

REVISED EDITION

KNOWING

SCRIPTURE

R. C. SPROUL

*Foreword by* J. I. PACKER

  
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## Preface

Recent years have seen a renewal of interest in the Scriptures. Since neo-orthodox theology called the church back to a serious study of the content of the Bible, there has been more concern in the life of the church for understanding and applying its message to our generation. Along with this new interest, however, has come confusion; there has been little agreement among Christian scholars concerning the rudimentary principles of biblical interpretation. This confusion in the scholarly world has made an impact on the life of the whole church.

Our day seems to be the age of “lay renewal.” Much of this renewal is associated with home Bible studies and small group fellowships. Many people now gather to discuss, debate and comment on the Scripture for themselves. Often they find themselves disagreeing about what the Bible means or how it should be applied. This has had unfortunate consequences.

For many, the Bible remains an enigma capable of vastly different interpretations. Some have even despaired of their own ability to make sense of it. To others the Bible has a nose of wax capable of being shaped into conformity with the vested interests of the

reader. Too often the conclusion seems to be, “You can quote the Bible to prove anything.”

Is there any way out of this confusion? Can serious readers find any principles to guide them through the conflicting viewpoints they hear from all sides? These are some of the questions that this book is designed to deal with.

Although many of the issues have a scholarly dimension, I have not been motivated by a desire to enter the academic debate concerning the science of hermeneutics. Rather my prime motivation is to offer basic, “common sense” guidelines to help serious readers study sacred Scripture profitably. In line with the Bible’s own view of itself, the book seeks to emphasize the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Because of this, I have attempted to provide rules of interpretation that will serve as a check and balance for our all-too-common tendency to interpret the Bible according to our own prejudices. The book closes with a survey of various tools that are available to help either beginners or more advanced students of the Bible. Above all, I would like this to be a practical book that will give assistance to lay people. Indeed, I have a fond hope that Christians will continue their study of the Scripture and continue the contributions they are making in the church. May this book be an encouragement to persevere with joy as well as understanding.

I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people who assisted me in this project, among them Prof. David Wells, whose advice has been invaluable in correcting the manuscript.

*R. C. Sproul*