



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N37 September 15, 2024

## PEOPLE GET READY

“What to Do with Bones in the Bible”

2 Peter 3:15-16

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Bible Study

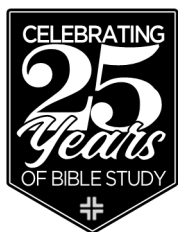
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

*“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:12



How do ignorant and unstable people interpret the Bible?



Since evangelical Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, when it comes to Bible reading, they believe the goal of biblical interpretation is to recognize the author's intended meaning expressed in the words of the biblical text. And given the doctrine of inspiration, the author of the text is the human author, who is “carried along” by the divine Author, the Holy Spirit (1Pe 1:21). This means the goal of biblical interpretation, the goal of Bible study, is to recognize the Author's/author's intended meaning expressed in the words of the text. Peter warns against *false teachers* who, contrary to the Author's/author's intended meaning, would twist the words of Scripture to mean whatever they want them to mean (2Pe 3:16) – namely, to justify their errant eschatology and aberrant libertinism (cf. 2Pe 2:1-3, 10b-19; 3:4; 2). (Luther lamented teachers in his day who treated Scripture like a “wax nose” that they could twist any which way they wished.) Referring to Paul's letters, Peter writes about teachers of the same ilk: “His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16).

How then is the Author's/author's intended meaning recognized – what's the process? On the one hand, it's an intuitive process. Readers intuitively recognize the meaning of what they read without being conscious of the reading process. They intuitively recognize the meaning of lower-level reading like ordinary emails, news articles, novels, etc. They intuitively recognize what they are about (their *subject*) and what they state about what they are about (their *comment*). On the other hand, it's also a *deliberate*

*process*. Readers deliberately follow a process to recognize the meaning of upper level reading like contracts, textbooks, serious literature, etc. (cf. Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed. [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972]).

When it comes to Bible reading, Dr. Elliott Johnson calls the *deliberate* process *active reading*. He writes, “Active reading is a process of thinking, questioning, formulating, and reconsidering that leads to a dawning awareness of the sense of the whole text that fits all the parts of it” (*Expository Hermeneutics*, 81). The process begins by positing the general sense of the “whole text” and then proceeds to fit the meaning of its various parts into it. Working back and forth from the whole to make sense of the parts and from the parts to make sense of the whole, the reader settles on the specific meaning of the whole text that accommodates all of the parts. It *dawns* on them.

Think of the process this way. The process of interpretation is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. Knowing that the puzzle pictures a clown, or a landscape (i.e., the whole meaning of the puzzle) would suggest how the individual pieces fit together. If one didn't know which one the puzzle pictured, how the individual pieces fit together would suggest either the one or the other. At first, one might think the puzzle pictured a clown, but then after recognizing that the pieces didn't fit that initial “interpretation,” recognize that it pictured a landscape. Initial “interpretations” are generally not quite right and must be amended in light of an *active reading* of the text. Identifying what the text “means to me” is not the goal of biblical interpretation.

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Read 2 Peter 3:15-16

15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

### Read in another translation

15 And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him –  
16 speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction. (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "salvation" in v. 15.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 15.
- Circle "wrote you" in v. 15.
- Underline "all his letters" in v. 16.
- Circle "these matters" in v. 16.
- Circle "hard" in v. 16.
- Bracket "ignorant and unstable" in v. 16.
- Circle "distort" in v. 16.
- Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 16.
- Double underline "other Scriptures" in v. 16.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. We have no New Testament letter of Paul addressed to Peter's readers. So how are we to understand Peter's reference to a letter from Paul written to them?
  2. Peter writes that "our Lord's patience means *salvation*." How so?
  3. Peter calls Paul "our dear brother" (v. 15). I thought Peter and Paul didn't get along (Gal 2:11-14). Explain.
  4. Peter refers to "all his letters" (v. 16), that is, Paul's letters. Does this mean 2 Peter was written after Paul had written all of his thirteen letters? Explain.
  5. To what does "these matters" (v. 16) refer?
  6. Describe your reaction to Peter's observation that Paul's letters contain things "that are hard to understand."
  7. What makes such passages hard for *you* to understand?
  8. How do "ignorant and unstable people" deal with these hard to understand passages?
  9. How are the false teachers whom Peter condemns (2:10b-19; 3:3-7) using these Pauline passages?
  10. **Discussion:** Talk about your takeaways from these verses.
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### Commentary On The Text

In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter appeals to the writings of Paul to confirm what he had just told his readers in verses 14 and 15a. In verse 14 he told them to “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” as they look forward to the coming of “the day of God” (v. 12) and to recognize that “the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise . . . Instead he is patient with *you* not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (v. 9). By implication, “the Lord’s patience means *salvation*” (v. 15) — not only *justification* for the sinner but also *sanctification* for the saint (cf. “you,” v. 9).

