

Plain Common Sense

... basic ability to perceive, understand, and judge things common to nearly all people without need for debate

When the Scripture makes plain common sense, do not seek some hidden deep mystical sense.

The Bible was written originally for the common everyday person without the need of an interpreter, translator, decoder, decipherer, teacher, tester, proctor, mystic, prophet, priest or king.

The First Five Books of the Old Testament

Genesis Leviticus

By the end of the second year in the wilderness, as the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai, Moses had engraved the first two books of the Bible. At that time, the Israelites understood every word in those books.

Exodus Numbers Deuteronomy

At the end of the 40th year in the wilderness, Moses and Joshua had completed the engraving of the third, fourth and fifth books. Because the Israelites had lived through the history included in those books, they all understood the meaning of every word.

The first five books made plain sense to every Israelite leaving Egypt and entering the Promised Land. Nothing was mysterious, secret, hidden, false, disputed, rejected, embellished or debated.

The multitudes of Israelite souls who left Egypt may not have liked everything that happened to them but the history from creation to the exodus was accurate. The multitude of Israelite souls who prepared to enter the Promised Land may not have liked what occurred in the wilderness, but the books were accurate in every detail.

The Rest of the Old Testament

For the rest of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament, the story is the same, an accurate, infallible record of Israelite history.

Moreover, as false teachers arose among the people, the Old Testament records their presence, errors and punishment. (See Jeremiah Chapter 28 for example.)

Why did the Old Testament make plain common sense to the Israelites?

It recorded their

history	language	worship	music
poetry	prose	struggles	sins
punishment	victories	defeats	future
hopes	dreams	rulers	elders
geography	enemies	rewards	Messiah

- in short, it was their culture!

But most of all, the Old Testament was written so that the common, everyday Israelite could understand it without the need of anyone to teach or interpret its meaning.

After the completion of the Old Testament books but before the time of Jesus, the Greeks had taken over and controlled Israel for more than 300 years, establishing the Greek language there. About 60 years before the birth of Jesus, the Roman Empire, with its Latin language, absorbed the Greek Empire, including Israel. However, even with the changes, the Israelites held on to their Hebrew heritage. Almost all Israelites spoke all the languages fluently and understood the cultures they lived in, Jewish, Greek and Roman.

The New Testament

Matthew engraved the story of Jesus for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for the Gentiles and John for the Church. The Israelite leaders may have hated Jesus but the four records were accurate and infallible words for the Israelites who believed in the Messiah and became part of the Church. Moreover, as false teachers arose during Jesus' life, the Gospels recorded their presence, errors and punishment.

The rest of the New Testament records the early development of the Church, Her

history	language	worship	music
poetry	prose	struggles	sins
punishment	victories	defeats	future
hopes	dreams	rulers	elders
geography	enemies	rewards	Messiah

- in accurate, infallible detail!

For the first century Hebrew and Greek speaking Church, the New Testament made plain common sense; they understood it completely. Moreover, as false teachers arose during the development of the Church, the New Testament recorded their presence, errors and punishment.

**The Old and New Testaments were engraved,
literally in plain common sense language for the people who
lived during the days recorded within their pages.**

When we study the Bible, taking it in its plain common sense form, we are reading the Scripture literally. Most of the Bible can be read and understood in its simplest face value words just as it was in the days that the Old and New Testament were written. Here are some examples:

Genesis 3:6 ... she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.	Adam and Eve ate the fruit.
2 Samuel 22:1 And David spoke the words of this song to the LORD in the day that the LORD delivered him ...	David spoke the words of a song to the LORD.
John 11:35 Jesus wept.	Jesus cried.
Acts 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord.	Paul, Barnabas and many others taught the word of the LORD in Antioch.
1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,	Paul instructed Timothy to stay in Ephesus where he was to teach certain men the truth so they would not teach false doctrines.

Reading the literal words of Scripture makes plain common sense!

To the Old and New Testament people, the Apostle Paul engraved the following words.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is **inspired by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Church understood the plain common sense of the entire Scripture stated in these two verses. The Scripture of God was to be used for:

Teaching	Reproof ¹	Correction ²	Training ³
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in righteousness and to adequately equip the man of God for every good work.
But far more than that, they understood Who the Author was of all Scripture.

¹ Reproof = criticism for a fault

² Correction = to put straight

³ Training = to pull or draw along

To the Old and New Testament people, the Apostle Peter engraved the following words.

2 Peter 1:19-21

And so we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, **for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

Here are the “Men Moved by the Holy Spirit” to Engrave the Scriptures!

Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Korah, Asaph, Ethan, Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Samuel, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James and Jude!

Interpretation Difficulty # 1: Different Cultures

The Scripture that made literal plain common sense to the eastern minds of the Hebrew speaking people of the Church in the days of Paul and Peter needed to be translated for the western minds of the English speaking people of the church today.

Examples of Eastern and Western Cultural Differences

The EASTERN MIND	The WESTERN MIND
accepts the truth as given, that it does not have to be proved and is more interested in finding the balance.	strives to find and prove the truth.
puts more stock in social responsibility	puts more stock in individual rights.
views life as a journey toward eternal reality.	views life as a service (to God, money, business, etc.).
winning is inside you.	winning is outside yourself.
implements actions with a spiritual/missionary approach.	implements actions with a pragmatic/emotional approach.
believes that success is spiritual.	believes that success is material.
believes that self-control occurs through meditation.	believes that self-control occurs through analysis.
believes that leadership is spiritual and walks behind the people.	believes that leadership is hands-on and walks ahead of the people.
uses holistic, thematic and family relationships, broad focus, community external bias, and symbolic logic in reasoning.	uses analytic, rule-based, narrow focus, personal internal bias, and formal logic in reasoning.
believes that plans/goals may take many generations to complete – when the time is right.	believes that plans/goals must be complete as quick as possible – regardless of it being the correct timing.

Interpreting the Scripture with a western mindset has caused a world of false teaching!

Today, all across the world, people of every language need an accurate **WORD FOR WORD** translation of the Bible. Even the best efforts of English committee translators who have attempted the task fall short of a good accurate translation because they attempt to put one word in English in the place of one word in Greek or Hebrew.

For example: The Hebrew, Chinese and ancient Egyptian languages use word pictures to paint or illustrate the meaning of what they are trying to say. The people who speak those languages understand the full meaning and extended context of the picture because it is part of their culture. But one Hebrew, Chinese or Egyptian word may take several words in English to mean the same thing; that is the essence of our first interpretation difficulty.

According to 2 Peter 1:19-21, the 32 men listed above who engraved the Scriptures, were “moved by the Holy Spirit.” Our English translators used the word “moved” in place of the Greek word that meant *to be carried along*.

In our Western English mindset, the word “moved” means *to go from one place to another*. That meaning does not adequately transfer the intent of the original word in the Eastern mindset. The Greek word that meant *to be carried along* means the men engraved the Word of God as directed by the Holy Spirit. In the context of the passage, the words that were written in the Scripture did not originate with men but with God Who delivered them through the Holy Spirit.

We find the same interpretation difficulty in 2 Timothy 3:16 which says, “All Scripture is **inspired** by God.” Today, our English western minds interpret the word “inspire” to mean *to fill with an animating, quickening or exalting influence, to produce or arouse a feeling or thought*. But in the days of the New Testament, the readers in their culture understood that “inspired” meant *breathed* and therefore the Scripture was *breathed by God*. The Scripture did not consist of the words of 32 men, it consisted of the **Words of God** recorded by the 32 men.

Old Testament Example of Interpretation Difficulty #1

If translations are going to cause interpretation difficulties, should we just leave the Scripture in the original languages and all learn to speak Hebrew and Greek?

No! The Old Testament was originally written as God’s **WORD** for the Israelites. Even then it was His Word “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”⁴ He foreknew that translations into every language would eventually be needed and He gave an example in the Old Testament.

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Context and background: The Israelites had fallen into grave sin and refused to repent. For punishment, the LORD sent them into exile for 70 years in Babylon. When Babylon was taken over by the Persians, King Cyrus the Great allowed the nation of Israel to return to the southern district of the Promised Land and specifically to their capital city of Jerusalem. But not all of the Israelites returned to Israel; many stayed behind. In subsequent waves, thousands of Israelites finally made the journey back to the Promised Land. Many of those making the journey to Jerusalem were born in Babylon and Persia and knew only the Babylonian or Persian language; they did not know or understand Hebrew. In essence, they were reared in a different culture from that of their ancestors before the exile. Ezra was a priest at the time of the return. In Jerusalem, Ezra stood on a platform and read the first five books of the Old Testament in Hebrew to the people. Many of the listeners had never heard the Scripture, neither did they understand Hebrew. Fortunately, some older men born in the Promised Land understood Hebrew. The Bible records the first translation of Scripture in the following passage.

