

How Should a Christian Approach the Word of God?

Recently, a Christian asked me if I had ever heard of Molinism. I said, “No.” He knew that I believe in the doctrines of sovereign grace in the salvation of souls. He has mentioned in the past that he is unsure of what side to take in this matter. But the other day, he said that he has been studying Molinism which claims to be the middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism. He tried to articulate one of the beliefs but I told him that it is no different than Arminianism. Subsequent to our discussion, I reflected on his decision to “study Molinism.” I reflected back on how I came to my current understanding on these matters and recalled that I never made a conscious decision to “study Calvinism.” When God saved me, I began attending a church that was anything but Calvinistic. I remember studying the Bible and reading it with a strong desire and intention to learn it. I remember being a bit confused by passages like Romans 9 and Ephesians 1 because they seemed to say things that did not fit my view of God. I began to ask my fellow church goers what they thought of these passages. When I stated what the passages seem to say, some of the Christians became annoyed and offered their explanations. But it was as if none of us could adequately explain them. They seemed content to leave the subject alone but I couldn’t. Occasionally, I would bring up the discussion and found that my fellow church goers were growing increasingly impatient with me. Nevertheless, I never opened theological books as the means to finding the correct interpretation of these matters. Rather, I asked God to shape my thinking so that it is in harmony with His thinking. The more time went on, the more seriously I prayed for God to reveal His truth to me. I realize that some Christians will insist that I eventually came to an incorrect view. But I have come to a firm, heart-felt conviction that God is sovereign in all things, including the salvation of sinners.

After reflecting more on my friend’s intention to “study Molinism,” something did not sit right within me. I wondered why anyone would opt for studying what people have said about such things rather than simply asking God to show them directly as they carefully search the Scriptures for themselves. The Bible teaches that God desires to show us truth if we diligently seek it. Jesus said, “*Ask and it shall be given unto you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you*” (Matthew 7:7). David prayed, “*Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law*” (Psalm 119:18).

I know Christians who actually think that it is best to consult “sound theologians” as the primary means of discerning correct theological positions. One such friend expressed concern over my insistence that we go to God directly and wait upon Him to guide us into correct understanding of the Bible. He said that this posture made me vulnerable to interpretations that could lead me into a cult or some such thing. I labored hard to help him understand that he can and should go to God directly for help in understanding the Bible. He seemed to acknowledge the promises from God about it but at the same time, he could not let go of his position that we must depend on what he called “sound biblical theologians” so that we do not fall into error.

I am of the persuasion that if I avail myself of God’s promise to guide me into truth, diligently seek it through prayer and Bible study, God will eventually direct me into correct thinking. I don’t need to consult “sound theologians” for this to happen. And when God gives me his understanding, then my thinking will indeed be the thinking of God. Inasmuch that any “sound theologian” has similar thoughts, it will only prove that God is indeed, able to guide His people into truth.

As a result of a lifelong study of His Word, I find my thoughts increasingly in harmony with the thoughts of the Apostle Paul and Jesus. I sense a genuine kindred spirit with them. I believe that the Word of God has been increasingly “engrafted” into my very soul as James describes. (See James 1:21.) This is that supernatural process that cannot be accomplished indirectly through “sound theologians.” Only God can do it and He uses His Word and trials to mysteriously bring it about directly. Those who depend on “sound theologians” for their learning circumvent God’s prescription and end up with second hand knowledge that will fail them in time of severe testing. This shortcut undermines the process of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The result is head knowledge rather than a firm foundation of our faith.

I honestly think that people who depend on commentaries and theological books as their first and most trusted source for biblical truth would be better off if all of those books were removed from the face of the earth.ⁱ Then, they would be forced to study their Bibles and pray more diligently in search for the truth. They would not be able to fall back on what other men have said and merely latch onto the word of man.

In closing, if you are one who depends on “respected” theologians in order to gain an understanding of the Bible, could it be that you are simply failing to depend on God’s promise to guide you into truth? Do you

believe that God will personally direct you if you sincerely ask Him to do so? If so, my advice is that you put away your books and spend more time studying, reading and meditation on God's Word and wait upon God to show you. Be patient in your waiting. You don't have to get all the answers at once. Your patient waiting will honor God by showing Him that you really believe Him and that He is fully able to guide you into all truth.

¹Just to clarify, I am not suggesting that all theological books and commentaries should be ignored or that they have no value. I have a large supply of them in my possession. I do consult them from time to time but only after I have first sought God's mind directly and arrived at what I believe is the correct understanding from Him. Since I can always be wrong, it is good to verify by looking at other's writings that I am not alone in my understanding.