

# BIBLE STUDY METHODS



Adapted from LIVING BY THE BOOK

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# **Part I**

## **Introduction**

## Chapter 1

### WHY PEOPLE DO NOT STUDY THE BIBLE

Dusty Bibles always lead to dirty lives. You are either in the Word and the Word is conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ, or you are in the world and the world is squeezing you into its mold.

## Chapter 2

### WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

We will look at three benefits from the study of God's Word, which are not available anywhere else. We will look at three passages that conspire to build a convincing case for why we must study the Bible, which is essential to living a successful Christian life.

#### **1. Bible Study Is Essential To Spiritual Growth: 1 Peter 2:2**

*"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."*

Here are three words, which help to understand the truth here:

##### **a. Attitude**

Just as the baby must have milk to sustain its life physically; you have to have the Scriptures to sustain your life spiritually.

##### **b. Appetite**

You should crave the spiritual milk of God's Word.

##### **c. Aim**

What is the aim of the Bible? The text tells us: in order that you might grow. Please note, it is not that you may know. Certainly you cannot grow without knowing. But you can know and not grow. The Bible was written not to satisfy your curiosity, but to help you conform to Christ's image. Not to fill your head with a collection of Biblical facts, but to transform your life.

So the first reason for studying Scripture is that it is a means of spiritual growth.

#### **2. Bible Study Is Essential To Spiritual Maturity: Hebrews 5:11-14**

*"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

The keyword in this passage is *"time."* Underline it in your Bible. The writer tells his readers, when you should be communicating the truth to others, you need to have someone communicate the truth to you. He says that you still need milk, not solid food. Solid food is for the mature. Who then are the mature?

The writer says you are mature if you have trained yourself through constant use of the Scripture to distinguish the good from the evil. The mark of spiritual maturity is not how much you understand, but how much you use. In the spiritual realm, the opposite of ignorance is not knowledge but obedience.

The second reason that Bible study is essential is that the Bible is the divine means of developing spiritual maturity.

#### **3. Bible Study Is Essential To Spiritual Effectiveness: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Notice the use of *"All Scripture."* Paul said that all Scripture is profitable. But profitable for what? He mentions four things.

##### **a. Doctrine or teaching**

This means it will structure your thinking. This is essential, because if you are not thinking correctly, you are not living correctly. What you believe will determine your behavior.

##### **b. Rebuke**

This means it will tell you when you have crossed over the line. It tells you what is sin. It tells you what God wants for your life. He provides you with standards.

**c. Correction**

The Bible provides a purifying dynamic in your life to help you clean out sin and learn to conform to God’s will.

**d. Instruction in righteousness**

The Bible is profitable for training in righteous living. God uses it to show you how to live. Having corrected you on the negatives, He gives you positive guidelines to follow in life.

The overall purpose is that you might be equipped for every good work. Bible study is a primary means to becoming an effective servant of Jesus Christ.

God wants to communicate with you. He wrote His message in a Book. He asks you to study that Book for three reasons: It is essential to growth. It is essential to maturity. It is essential to spiritual effectiveness.

***What Have You Learned?***

1. List three (3) benefits to studying God’s Word. Give Scripture to support each. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. List three (3) words that define the truth of 1 Peter 2:2. Briefly explain each. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Briefly explain the key word found in Hebrews 5:11-14. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Briefly explain the “mature” talked about in Hebrews 5:11-14. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. List & briefly explain the four (4) things (found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17) that all Scripture is profitable for. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. On the lines below, write 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in full. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is the overall purpose of Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Write 2 Timothy 2:15 on the lines provided. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 3

### HOW THIS BOOK CAN HELP

Effective Bible study requires a method. By “*method*” we mean strategy, a plan of attack, which will yield maximum results for your investment of time and effort. The lack of a method quickly leads to frustration and even errors in interpretation and application. This book presents a method. Before looking at the method we will look at its four benefits.

**1. You will find a simple, proven process.**

The process presented in this book is one that anyone can use, no matter the level of spiritual maturity or education. If you can read you can study the Bible. As you grow in your knowledge and insight into the Word, this method will keep pace with you.

