

Understanding Essentials – Fundamental Building Blocks of Faith

By Jeanne Alley

A seven-week study in the
Understanding the Bible series

...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...(I Peter 3:15)

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Welcome

Most Western-thinkers, in particular those raised in the United States, come into certain understandings of the Scriptures based on pre-conceived notions; notions that arise from cultural upbringing or native language influences. The biggest challenge one has in understanding the God-breathed Word is that of gathering information by *pulling out* of the Scriptures that which was *written into* the Scriptures, all the while understanding that the Supreme Author, the Holy Spirit, moved those men of old to pen the words as they did.

The original Scriptures were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; the English translations we have today are just that – man’s translations of one language into another. During this process many words have gotten mistranslated and many times the definitions of the words (such as we find in a lexicon) reflect these misinterpretations. In other words, the translations and definitions *are not God-breathed and thereby are not infallible*. That is why it is so important to view the Scriptures both *as a whole* and *within context*, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. The Spirit, in His perfection, brought all the individual books and letters together into one Big Book; therefore, spiritual concepts *must remain constant* throughout.

The following study will show *scripturally* that some of the most fundamental Christian doctrines are largely misunderstood today and such misunderstandings are usually based on faulty translations and too narrow a view of the Scriptures. There are four main concepts that fit this category: time and eternity, life and death, salvation and destruction, and heaven and hell. Each one will be dealt with separately.

This study is designed to stretch your thinking, to get you to think in large, comprehensive pictures and concepts rather than just in smaller strokes and details. The details of God’s Word are indeed essential, but it is necessary to build an overall view of God’s revelation concerning His plans and purposes *first*; once this is done, the smaller pieces can be more readily understood. My desire in bringing you this study is to get you to think critically, comprehensively, and to *ask questions*.

So I encourage you to study thoroughly each and every day and be sure to set aside ample time to get into the Scriptures. Even though this study is presented in the form of weekly Lessons, some material may run longer than what you are used to from other studies in the series. And because of that you may very well find that one day’s study time takes two days, and one week’s Lesson takes two weeks to get through. I highly recommend that you try not to be on a schedule! And if you are doing this study in a group setting, perhaps it would be most beneficial for the leader to take the time to read through each page as a group – after everyone has done their homework, of course. This would undoubtedly take more than seven weeks.

I would also like to mention that it would be most advantageous to you to answer each question with as much direct quoting from the Scriptures as possible. I will usually ask several questions pertaining to certain verses and passages, and perhaps even mention a specific verse that gives the answer to the question I ask. Please answer the questions using the language of Scripture, if possible. I will also ask comprehensive questions that require you to put some concepts into your own words; if so, I will specifically ask this. To put it simply, please make sure that all of your answers are from God’s Word.

You will most probably find at different points in this study that my explanations fall short. If (when) this happens I encourage you to find the mentioned Scriptures yourself and read as much context as you can. In some cases this may take you in a different direction than you had thought, but *go where the Spirit leads you*. Try not to be mechanical in your study time, or rushed or anxious. Relax, pray each and every day, and allow God to teach you *His way*. It will be an abundant blessing in the end.

I pray that your eyes and ears are wide open and that you listen to the Spirit within you. Study well.

Jeanne Alley

