BUT**, do it with the **understanding that you are not under law nor commanded to do so**. You are not breaking a command where

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you can be condemned and if you miss a week, God is not going to zap you. You would not be sinning if you do tithe and you are not sinning if you don't. Your **gift** is pleasing to God when you give/share with the needs of the body as you "*decided in his heart to give*" (read *2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9*). Here we see that the Corinthians were giving to a specific need but notice the things said about how they were to give: "*privilege of sharing*" 8:4, "*grace of giving*" 8:7, "*Desire to do so*" 8:10, "*according to your means*", "*according to what one has, not according to what he does not have*" 8:11-13, "*decided in his heart to give*" 9:7, "*supplying the needs of God's people*" 9:12, "*generosity in sharing*" 9:13. Read both chapters, there is more. This is giving/sharing under grace, not tithing.

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Question: What does “rightly divide” mean and where did you get it?

This phrase is found in *2 Timothy 2:15* where it states, “*Study to shew thyself approved by God... rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*” King James Version.

This is translated from the Greek word “orthotomeo” which means to cut straight, to hold a straight course, to teach the truth directly and correctly, handle correctly or to dissect correctly. Different translators will use any of these phrases when translating this word depending on the translator. Get a good Greek dictionary if you don’t already have one and look it up; “*Vines*” is a good one.

The reason we use this phrase so much is because it is so important for the understanding of the Scriptures. Without “*rightly dividing*” the Word of God, one will find conflicts too numerous to mention, whereas, when it is “*rightly divided*” or “*correctly handled*” or “*taught directly and correctly*” there are no contradictions because then all is in the context in which it was given and the meaning very clear. It is interesting how people can read a book, magazine article, news paper article and even a very large novel and put every person, place and event in context of the story; but the Bible, even elders (pastors, teachers) will consistently take people under a covenant of grace and try to put them under a covenant of law. It makes me wonder if they have read *Galatians* or if they have the Spirit.

Let me give one example: in *Matthew 6:14-15*, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states “*For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*”

Now read *Ephesians chapter 1* and note *verse 7* which states, “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace...*” Wait a minute, in *Matthew* it says we have to forgive our brother and this says we have forgiveness through His blood. So which is it? Both are true but the first does not apply to the second. The statement of Jesus was given to Israel, under a covenant of law, in preparing them for entrance into the kingdom. At this time, their entrance or denial of entrance was based on their obedience to the law because “... *that will be our righteousness*” (*Deuteronomy 6:25*). Jesus came to Israel with an offer to bring the fifth kingdom of *Daniel 2:44* down to earth and set it up; they rejected the offer. The statement in *Ephesians* is given after Jesus died and rose to eternal life, where sin can now be forgiven/removed, to people under a covenant of grace.

This is a decisive and distinct “straight cutting” of the Scriptures, but, when this “*rightly dividing*” is not understood, the **plan** of God is not being considered and all is lumped together as one teaching and we wind up with a huge confused mess and 3000 plus so called “Christian” denominations. God’s Word is still the same Truth as when He gave it but most can’t understand it because we won’t put it into the proper context in which He gave it.

Consider conversations you have had with others where you say something, meaning something specific and the other person takes what you said completely out of context and comes back with a statement that is on the other side of the world as to what you were talking about. It should not be hard to see how many problems can result when statements are taken out of context and the Scriptures are not “*rightly divided.*” All of God’s Word is Truth but not all Scripture has application to all groups of people. God does not change, but as His plan advances through time, His requirements of repentance vary according to the message or gospel presented to Man and by events that have taken place (example: Christ’s death and resurrection) in any given period of time and this we need to recognize and understand. This is why to “*correctly handle*” (NIV translation) is so vitally important.

Under the Law of Moses, a parent was to bring a stubborn and rebellious son to the elders and they were to stone him to death. Yes, it says that, read *Deuteronomy 21:18-21*. Have you done that with your rebellious son? If my mother had followed the law, I would not be here today; would you? I doubt if anyone we know has done this either. Why? Because those who try to follow the Law of Moses pick and choose the things they like and omit the others. Example: many teach that we, as the body, are to tithe but do not observe the Sabbath (the Sabbath is Saturday, not Sunday) and they sure are not going to stone a rebellious son. This mixing of the covenants is misleading and deceptive and why we must “*rightly divide*” God’s Word if we are ever going to understand what it means to be “in Christ” under a covenant of grace. Refer to the Body of Christ under Grace tool in the toolbox.