Peter’s appeal to Paul takes the form of a “just as” statement: “just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you” (v. 15b). Who knew that Peter’s readers had received a letter from Paul? While the New Testament contains no letter from Paul among his thirteen epistles addressed to the readers of 2 Peter, some speculate that they likely had a copy of his letter to the Romans (cf. Ro 2:4), perhaps because it was a circular letter, or because copies of letters addressed to one church were often passed on to other churches. What’s more, Peter’s point is quite general, namely, that Christians need to live holy lives in light of the coming day of the Lord, a theme woven throughout all of Paul’s letters. About Paul, Peter notes: “he writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of *these matters*,” namely, living godly lives in light of future events.

Having appealed to the writings of Paul, Peter continues by noting that Paul’s “letters contain some things that are hard to understand,” an understatement for sure — which ironically, applies to Peter’s letters as well, which also contain some puzzling passages (cf. 1Pe 3:18-22; 2Pe 2:20-22). The *obscure* passages in Paul provide “ignorant and unstable people” an opportunity to *distort* or to *twist* their meanings to suit a personal agenda.

Human communication, whether spoken or written, is always subject to misunderstanding. Now to “misunderstand” implies that a correct or proper understanding exists, as well as incorrect or improper misunderstandings. But what is the correct or proper understanding — how is it to be defined? Well, when it comes to written communication — like the Bible — some argue that texts mean whatever readers construe them to mean, others that texts mean what they mean independent of their authors and readers, and still others argue that texts mean what their authors intend them to mean — and since readers can’t

read authors’ minds, that texts mean what their authors intend them to mean as expressed in the words of the text.

Biblical texts mean what their authors intended them to mean and not what any individual reader might understand them to mean. If they did, a text would have as many different meanings as it had different readers and could never be misunderstood. Such a view makes the meaning of the text subject to the reader, rather than making the reader subject to the meaning of the text. And makes the text the word of the interpreter rather than the word of God. Recognizing what a text “means to me” is *not* the goal of biblical interpretation.

The false teachers about whom Peter writes are Scripture twisters. One commentator explains: “Peter probably is alluding to Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith which was, we know, twisted by the unscrupulous to mean that once justified a man could do what he like with impunity. Indeed, the more he sinned the better, for it afforded a greater opportunity for the grace of God to be displayed (Rom. 3:5-8; 6:1). Paul’s insistence that the Christian is free from legal rules (Rom. 8:1-2; 7:4; Gal. 3:10) was twisted to mean that he condoned license. One can almost hear his own libertarian war-cries being quoted back at him in 1 Corinthians 6:12, ‘Everything is permissible for me’ and in Galatians 5:13, ‘You, my brothers, were called to be free’. Such was the cry of the false teachers (2:19)” (Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, TNTC, 160).

In his rebuke of the false teachers’ hermeneutics, Peter notes that they not only distort the meaning of Paul’s letters but also “the other Scriptures” (v. 16). On the significance of Peter’s comment, one writer notes: “The inclusion of Paul’s letters in this category certainly means they are regarded as inspired, authoritative writings (as v 15 in fact says), ranked alongside the OT and probably various other books, including other apostolic writings” (Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 50, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 333). Playing fast and loose with the Scriptures inevitably leads to one’s “own destruction,” that is one’s own spiritual demise.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 15 *salvation* “He is patient with you” (v. 9), referring to Peter’s readers, suggests that “salvation” be understood in broad terms to include *justification* and *sanctification*. “While God is waiting, He is both giving time for the unbeliever to be saved, and for the believer to be working out his salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13) in terms of progress in sanctification” (David H. Wheaton, “2 Peter,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, Rev., 3rd ed., 1258).

v. 15 *just as* “The connection ‘just as’ indicates that Paul wrote to the readers the same thing that Peter has just said in verses 14-15a. But the point he has made is very general—Christians need to live holy lives in light of the coming of Christ—and Paul touches on this subject in virtually every letter he wrote” (Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter and Jude*, 210).

v. 15 *wrote you* Some speculate that Peter’s readers received a copy of Paul’s letter to the Romans and that Peter is alluding to Romans 2:4, “God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance” (see Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, TNTC, 158). “At an early stage copies of letters in the NT were shared by churches other than those to whom they were first addressed . . . Peter could be referring to our letter to the Romans (2:4), 1 Thessalonians (chs. 4 and 5), 2 Thessalonians (ch. 2), Ephesians (1:14; 2:7; 3:9-11), Colossians (1:20), or possibly to some other correspondence that has not survived” (Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, NIBC, 222, 223).