**2. You will gain a valuable sense of self-confidence in your ability to handle scripture.**

There is nothing like the self-assurance that comes from firsthand knowledge of the Bible. It gives you confidence to think for yourself. Effective Bible study enables you to evaluate the thoughts and ideas of others.

**3. You will experience the joy of personal discovery.**

There is no joy comparable to that which comes from firsthand study of Scripture. To discover personally what God has revealed is exciting.

**4. You will deepen your relationship with God.**

The ultimate benefit of firsthand Bible study is that you will fall in love with the Author. If you want to know God directly, you need to encounter His Word directly. A problem with many believers is that they know more about the Scriptures than they know about the God of the Scriptures.

The riches of God are free, but they are not cheap. Bible study places several expectations on you. Here are three costs involved:

**a. Effort**

Scripture does not yield its fruit to the lazy. Bible study pays in proportion to how much of an investment you make. The greater the investment, the greater the reward. Bible study takes time.

**b. Openness to God**

The ultimate goal of Bible study is to know God. Do you want to know Him intimately? Proverbs 8:34-35 *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.”*

**c. Openness to change**

The Bible was not written just to be studied but to change our lives. Life change is the desired result. The human heart resists change but spiritual growth is a commitment to change. Romans 8:29 tells you that God intends to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ – in other words, to make you like Christ.

### Getting Started

Here are two suggestions before getting started:

**a. Set some goals**

What do you want out of this process? What needs in your life must be addressed? Are there relationships that need to be healed, cultivated, or altered? Are there attitudes that need to be changed? Are there habits that need to be broken or established?

**b. Adjust your expectations**

*Be realistic. Remember, you are not going to master the process in one day. It takes time. The issue in Bible study is not speed, but direction. It does not matter how far you get. What is important is that you keep making progress. Diligence is the key.*

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. List & briefly explain the four (4) benefits provided by our textbook for effective Bible study.

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2. List & briefly explain three (3) costs involved in finding the riches of God through Bible study.

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3. List and briefly explain two (2) good suggestions to follow before beginning Bible study.

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4. On the lines provided below, write the Scripture (with reference) that talks about knowing God intimately.

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5. On the lines provided below, write Psalm 1:1. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times.

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## Chapter 4

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The study of God's Word is a process that cannot happen overnight. In this chapter we will look at an overview of the Bible study process and define what method in Bible study involves.

#### What Is Method?

Method in Bible study can be defined with three statements.

##### 1. Method means being **"systematic."**

This means that it involves taking certain steps in a certain order to guarantee a certain result. Not just any steps; not just any order; not just any result. The result governs everything. What is the product of systematic Bible study? What are you after? As has already been said, Bible study has a very specific aim – namely, life-change.

Here are three crucial steps, which if carried out in a particular order, will guarantee life-change:

##### a. Observation

In this step you ask the question, *"What do I see?"* You are searching for the facts.

##### b. Interpretation

Here you ask the question, *"What does it mean?"* Your quest is for meaning.

##### c. Application

Here you ask and answer the question, *"How does it work?"* not does it work. People say that they are going to make the Bible "relevant." But if the Bible is not already relevant, there is nothing you nor I can do to help. The Bible is relevant because it is revealed. It is always a return to reality. And it changes the lives of those who read it and heed it.

##### 2. Method means being **"systematic, with a view to becoming receptive and reproductive."**

If you want to make an impact on your generation, the Scripture must first make an impact on you. It is the analogy of the sperm and the egg. Neither the male sperm nor the female egg is capable of reproduction. Only when the sperm impacts and is embraced by the egg is there conception and reproduction.

Personal Bible study is designed to transform your life, and as a result, transform your world.

##### 3. Method means being **"systematic, with a view to becoming receptive and reproductive, by means of firsthand acquaintance with the Word."**

There is no substitute for firsthand knowledge of the Word and nothing can replace prolonged personal exposure to the word.

#### Begin With Observation

Remember the first step is observation and you ask the question, *What do I see?* At this step you look for four things.