Nehemiah 8:6-8 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, " Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. ⁷ Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiiah, and the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place. ⁸ And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

As Ezra read the law, 13 men and all the Levites were in the audience translating the Hebrew Scripture into the languages the people understood. God even recorded in the Scripture that the purpose of the translation was “to give the sense so that they understood the reading.” What kind of sense? The plain common sense. Word “sense” in the Hebrew means *insight* which is the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding. God’s law and the Babylonian/Persia laws were vastly different. The words, meanings, intent and backgrounds in the vastly different cultures were not the same. The translators had to make the words read by Ezra clear to the people who had never heard them before in light of the culture in which they were raised.

Interpretation Difficulty #1 Gone Wrong in Different Cultures

Failing to translate and interpret cultural differences in Scripture passages has led to the development of teachings by religious groups that miss the intent of God completely.

Example: The fourth largest religious organization in America has used the western mindset to interpret and teach that God the Father was an exalted man who became God.⁵ The following chart shows just six of the Scriptures they use to prove their theology about God the Father.

Genesis 1:3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.	God speaks; therefore, God has a mouth.
Genesis 1:4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.	God can see; therefore, God has eyes.
Genesis 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.	God made man in His image; therefore, God has an earthly body.
Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.	God can walk; therefore, God has legs.
Genesis 3:21 And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.	God can sew; therefore, God has hands.
Genesis 8:21 And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma... .	God can smell; therefore God has a nose.⁶

Therefore, God is an exalted MAN!

But their theology gets crazy and falls apart when other Scriptures are used with the same thinking process. Here are just two examples.⁷

Psalms 91:4 He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge;	God has wings; therefore, God is a bird.
Revelation 19:15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword...	God has a sword coming out of His mouth; therefore, God has a sword for a tongue.

God also looks like a bird with a sword for a tongue!

⁵ Mormon Theology concerning God the Father

⁶ Other examples of human attributes used to describe God: an arm (Job 40:9), a back (Exod. 33:21-23), breath (Job 33:4), ears (2 Sam. 22:7), eyes (Ps. 34:15), a face (Exod. 33:11), feet (Gen. 3:8), fingers (Deut. 9:10), hair (Dan. 7:9), a hand (Ps. 95:4-5), a head (Dan. 7:9), a heart (2 Chron. 7:16), lips (Ps. 89:34), a mouth (Deut. 8:3), nostrils (2 Sam. 22:9, 16), shoulders (Deut. 33:12), a tongue (Isa. 30:27), a voice (Exod. 3:4), birth (Deut. 32:18), hear (Num. 11:18), laugh (Ps. 37:13), see (Ps. 10:11), sit (Ps. 29:10), smell (Gen. 8:21), stand (Amos 7:7), walk (Gen. 3:8), watch (Gen. 31:49), joy (Isa. 65:19), grief (Judg. 10:16), anger (Deut. 1:37), hatred (Ps. 5:5-6), love (Jer. 31:3).

⁷ Not examples of Mormon Theology concerning God the Father

That interpretation process is called *letterism* and all false teachers use it to lead their disciples astray by ignoring the intent of Scripture in light of its plain common sense found in its original cultural setting.

Letterism presses the literal words of Scripture to extract a meaning that was originally intended as a figure of speech!

Another example of letterism: The largest religious organization in the world today has used *letterism* to interpret and teach that once a priest has consecrated the bread and wine of the LORD’s Supper, the bread and wine will literally turn into the LORD’s body and blood.⁸

<p>Luke 22:19 And when He had taken <i>some</i> bread and given thanks, He broke <i>it</i>, and gave <i>it</i> to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."</p>	<p>After the bread was blessed, it became the actual flesh of the LORD. When you eat the consecrated bread you are eating the actual flesh, not bread.</p>
<p>Luke 22:20 And in the same way <i>He</i> took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."</p>	<p>After the wine was blessed, it became the actual blood of the LORD. When you drink the consecrated wine you are drinking the actual blood, not wine.</p>

The western mind pressed a literal meaning on a symbolic passage - letterism!

In about 150 A.D., Justin Martyr, referring to the LORD’s Supper, wrote:

"Not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

In about 200 A.D., Tertullian wrote:

"Taking bread and distributing it to his disciples he made it his own body by saying, 'This is my body,' that is a 'figure of my body.' On the other hand, there would not have been a figure unless there was a true body."⁹

When pressed by scientists to explain why the bread is still bread and the wine is still wine once they have been blessed, their theologians say it is “mystical”¹⁰ – and that makes it true!

On to Interpretation of Figures of Speech in the Scripture

⁸ The teaching of Catholicism

⁹ Against Marcion IV. 40

¹⁰ Mystical – a spiritual matter only the truly spiritual can understand