v. 16 *all his letters* “Critics of the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter think that the reference to ‘all’ Paul’s letters requires a date in the late first or early second century, when Paul’s letters had been gathered together. But these critics are guilty once again of an over-interpretation. Peter says no more than that Paul wrote in the same way in all the letters *that Peter has seen*. The language does not imply that all of Paul’s letters had been written or that they had been put together into a corpus” (Moo, 159).

v. 16 *these matters* “‘These things’ probably refers generally to future events (cf. vv. 11, 14) and the importance of Christians living godly lives in view of them (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12) . . . If Peter wrote this epistle in A.D. 67 or 68, it is possible that he could have read every one of Paul’s 13 inspired epistles” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 Peter,” 2024 ed., 76, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2peter.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2peter.pdf)).

v. 16 *hard* “It is comforting to think that Peter, too, found Paul’s letters *hard to understand*, i.e. ‘obscure’, or ‘ambiguous’. *Dusnoētos* is a rare word, with a nuance of ambiguity about it. It was applied in antiquity to oracles, whose pronouncements were notoriously capable of more than one interpretation” (Green 159). “The difficulty in Paul’s letters stems from the profundity of the God-given wisdom they contain” (Edwin A. Blum, “2 Peter,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, 288).

v. 16 *ignorant and unstable* “**Ignorant** (*amathēs*): In the NT only here, *amathēs* means uninstructed, unlearned” —in the teaching of the apostles—“unscholarly. Such men were probably making their calamitous errors by tearing proof-texts out of context to fit their own ideas . . . **Unstable** (*astēriktos*): again, in the NT, only in 2 Pet.; lit. ‘without a staff, unsupported.’ This rare term is used by Peter to describe the unqualified teachers who disastrously misinterpret Paul’s writings. Earlier Peter applied the word to the Christian beginner who falls an easy prey to false teaching (2:14)” (Hillyer, 223-24).

v. 16 *distort* Cf. “twist” (ESV); “explain falsely” (GNT). “**Distort** (*stredloun*): occurring in the NT only here, *stredloun* means ‘to twist, torture, dislocate the limbs on the rack,’ a singularly vivid term to describe their perversion of Scripture” (Hillyer, 224). In other words, the false teachers take Paul’s statements and twist and torture them, like victims on the rack, to force them to say what they want them to say. “Almost certainly he is referring to the false teachers whom he has been rebuking throughout the letter. He uses the same word of them in 2:14 (‘unstable,’ *asteriktos*) as he uses here. What Peter suggests, then, is that these false teachers are ‘twisting’ Paul’s own writings as support for their heresies. Peter may be thinking of their faulty eschatology. But he is more likely thinking of their lawless and licentious conduct, which he castigates in chapter 2” (Moo, 212).

v. 16 *other Scriptures* “The word ‘other’ (*loiipos*) shows that Peter considers the letters of Paul to belong to the category of ‘Scripture’” (Moo, 212). “The inclusion of Paul’s letters in this category certainly means they are regarded as inspired, authoritative writings (as v 15 in fact says), ranked alongside the OT and probably various other books, including other apostolic writings” (Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 50, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 333).



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Live a godly life in light of the coming of the day of God  
just as Peter and Paul write in their epistles.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

Good things come to those who wait. Try telling that to a toddler or tween or, for that matter, any adult who waits at carpool pick up (aka the “gauntlet of pain”) or for seven-to-ten-day shipping. We’re an instant gratification society and I’m fully prepared to admit I live right in the center of that world. I want it and I want it now. Not only do I want what I want instantly, waiting makes my life more challenging and I only like things to be easy, so that’s a problem. Whether you’re two or 12 or 52, it’s hard to see the good in waiting. The challenges of this life cause us to fervently pray with impatience for the Lord’s return. I was thinking the other day about this passage (2 Peter 3:15-16), which says “our Lord’s patience means salvation.” Though I’m sure many around the world have prayed for that mighty trumpet blow signaling Jesus’ return, what if that happened the day before you or I experienced salvation? How would you feel about the Lord’s patience then? Have your kids trusted in the Lord? Do you want Him to wait on their salvation? Can you continue living life on this side of heaven patiently waiting on the Lord as He works in the life of your child, best friend or father? Listen, this life can be hard. With car wrecks and cancer and combat between nations, I just want Jesus to come right now. But, if it means that one person that I’ve been praying for over the years will come to salvation, I’ll wait. God’s timing is always right. We’re praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Peter 3:15-16

1. What does the Lord’s patience mean?
2. Where did Paul’s wisdom come from?
3. What will some people do when they don’t understand Paul’s writing?

### What Do You Think?

How can God’s patience mean our salvation?

### What Do You Do?

Imagine a world where there is no measure of time. Would you go fast forward to a certain age or rewind to the past? Why?

## CORE COMPETENCY: Bible Study

I read the Bible to know who God is and what he wants from my life.

## MEMORY VERSE: Romans 5:3-4

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*

## KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week’s verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.