

# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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## IMPLICATIONS OF INSPIRATION

By Andrew Dow

Paul encouraged Timothy to remember Scripture when faced with godless opponents (2 Tim 3:13–14). These Scriptures are worth remembering because they are **“inspired by God”** (2 Tim 3:16). That is to say, they are the words of God. How will this help Timothy overcome his godless opponents? Inspiration comes with implications:

**Inspired Scriptures are Profitable for Teaching.** The books of the Old and New Testaments are not mere historical records or outdated law codes. They teach us about God, man, and how they relate.

**Inspired Scriptures Reprove and Correct.** By these words we can know where humanity has erred and how to fix the problem. We learn about sin and Jesus’s sacrificial death.

**Inspired Scriptures Train in Righteousness.** They do much more than condemn and correct our errors. The Word of God also trains us to be righteous—like God.

Ultimately, inspired Scriptures are given **“so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”** (2 Tim 3:17). When allowed to permeate our hearts and minds, the Bible makes us what God wants us to be. So, when **“difficult times come”** (2 Tim 3:1), turn to the inspired words of God for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

## BIBLE COMMENTARIES: HOW TO USE THEM?

By Andrew Dow

Reading a Bible commentary is not much different than sitting down for a one-on-one Bible study with the author. As a result, commentaries can enhance our personal Bible studies. However, as noted in a previous article, not all commentaries are created equal. While we can gain valuable insight from a variety of commentaries, we must be careful to know the background, date, purpose, and intended audience of each commentary we consult.

Selecting commentaries is only part of our job. We must make sure that we are using them properly. Many people are led astray by commentaries because they simply misuse them. Misusing a commentary looks something like this: *you wonder what a verse means so you go read a commentary by trusted-brother-so-and-so or renowned-scholar-such-and-such. They sound like they know what they're talking about, so you accept their views and plug them into your class notes, sermon, or personal studies.* This is NOT the right way to use commentaries. Let me offer some tips for properly using commentaries.

**First, always start with the Biblical text.** If, for instance, you want to understand the parable of prodigal son, begin by reading (and rereading) Luke 15 and the surrounding context. This is the first step. Before consulting a commentary (or reading articles or listening to sermons) sit down and read the text. Make observations and jot down what you see. I am amazed by how many people say they could never understand the Bible only to find out that they have never read the Bible. You will never understand Scripture until you spend time trying to understand it.

**Second, use the commentaries' introductions to help you understand important backgrounded material.** The introduction is often the most helpful part of a commentary. A good Bible commentary will address who the author of the book was, for whom it was written, when it was written, and a number of other pertinent background issues. For instance, if you are studying 1 Corinthians 8–9 it is helpful to know about the long history and strong influence of idol worship in Corinth. Finding background material in commentaries, however, should never precede or supersede the first step: reading and observing the text.

**Third, make up your own mind about what the text means.** Having spent a great deal of time observing the text and learning about important background material, you will be ready to start drawing some conclusions. This is the fun part of Bible study. You determine what the text means and make application to your life. Notice, however, that you should draw your own conclusions before you consult a commentator's conclusions.

**Finally, consult several commentaries to check your conclusions.** This should happen AFTER you have spent time reading the text and drawing your own conclusions. You should check to see if commentators agree with your conclusions. If they agree with your conclusions, then you are probably on the right track. If, on the other hand, they disagree, find out why (*e.g.*, maybe they noticed something that you overlooked, or maybe you find that they have overlooked something that you saw). This is one reason it is best to consult *several* commentaries: one may point out something another missed (cf. Prov 27:17).

**Conclusion:** Commentaries should not be used as a replacement for bible study. In other words, do not presume that if you have read a commentary (or two) that you have studied the bible. Read the Bible for yourself and draw your own conclusions before consulting any commentaries. Commentaries are valuable tools from which to learn background material and against which to check your work. Misusing commentaries may lead to erroneous conclusions. When used appropriately, however, commentaries can enrich our Bible studies.

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	<b>LISTENING TO GOD</b> <b>(LESSONS BY BOB PULLIAM)</b>	
	Sun. 9:30am	Why Is This Subject Important?
	Sun. 10:30am	Filters Aren't Always Good
	Sun. 6:00pm	Is Scripture Necessary?
	Mon. 7:00pm	Establishing Authority
	Tue. 7:00pm	Applications to the Church
	Wed. 7:00pm	Personal Applications

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”**  
**(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**