

## *Seeking God's Word to Me*

Whenever anyone tells me that there is only one way to read and interpret the Bible, I agree. Then quickly I say, "Yes, there is only one way, my way!" That, of course, is not the expected answer, because the speaker already has a fixed opinion about the Bible and is seeking either agreement or an opportunity to propagate that opinion.

I honestly believe there is only one way for me to read the Bible, and I cannot read it any other way. When I open its pages I can only see it through my own eyes and my own understanding. What I "see" and what I "understand" have been greatly conditioned by who I am, what I've learned along the way, and what my deepest needs are at the time.

Let me give you an example. When I first began to read the Bible, with little or no understanding of it, I stumbled on a verse, 2 Timothy 1:7, that said, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (King James Version). Those words came to me like a gift from God, and they were.

At that time they spoke to me about fear, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear." Later those same words spoke to me about "power," "love," a "sound mind." The meaning of the verse or the emphasis on one of those words would change from time to time because my need was different, and God was speaking to my need.

Do you see what I'm driving at? If I am to follow the directions of the person who has "one way," then I must give over the Bible to be read through another's eyes and experience and accept God's word to another as God's word to me. In the end I've put more faith in the other person than I have in God's desire to speak to me through the pages of the scripture.

Various interpretations of the Bible are important, and no serious reader should disregard them. In the end, however, I believe the spirit of God is our guide as we read the Bible, and God brings its truth to us according to our need. In this sense, the process of reading and understanding the Bible has a personal element in it that can't be discarded in favor of someone else's "one way" theory. To abandon that personal element is to give up one of the avenues that God has of speaking to us.