

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF WORDS AND ARGUING THEIR MEANING

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There are many useful methods one can practice to better understand his Bible. The Bible speaks on nearly every subject and reveals to us the mind of God and his will for his creatures. The Bible has milk and meat. It has things simple to understand (God's commandments) and some things hard to understand. A good steward will "study to shew himself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth." Here are a few practical things one can do to better understand any passage:

- 1 Read without distractions (good focus).
- 2 Read prayerfully. Seek Holy Ghost illumination. Confess your sin and willingness to be taught by God. Desire the sincere milk of the word.
- 3 Read slowly.
- 4 Read repeatedly.
- 5 Meditate on the passage. Think.
- 6 Read the context. Ask, who, what, where, when, and why.
- 7 Understand all the words as best you can.
- 8 Compare parallel readings – comparing things spiritual with spiritual.
- 9 Compare passages with the same words.
- 10 Refer to helps knowing their fallability.
- 11 Give God time as you continue to think on these things.
- 12 Try to not "put God into a box," that is, have preconceived ideas about God that have not been already proved by the Bible. Be open to being corrected or have your notions adjusted. Allow God to supply the conclusions. This is done by having a good and honest heart. Beware of pride. Your purpose in study should not be to prove your opinion right if indeed it is wrong. Be willing to be corrected.
- 13 Be faithful to the precepts (first and foremost commandments).
- 14 Receive the light as God supplies it. Be willing "to do" what he has shown you.
- 15 Purpose of study is to have better doctrine and know God better.
- 16 Beware of your emphasis. Try to have the same emphasis God has.

Know and understand the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning and study. An inductive argument seeks to prove or disprove an assertion. State a proposition and seek to prove or disprove it.

A deductive argument has three stages

- Premise (assuming, since, because...)
- Inference (therefore, implies that...)
- Conclusion (it is affirmed...)

Beware and identify fallacies in your argument. For a brief list of common fallacies found when deducing an argument (especially helpful when studying the Bible study) note the following:

Accent

Sometimes the meaning of a statement can be shifted by a word's accent or emphasis.

In the *BEGINNING* God created. In the beginning *GOD* created. In the beginning God *CREATED*. These accents can be hard to discern. Consider the variable:

Train up a child in **THE WAY** he should go....

Train up a child in the way **HE** should go....

Train up a child in the way **HE SHOULD GO**....

Assuming something is true because the accent appeals to you.

Ad hoc

Identify the difference between argument and explanation.

Is God who he is because he a Creator?

Assuming something is true because of the explanation.

Affirmation of the consequent

Since God orderly created heaven and earth, must all be orderly?

Assuming something is true because it sounds likely.

Denial of the consequent

Since I did not see God create, it cannot be true.

Assuming something is not true because you can't understand it.

Anecdotal evidence

An illustration does not prove the point. It can add light, but not necessarily does it make it true. David danced with all his might. Does that mean we do it? Judas hanged himself after he repented – who would assert we should follow his example.

Argumentum ad antiquitatem

Assuming something is true because it is old.

Argumentum ad novitatem

Assuming something is true because it is new.

Argumentum ad baculum (Appeal to force or fear)

You better accept it as true, or else....

Argumentum ad crumenam

Assuming something is true because it has profit.

Argumentum ad Lazarum

Assuming something is true because it has no profit.

Argumentum ad hominem (Abusive: attacking the person)

Assuming something is false because of the person. Balaam prophesied as a false prophet (for profit); but was his prophecy wrong?

Argumentum ad ignorantiam (Argument from ignorance)

Assuming something is true because it has not been proved false.
Assuming something is false because it has not been proved true.

Argumentum ad logicam

Assuming the conclusion is false because of a fallacy as to how it was arrived at. One can contend that Jesus walked on water because of some odd reason. The reason may be fallacious, but it does not disprove the conclusion.

Argumentum ad misericordiam (Appeal to pity; Special pleading)

Assuming something is true because of the suffering associated with it.

Argumentum ad nauseam

Assuming something is true because of constant repetition.

Argumentum ad numerum

Assuming something is true because of the majority opinion.

Argumentum ad populum (Appeal to the people or gallery)

Assuming something is true because you have supporters.

Argumentum ad verecundiam (Appeal to authority)

Assuming something is true because of who agrees.
John 7:48: Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

Audiatur et altera pars

Assuming something is true without stated assumptions.

Bifurcation

Assuming something is true because you think in “Either-Or” extremes. The “baptism” Jesus spoke of before the crucifixion must be that of the Holy Ghost, because it cannot water baptism.

Circulus in demonstrando

Circular arguments: The Bible is God’s word because God said it is.
Assuming something is true because you assume something is true.

Complex question or Fallacy of interrogation or Fallacy of presupposition

Begging the question or a loaded question.
Have you stopped beating your wife?
Assuming something is true because of the way the proposition or question is phrased.

Composition

Man is simply an animal because they are made of the same composition.
Assuming something is true because each element of the composition is true. God exists. Things that exist are created. God is Creator. God created God.

Converse accident or Hasty generalization

All men are liars, so if someone lied, it must have been a man.
Assuming something is true because generally it is true.

Cum hoc ergo propter hoc

Because two events occurred at the same time, they must be related.
Jesus was crucified with two thieves. Jesus must have been in league with them,

Post hoc ergo propter hoc

...or they caused his crucifixion.

Dicto simpliciter or Fallacy of accident or Sweeping generalization

Because the Corinthians Christians were carnal, therefore all Corinthian Christians are carnal.

Division

You are from Corinth, so you must be carnal.

Equivocation or Fallacy of four terms (Quaternio Terminorum)

My work is a ministry so I need to be supported.

Avoid words with many meanings.

Avoid introducing a fourth term to a syllogism (requires only three)

All fish live in the water

A trout is a fish

A trout lives in the water

Verses:

All fish live in the sea

A trout is a fish

A trout has fins

Extended analogy

Using types to prove a truth.

Assuming something is true because an analogy make is sound correct.

Ignoratio elenchi or Irrelevant conclusion

Assuming something is true because people like it.

Assuming something is true because it is in the Bible

Natural Law fallacy or Appeal to Nature

Sodomy is wrong because it is unnatural.

No spiritual Christian uses anything other than a KJV.

Assuming something is true based on some unproved rule or natural law.

Non causa pro causa

God blessed the midwives because they lied.

This is known as a false cause fallacy. Two specific forms of non causa pro causa fallacy are the cum hoc ergo propter hoc and post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacies.

Assuming something is true because of related elements. A cock crows at sunrise, but the cock did not cause the sun to rise.

Non sequitur

Because Paul was a Pharisee he hated sinners.

Assuming something is true when the reason does not follow logically.

Plurium interrogationum or Many questions

Demanding a simple (yes or no) answer to a complex question.

Red herring

Introducing irrelevant material to an argument to distract from the core question.

Reification / Hypostatization

Treating an abstract as a concrete thing.

Because I cannot see God he does not exist.

Hold fast that which is good. Since good is not a concrete thing, one does not "hold" it literally. To make one "hold it" literally, one would have to reify "good" to make it a concrete thing.

Slippery slope argument

If we believe God made a perfect Bible in English, we are obligated to believe God does the same in every language.

Straw man

Misrepresenting the proposition so you can defeat it easily.

Tu quoque

This is the famous "you too" fallacy. I can do it because you did it – what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Undistributed Middle or "A is based on B" fallacies

Defining a parable in details, or you do not define how two things are similar.

God has human attributes, so God must be human.