##### 1. Terms

A term is more than just a word. It is a key word that is crucial to what the author has to say. For example, in the gospel of John, the word *believe* appears no less than seventy-nine times, always as a verb and never as a noun.

If you investigate, you will discover that John uses *believe* very purposefully. It is a term that unlocks his meaning. The same principle applies to every book in the Bible. They are filled with terms. You must learn to recognize them and pay close attention to them because they are basic building blocks with which you construct meaning.

##### 2. Structure

The Bible is not just a collection of random sayings and stories. It is rather a library of carefully constructed books that display – to those who look for it – two basic kinds of structure.

##### a. Grammatical structure.

In order to learn to study Scripture effectively, you must learn to read it with grammar in mind. What is the subject of the sentence? What is the object? What is the main verb? The more you know about the grammar, the more you get out of a passage.

##### b. Literary structure.

There are questions and answers. There is a climax and resolution. There is a cause and effect.

### **3. Literary Form**

It is vital to consider genre (gender) when you come to the books of the Bible. There is a vast difference between the Hebrew poetry of the Psalms and the epistles of Paul, between the narrative style of Genesis and Exodus, and the simple, poignant stories of the parables. There is allegory and love poetry, satire and apocalyptic, comedy and tragedy, and much more. The Holy Spirit used each of these forms to communicate His message. If you want to grasp His message, you must read each kind according to its proper “rules.” We will learn how to do that in later chapters.

### **4. Atmosphere**

Reading for atmosphere involves picking up the setting and feelings from the biblical text. What is it like to be in the author’s shoes? For example, Paul said, “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*” (Philippians 4:4) Where was he when he said that? Not in a nice hotel but rather in a foul smelling Roman prison, and life looks very different from behind bars.

You seek to transport your senses into the passage. If there is a sunset, you see it. If there is an odor, smell it. If there is a cry of anguish, feel it. If you are studying the letter to the Ephesians, join the church at Ephesus, and listen to Paul as he goes down on his knees to pray (Ephesians 3:14-21). This is an exercise for the imagination, not just the intellect.

## **Move On To Interpretation**

The second step is Interpretation and you ask the question, “*What does it mean?*” Remember that you are searching for meaning. Following are three things that will help you to get the meaning of a passage of Scripture.

### **1. Questions**

To gain understanding of a biblical text, you must bombard it with many questions. This does not mean that you will find answers to all of them but ask them to determine if they can be answered.

### **2. Answers**

You have asked questions so you must look for answers. You will find them in the text. Observation will give you the basic building blocks out of which you will construct the meaning of a passage. The answers to your questions will come directly from the observation process. The more time you spend in observation, the less time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the more accurate will be your results. The less time you spend in observation, the more time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the less accurate will be your results.

### **3. Integration**

After having asked questions and found answers, you must put them together into a meaningful whole. Otherwise you end up with nothing but baskets of fragments. Integration is the stage where you reconstruct the meaning of a passage after you have taken it apart to inspect the details.

## **Keep Going Into Application**

The third step is Application and you ask the question, “*How does it work?*” Again, not does it work, but how does it work? There are two areas to consider.

### **1. How does it work for me?**

This can be a very convicting question. What does this have to say to me? How does this work in my life? Because if it is not working in my life, then what authority do I have sharing it with someone else?

### **2. How does it work for others?**

Since the Bible does have implications for others, it is legitimate to ask: How would this transform their life? Their marriage and family? Their business and occupation?

## **Always Keep The Big Picture**

**Observation** – “*What do I see?*”

**Interpretation** – “*What does it mean?*”

**Application** – “*How does it work?*”

**What Have You Learned?**

1. When referring to Bible study, what three (3) statements define “method?” Briefly explain.

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2. List the three (3) crucial steps to “systematic” Bible study. Briefly explain each. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. During observation, what four (4) things do you look for? Briefly explain each. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. List and explain the three (3) things that will help you get the meaning of a passage of Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. List and briefly explain the two (2) areas considered during the application step. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What is the significance of “atmosphere” when reading Philippians 4:4? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. On the lines provided, write Psalm 1:2. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Part II**

## **Observation**

### **What Do I See?**

## Chapter 5

### THE VALUE OF OBSERVATION

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” (Psalms 119:18)

What makes one person a better Bible student than another? The answer is, one can see more. The same truth is available to both of them in the text. The difference between them is what either one can see in a cubic foot of space. Not only must you see, but you must also observe. The ability to see and observe is a developed process.

