

Bible Study and the Recipe Principle

A recipe is a somewhat complicated thing. It has directions that define its purpose, but directions involve a number of factors. To successfully produce the desired creation, two kinds of thinking are required. We generally do fairly well with thinking that goes from point A to point B. A good recipe, however, has some side roads to take along the way. It is, therefore, holistic thinking, one that sees the whole "space" of a thing that becomes invaluable. The whole "space" of a recipe involves: temperature (often different levels at different times and for different parts of the mix), ingredients, proportions or measurements, various sequences of combining ingredients, adding smaller parts to the bigger mix, and certain "intangibles" that one acquires through practice. This does not always follow a straight line, things happen at different times and in different ways. There may well be things going on all over the kitchen.

In seeking to arrive at truth, there are a number of holistic factors to consider. Biblical things have **differing weights (Matt. 23:23; I Cor. 13:13)**, and some are thus **more fundamentally significant** to the success of the whole (**Matt. 23:23-24; 7:12; Mk. 12:28-34**). Some things require more **time** to mature, such as the ability to teach (**Heb. 5:12**). **Sequence** is also of considerable importance in getting the mix right. Belief and repentance must come before baptism (**Acts 2:46-38**). **Timing** can make or break a biblical action. In Corinth, a sinful situation needed **immediate**, public action (**I Cor 5:1-8**); dealing with sin often requires a **longer process** before going public (**Matt. 18:15-17**). The timing of when and how to speak is a daily concern (**Col. 4:5-6; Prov. 25:11**).

Also, the severity or deliberate nature of an action can make all the difference in **how much heat** to apply. For a false teacher who has an agenda, the needed response is swift and hard—hot (**II Jn. 9-10**); but for someone who is teachable, patience and gentleness are demanded—warm (**II Tim. 2:24-26**). Apollos was easily called aside and corrected (**Acts 18:24-28**); Simon the Sorcerer needed a less sympathetic encounter (**Acts 8:18-22**). To learn how to use the truth and avoid extremes, we must

through practice **train ourselves to accurately handle** the word (**Heb. 5:14; II Tim. 2:15**). Such abilities require us to be able to see the whole space of a given circumstance and take the steps that fully use the pertinent principles. **The Sermon on the Mt.** is a classic example of Jesus addressing the **limited, shortsighted**, pharisaic interpretations of the Law of Moses and providing a **full, rich** correction.

By thinking from a somewhat different angle in looking into an understanding of the fullness of truth, we can hopefully get a better feel for what is required for biblical success. We must view the attainment of truth as a holistic discipline. Just as God's multifaceted nature works in complete harmony, so must we allow the full expression of His revealed will to cooperate harmoniously in the search for well-rounded truth. Ingredients and an oven alone do not a recipe make.

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