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Today we are in between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks of Israel's prophetic time given to Daniel in *Daniel 9:24-27* when the body of Christ is being gathered; that's who we are: the body of Christ. We are not Noah before the flood, we are not Abraham before the Law of Moses was given, we are not the nation Israel, we are not the people on the earth during the 70<sup>th</sup> week (tribulation), and we are not at the judgments of *Matthew 24:45* through *25:46* and we don't go to the accounts of Jesus coming (*Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*) to see how to be saved or to see how to live without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; we go to the Epistles which were written for and to the body of Christ, us. This is "*rightly dividing*" the Word of God and why it is so important. Hope this helps.

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Question: Are you a dispensationalist? It seems like you are.

No, we are not dispensationalists but we do believe that God has a **plan** that He oversees to its fulfillment. We are born again, believers in the Lord Jesus the Christ who died for the sins of all mankind and believe that we are saved by grace through faith. In His plan of salvation for Mankind, God has steps (periods of time, age is the word Scripture uses) or phases if you will, of things that have to be completed before the next thing can happen. Example: before the flood, there was no Law of Moses but eight were saved from the flood and all others destroyed. Before the cross, sin was atoned for or covered over by animal sacrifice of blood for both Jew and Gentile. After the cross, sin can now be forgiven/removed by the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, where the blood of Jesus was what met God's requirement for removal of sin, not that of an animal. Read *Hebrews 9* and *10* for context. Israel was under a covenant of law where the Body is under a new covenant of grace. After the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Israel's prophetic time (tribulation) is completed, Jesus returns and sets up His 1000 year reign on the earth. For the student of the Scriptures, all of these things need to be recognized and understood.

The plan of God is to save all of Man who will trust and obey Him, and there are many details not mentioned here in this answer. If one can look at what I just pointed out and wants to look at us and say we are dispensationalists, there will be nothing I can do to change your mind but just consider that God has a plan and that plan has structure and order to it. This structure was designed by God, not man, and is very clearly outlined in His Word to mankind. These time periods or ages come with their own specific way to obey the command God gives to that group of people in that age.

For those who say that there were/are no ages, how do you explain Enoch or Noah? Christ had not come to the earth, there was no Law of Moses, there was no Israel and Christ had not died on the cross. So how can one say that he had to believe in Jesus to be saved? Wouldn't you agree that would be hard to do since they didn't know anything about Him dying on the cross? It is true that God told Satan, in *Genesis 3:3*, that there would be one who would "crush your head" and it is possible that God told man about One that would come, but we have no clear Scripture of this. To explain this, one will have to dismiss and distort a tremendous amount of Scripture and still not have an acceptable answer, but if you are really interested in the answer, refer to the paper in the toolbox titled Salvation where we have outlined salvation the way the plan of God lays it out from *Genesis* to *Revelation* and then decide for yourself.

There are teachers who are labeled "hyper dispensationalists" and these are the ones who distort the Scriptures with false teachings and give rise to many controversies, and rightly so, as they go way too far with regard to when the body was established and to whom some of the letters were written to and about, etc.

As with anything else, along with the Truth, there will also be those who distort it just enough so that believers, as well as the world, will be deceived and it is for you to study the Scriptures, put all into the proper context, and allow the Holy Spirit opportunity to lead you into all Truth.

Several years ago I called myself a dispensationalist but as I studied and grew in knowledge of the Scriptures, that idea along with other beliefs and traditions that I held, slowly yielded itself to the Truth. Today it is not even an issue to me because now I KNOW that God has a plan and that there are certain things that are to be accomplished in certain time periods as He directs certain things to happen within that time of the plan. So, if people want to label us as dispensationalists, that's fine but what we really are is: believers in Jesus the Christ who believe God has a plan that He will see to its end and will save all men who turn to and believe Him for salvation.

I hope this answered your question. Grace be with you as we, the body, all grow together.

Question: I was saved recently and not really sure what God wants me to do. How do I know what God's will is for my life?

That's great, welcome to the body of Christ and that is a very appropriate question for a new believer because that is exactly what you should do: seek and understand God's will as one of His children. So many times what we see in assemblies is that new believers are told that they have "joined" that particular church, placed in some sort of new believer's class and "put to work" doing some task within the scope of that church's "mission" and told that their

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“journey” has now begun. Sound familiar? The question you have asked is a very important one because for so many believers this is what we see is given to them as God’s will; but is it?