In the following pages you will study several ways to boost your powers of observation when you read the Scripture. Here is an exercise to make the point that seeing is not the same as observing. Answer the following questions from memory.

1. Think of a stairway or the steps to a building that you use regularly. How many steps are there?
2. How many stoplights do you pass on your way to work/church?
3. What color is the emblem, if there is one, on your national flag? What color is the emblem on the national flag of your neighboring nations?
4. Think of someone you live with or work with closely. Describe in detail what that person was wearing the last time you saw him or her.
5. How many pages are there in this book?
6. What was the exact title of your pastor’s sermon last Sunday? What was the text, if he used one?
7. Was your mother right-handed or left-handed? How about your father?
8. If you are married, which side of his face does your husband start shaving first? Or which shoe does your wife put on first?
9. Which phase was last night’s moon to: new, first quarter, full, or quarter?

#### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. Read and study the Bible Picture chart. Fill in the blanks on the assignment sheet.
2. On the lines provided, write the answers to the above questions. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 6

### LET'S START WITH A VERSE

In this chapter we will start by observing one verse, Acts 1:8. Follow along in the Bible as we consider some questions about the text.

#### 1. Start With Terms

**What is the most important term in this verse?** It is the first word, *But*. Mark that word in your Bible. The word *but* indicates contrast. Later we will see that contrasts are always important in Scripture. They indicate a change in direction.

**What does the word “but” force me to do?** To go back to the preceding verses, another crucial aspect of Bible study that we will come back to. We never want to study something in isolation, but always in relation to something else. Let us go back to the beginning of the chapter and pick up the context.

Verse 1 begins by mentioning “*the first account*,” which refers to the gospel of Luke. So we discover that the same author, Luke, wrote the two books. (An important question is, **Who was Luke?** Make a list of everything you can discover about him.) Luke-Acts forms a two-volume set. The gospel of Luke starts the story; Acts is the sequel. Luke and Acts have the same subject: “*all that Jesus began to do and teach*.” This is a clue that Acts gives a continuation of Christ’s ministry through His apostles.

The gospel of Luke and Acts are also addressed to the same person, a man named Theophilus.

**Who was Theophilus?** (Luke 1:3)

Acts begins with a discussion between the Lord and His disciples about the kingdom of God. Notice in verse 6 that the disciples asked Jesus a question about the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel. Jesus answers their question negatively in verse 7 by saying, “*It is not for you to know...*” And then in verse 8, where the word “*but*” plays such an important role, Jesus points His disciples to their responsibility. So verse 8 is part of a dialogue in which the disciples are asking questions and the Lord is answering them.

Now let us look at what follows in verses 9-11. These verses recount the ascension of our Lord. Remember that in addition to terms, you should look for atmosphere. If this is the ascension, then Jesus’ words in verse 8 are His last words to His disciples. In essence He tells them, “Now the job is yours” and He goes up into heaven.

Whenever you study any verse of Scripture, make sure to place it in its context. See it both in terms of what goes before and what follows.

*But ye shall receive power,  
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:  
and ye shall be witnesses unto me  
both in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea,  
and in Samaria,  
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

#### 2. Who Are The People Involved?

**Do you see another key word in this verse?** The word is *you*. Observe that it is repeated: “*ye shall receive power...ye shall be witnesses...*”

**Who are these people?** Verse 2 tells us they are apostles. From there we can make a list of general information that we already know about these people.

- a. They have walked with Jesus for about three years during His ministry.
- b. Jesus has chosen them.
- c. They are anxious, which is probably why they ask the question about the kingdom.
- d. They are all Jews.
- e. Many of them are, or have been, fishermen.

When you come to something like this, re-create in your mind who these people are.

**What is the main verb in this verse?** It is “*shall receive*.”

**What tense is it?** Future tense.

**What are they going to receive?** “Power.” This word can be translated “ability.” Jesus is not talking about physical power; He is talking about the ability of the apostles to accomplish what He wants them to.

