**Rightly Dividing the Word vs. the Backfire Effect**

Have you ever been confused by a Bible teaching that seemed contrary to something else in the Bible in that same area?

Have you ever read a scripture that seemed to contradict another scripture?

If a person’s held belief/doctrine/dogma/option requires them to shun, ignore or change the meaning of other scriptures that contradict it, is their belief/doctrine/dogma/opinion correct?

Biblical **Inerrancy**, as formulated in the "Chicago Statement on Biblical **Inerrancy**", is the doctrine that the Bible "is without error or fault in all its teaching" or at least that "Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact".

**Dogma** "that which one thinks is true" applied to some strong belief or doctrine that the one adhering to often uses to refer to matters related to religion.

If you find a Bible verse(s) that seems to or clearly contradicts something you believe or at least have been taught (i.e. Dogma) there are only three possible reasons if you believe scripture is “Inerrant”.

1. The verse(s) you believe is correct and that the other(s) is wrong or doesn’t mean what it clearly says.
2. Both are wrong.
3. Both are correct.

If another Bible verse(s) contradicts what you believe is correct in meaning, context and application then the Bible is not Inerrant.

If both verses are wrong then the Bible is not Inerrant.

If both are correct then your belief (opinion) or understanding about that subject or doctrinal point is not correct otherwise there would be no contradiction between the two if the Bible is Inerrant.

**Rightly Dividing the Word?**

**2Ti 2:15** Study **G4704** to shew**G3936** thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividingG3718** the word of truth.

**G4704** - spoudazō (spoo-dad'-zo): (Verb) From G4710; to use speed, that is, to make effort, be prompt or earnest: - do (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavour, labour, study.

Tense: Aorist

Voice: Active

Mood: Imperative

Person: second [you]

Number: Singular

**G3936** - paristēmi (par-is'-tay-mee): (Verb) From G3488 and G2476; to stand beside, that is, (transitively) to exhibit, proffer, (specifically) recommend, (figuratively) substantiate; or (intransitively) to be at hand (or ready), aid: - assist, bring before, command, commend, give presently, present, prove, provide, shew, stand (before, by, here, up, with), yield.

Tense: Aorist

Voice: Active

Mood: Infinitive

**G3718 - O**rthotomeō (*or-thot-om-eh'-o)* From a compound of G3717 and the base of G5114; to *make* a *straight* *cut*, that is, (figuratively) to *dissect* (*expound*) *correctly* (the divine message): - **rightly divide**.

Tense: Present

Voice: Active

Mood: Participle

Case: Accusative (direct object; motion toward; time: "how long")

Number: Singular

Gender: Masculine

In New Testament times, o*rthotomeo* (*or-thot-om-eh'-o)* was primarily a civil engineering term. It was used, for example, as a road building term. The idea of the word was to cut straight, or to guide on a straight path. The idea is to cut a roadway in a straight manner, so that people who will travel over that road can arrive at their destination directly, without deviation. *Orthotomeo* was also used as a mining term. It meant to drill a straight mine shaft so that the miners can get quickly and safely to the "mother lode."

There is another word in Greek, *katatomeo* ***G2699***, which means "to cut into sections." But that is not the word that the Apostle Paul, under divine inspiration, used in 2nd Timothy 2:15. Paul is not talking about "rightly dividing" in terms of dissecting the Word of God, or cutting it into sections or any other criterion.

**G2699 katatomē** (kat-at-om-ay') **-** From a compound of G2596 and τέμνω temnō (to cut); **a cutting down (off)**, that is, mutilation (ironically): - concision. Compare G609.

**G609 apokoptō** (ap-ok-op'-to) **-** From G575 and G2875; to amputate; reflexively (by irony) to mutilate (the privy parts): - **cut off**. Compare **G2699**.

It's interesting that the Apostle Paul does use that other word – ***katatomeo G2699*,** cutting up - in Philippians 3:2, where he says, literally, "beware of those who would divide you up".

Php 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the **concision *G2699***

So what is the proper meaning of *orthotomeo* - "rightly dividing" the Word of truth? What is intended is not the dividing of Scripture, not cutting it up, but teaching Scripture accurately, as a single, unified whole, without being turned aside by false teaching, man-made agendas or opinions.

The faithful practice of o*rthotomeo* in the handling of Scripture demonstrates that God's Word is a glorious whole from beginning to end. We dare not employ the theological equivalent of a pathologist's scalpel to carve up God's living Word.

**Does God’s Word Contradict itself?**

If the Bible is inerrant it **cannot** contradict itself or it would **not** be inerrant.

**2Ti 3:16 All G3956** scripture *is* given by **inspiration of God G2315, and *is* profitable for doctrine G1319, for reproof G1650, for correction G1882, for instruction G3809 in righteousness G1343:**

**G3956 –** pas (*pas):* (Adjective)Including all the forms of declension; apparently a primary word; ***all*, *any*, *every*, the *whole****:* - all (manner of, means) alway (-s), any (one), X daily, + ever, every (one, way), as many as, + no (-thing), X thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, whosoever.

