Question 9: How do we interpret a verse correctly?

Short answer

We interpret a verse correctly by reading the context, understanding the plain meaning of the words, comparing it with the rest of the Bible, and asking God for wisdom to apply it in the right way.

Explanation

Sometimes a sentence, taken by itself, can seem to say something different from what it really means. That's why, to interpret a verse well, we need some simple rules:

1. **Read the context**
   Look at the verses before and after, and also the chapter: what is the author talking about? Who is he writing to? In what situation?

2. **Look for the natural meaning**
   Usually the Bible should be read in a straightforward way: normal words have a normal meaning. If the text is poetry or uses images (like "God is my rock"), understand that it is using a symbol.

3. **Compare with the rest of the Bible**
   The Bible does not contradict itself. If your interpretation makes God unjust or cancels the Gospel, you are probably misunderstanding it. A clear passage helps explain a more difficult one.

4. **Look at the theme of the book**
   Each book of the Bible has a purpose. Understanding the purpose helps you avoid using a verse "out of place."

5. **Think about the right application**
   First: "What did it mean then?" Then: "How does it apply today?" Not everything that is described is also commanded.

Interpreting well does not mean "inventing a meaning," but discovering what God truly intended to say and then living according to it.

Reference verses

- **2 Timothy 2:15** — "...present yourself to God... correctly handling the word of truth."
- **Acts 17:11** — "...they examined the Scriptures every day to see if these

things were so."

- **Nehemiah 8:8** — "They read… explaining the meaning, so that the reading could be understood."

In simple words

To understand a verse well, you shouldn't take it by itself. Read what is around it too, try to understand what the author was talking about, and compare it with other verses. If an idea doesn't fit with the rest of the Bible, then you are probably interpreting it incorrectly.