Let’s look at the statement above and analyze what was said:

- 1) Joined the church - Upon our belief in Jesus the Christ for our salvation we become members of the body of Christ, not members of any particular congregation or assembly. The practice of making a member of the body “join” a congregation is unfounded in the Scriptures, as it is a tradition of man. You or I, as a member of the body, should be able to travel to any congregation anywhere and be accepted as a brother in Christ. If we choose to stay and worship collectively with that group, there is no requirement in the Scriptures of anything we should do to be a member there, as we are already members of the body, except abide under the leadership of the elders where we should be able to grow and mature in Christ - this is God’s will. Some churches require a letter of recommendation from our previous church, which sounds like a good idea, but if we are saved, the Spirit of God lives in us producing good works which will be recognized by others of the same, and the acceptance should be based on that, not a letter from some unknown person.
- 2) Put to work - When we are saved, God places His Spirit within each one of us and He dwells with us every second of our life. He also gives each one of us a spiritual gift that He can now use to produce righteous works. This gift doesn’t necessarily correspond with what we do for a living or something we are good at. It is a spiritual gift that God uses for His purpose. Example: a school teacher is saved and is “put to work” teaching a class of believers just because their profession is teaching. This new born babe in the faith is an infant needing milk and not yet able to understand the deep truths of the faith, consequently there is no doubt that many false teachings would come from this effort of putting someone to work. Yes, it is true, we should work within the will of God, allowing Him to work through us the gift He supplied and let Him produce the righteous works of His “...good purpose...” How do we know what that gift is? Diligent study of the Scriptures, prayer and desire will slowly reveal God’s will for your life. For an elder to put a believer in a position of work just so they will “feel” like they have something to do, have a responsibility, be accountable or important enough to want to stay there, is a tragic error which more times than not only produces frustration, not growth and maturity in Christ.
- 3) New believer’s class - Nothing wrong with this **IF** what they are being taught is in fact sound doctrine being rightly divided. But, if what is being taught is church doctrines, how to be a member of that congregation or anything manmade (traditions, customs, etc.), they are being misled and no one should be part of that.
- 4) Journey - for those who have placed their trust in Christ and been saved, we are reborn (born again) into the kingdom where we now become heavenly citizens, given God’s Spirit and the gift of eternal life. God then gives us a spiritual gift that He uses to do righteous works and we work within that gift, in Christ, as we wait for the redemption of our bodies. This is the life of a believer and **there is no “journey”** that we embark upon. We are already heavenly citizens and need to do nothing to get there. Of course we are to work, as already stated, but these works are what we allow the Father to do through us as one of His children and this is for His “...good purpose...” (*Philippians 2:12-13*).

Now that we have pointed out some erroneous practices, let’s look at what God says that His will is for His children. If you will read the following passages you can then determine what His will actually is. Remember this is not an exhaustive list and you will find more as you study for yourself.

List passages of God’s will here

Question: If we are under a new covenant of grace, what happened to Israel? Aren’t they still God’s chosen people and can they be saved today? Should we give the gospel to a Jewish person?

Note: these are separate, individual questions put together and will be addressed as one question.

These are common questions that we have heard multiple times before from people who really want to know. It is unfortunate that so many times and at so many places the answer is confused because of the mixing of the “Gospels” and the Epistles. If one does not “rightly divide” and put people, places, things said and events in the proper context, the answer normally becomes as muddy as a freshly visited hog wallow. So let’s put it in context and see if we can come up with the clearest answer possible, as we never want anyone misled or deceived. This will take some reading

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on your part, so if you really want to know, take the time to read the passages and do not only believe what we say but check the Scriptures for yourself.

When reading the Old Testament it will be abundantly clear that Israel was a chosen people. Here are some ways Israel was described by the Scriptures: chosen, elect, apple of God's eye, God's wife, God's inheritance.....

We already know that Jesus came to Israel with a message that announced the birth of the kingdom (fifth kingdom of *Daniel 2:44*) but was rejected as prophesied and God placed Him on a cross to pay for the sins of all mankind. Now, think about this: God sent their Messiah to take Israel into their promised, prophesied kingdom on earth that they were waiting for and they did not want (reject) not only the Messiah but also God's offer of entrance into the kingdom. So what did God do? He caused the Romans to come into Jerusalem and destroy much of the city, destroy the temple, kill an estimated 1,000,000 Jews, with most of the remaining fleeing into the nations for fear of their lives where they remain to this day.