**G2315 –** theopneustos (*theh-op'-nyoo-stos):* (Adjective)From G2316 and a presumed derivative of G4154; *divinely* *breathed* in: - given by inspiration of God.

**G1319 –** didaskalia (*did-as-kal-ee'-ah):* (Noun)From G1320; ***instruction*** (the function or the information): - doctrine, learning, teaching.

**G1650 –** elegchos (*el'-eng-khos):* (Noun)From G1651; ***proof***, *conviction:* - **evidence**, reproof.

**G1882 -** epanorthōsis (*ep-an-or'-tho-sis)* (Noun)From a compound of G1909 and G461; a *straightening* *up* *again*, that is, (figuratively) *rectification* (*reformation*): - **correction**.

**G3809 –** paideia (*pahee-di'-ah)* (Noun)From G3811; ***tutorage*,** that is, *education* or *training*; by implication disciplinary *correction:* - chastening, chastisement, **instruction,** nurture.

**G1343 -** dikaiosunē (*dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay)* (Noun)From G1342; *equity* (of character or act); **specifically (Christian) *justification****:* - righteousness.

Many *apparent* contradictions people have pointed out are not formal contradictions at all. They are simply different accounts, different perspectives, or different versions of the story.

The four Gospels give each author’s account. Each has countless similarities with the others but there are some differences in the details based on the perspective of the Author led by the Holy Spirit.

**What is a contradiction?**

If one sentence is true, then other has to be false. Important examples can be found at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contradiction/>

So why do people not question their beliefs/doctrines/options when they find that other scriptures contradict them?

**The Backfire Effect (Man’s fallen nature)**

**The Misconception:** When your beliefs are challenged with facts, you alter your opinions and incorporate the new information into your thinking.

**The Truth:** When your deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence, your beliefs get stronger.

People are likely to resist or reject arguments and evidence contradicting their opinions – a view that is consistent with a wide array of research.

Once something is added to your collection of beliefs, you protect it from harm. You do it instinctively and unconsciously when confronted with attitude-inconsistent information. Just as confirmation bias shields you when you actively seek information, the backfire effect defends you when the information seeks you, when it blindsides you. Coming or going, you stick to your beliefs instead of questioning or proving them. When someone tries to correct you, tries to dilute your misconceptions, **it backfires and strengthens them instead**. Over time, the backfire effect helps make you less skeptical of those things which allow you to continue seeing your beliefs and attitudes as true and proper.

*The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else-by some distinction sets aside and rejects, in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusion may remain inviolate*

*– Francis Bacon*

Human beings are irrational, selfish, and proud (*fallen nature*). This affects both the un-Saved and Saved. We are personally invested in our most deeply held views, not just religious, and we cling to them like a dog on a bone when we think they are under threat.

This is why we must submit all our beliefs/doctrines/dogmas/opinions to the HOLY SPIRIT and not to man as these are really spiritual issues or we will be powerless to correct them and will be led astray.

**1Th 5:21  Prove G1381all things G3956**: **hold fast G2722** **that which is good G2570.**

**G1381 -** dokimazō (*dok-im-ad'-zo):* (Verb)From G1384; to *test* (literally or figuratively); by implication to *approve:* - allow, discern, **examine**, X like, (ap-) prove, try.

Tense: Present (**Continuous liner action, *does not stop***)

Voice: Active (**You are responsible**)

Mood: Imperative (**A Command**)

Person: second [you+]

Number: Plural

**G3956 –** pas (*pas)* (Adjective) Including all the forms of declension; apparently a primary word; ***all*, *any*, *every*, the *whole****:* - all (manner of, means) alway (-s), any (one), X daily, + ever, every (one, way), as many as, + no (-thing), X thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, whosoever.

**G2722 -** katechō (*kat-ekh'-o):* (Verb*)* From G2596 and G2192; to *hold* *down* (*fast*), in various applications (literally or figuratively): - have, hold (fast), **keep (in memory**), let, X make toward, possess, retain, seize on, stay, take, withhold.

Tense: Present (**Continuous liner action, *does not stop***)

Voice: Active (**You are responsible**)

Mood: Imperative (**A Command**)

Person: second [you+]

Number: Plural

**G2570 –** kalos (*kal-os'):* (Adjective) Of uncertain affinity; properly *beautiful*, but chiefly (figuratively) ***good* (literally or morally**), that is, *valuable* or *virtuous* (for *appearance* or *use*, and thus distinguished from G18, which is properly *intrinsic*): - X better, fair, good (-ly), honest, meet, well, worthy.

Because we are prone to the Backfire Effect maybe this why the **LORD** does not put new wine in old bottles.

Mat\_9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Mar\_2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Luk\_5:37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

Luk\_5:38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

We get certain ideas from Church history mediated to us as doctrine.

The Bible is either filtered through these tradition’s or a tradition actually supersedes what the biblical text actually says.

Many Christians are not students of the texts of scripture so do not pick up on these inconsistencies. It is important that what we think and say about scripture actually conforms to biblical text or we will be led to error or worse will lead others to error. We to must follow Paul’s command to Timothy

2Ti 3:14  But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

2Ti 3:15  And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2Ti 3:16  All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17  That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.