### 3. Watch For Cause-Effect Relationships

A crucial phrase comes next: “*after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*”

**What does that add to the verse?** First, it indicates a cause-effect relationship. The power will not come until the Holy Ghost comes. Second, it answers the question of time. Since we are talking about the Holy Ghost, we are talking about supernatural power.

Earlier we saw a cause-effect relationship in terms of timing. Now we see one in terms of two statements, “*ye shall receive power*” and the next phrase, “*and ye shall be witnesses unto me.*” The apostles were going to receive power; that is the cause. The effect is that they are going to be something – “witnesses.”

*But ye shall receive power,  
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:  
and ye shall be witnesses unto me  
both in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea,  
and in Samaria,  
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

It is significant that the future tense is used, “*shall receive.*” As a result of what the apostles will receive, they are going to be witnesses.

**They will be witnesses of whom?** – Witnesses of Jesus Christ. They are going to represent Him.

### 4. Define The Terms

**What is a witness?** A witness is someone who has experienced something – an event, person, or circumstance.

**What does the next phrase begin with?** “*Both in Jerusalem.*” The use of the word “*both*” indicates more than one thing. In fact there are four places mentioned. Researching the word “*both*” in a commentary reveals that it indicates the beginning of a series. “*Both*” begins a series of four places where the apostles are going to be witnesses for Christ.

### 5. The Importance Of A Place

The first is Jerusalem. What do we know about Jerusalem? Let us start a list:

- a. It is a city.
- b. The Temple is there.
- c. It is where they are at this moment.
- d. It is also their home. They are to begin witnessing at home.
- e. It is where the crucifixion took place. They are known there.

*But ye shall receive power,  
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:  
and ye shall be witnesses unto me  
both in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea,  
and in Samaria,  
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

After starting in Jerusalem, they are to go to Judea.

**How can we relate Jerusalem and Judea?** A glance at a good atlas shows that Jerusalem was a city within the larger province called Judea. So the Lord is moving from the city to the province. The apostles were familiar with four provinces: Judea in the south; Galilee in the north; Samaria in the center and a fourth one on the eastern side of the Jordan River called Perea.

Remember the woman at the well in John 4? The text says that Jesus *had* to go through Samaria. He was in the south; He wanted to go to Galilee in the north. Normally he would have crossed over the Jordan, passed up the east bank and eventually back west into Galilee. Under no circumstance was He, a Jew, ever to go through Samaria. John 4:9 explains that, “*the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*” But in Acts 1:8, Jesus told the apostles that they would be witnesses in the area that they would normally avoid.

The next phrase says, “and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Jesus used a word for “earth” which means the inhabited earth. Consulting a Bible dictionary, you will see that several words for “earth” are used in the New Testament. Jesus is talking about the populated earth.

**6. Relate The Verse To The Book As A Whole**

What have we discovered to this point in this verse?

- a. Two places that are usually separated – Judea and Samaria – are linked together.
- b. The apostles are not to stop until they go to the last part of the inhabited earth.
- c. These are the last words of the Lord before His ascension.

**Is it possible that this verse is in any way an outline for the book? Do the apostles actually follow this pattern?** By studying the book as a whole, we see that the answer to both questions is yes. They started in Jerusalem; then went into Judea; then into Samaria; and by the end of the book they are well on their way toward reaching the inhabited world of their day.

*But ye shall receive power,  
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:  
and ye shall be witnesses unto me  
both in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea,  
and in Samaria,  
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

**There Is No Limit To Observation**

Count and see how many observations we have determined from Acts 1:8. Notice, we have not studied a paragraph, or even a chapter, or even the book of Acts – just one verse. Yet each time I come back to it, I will see more.

Observation is the essential first step in Bible study method.

**What Have You Learned?**

- 1. What is the difference between “seeing” and “observing.” \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 2. List six (6) questions or things to look for that can help with observing a single verse of Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 3. What is the most important term in Acts 1:8? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. What does the word “but” force me to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. What is the essential first step in Bible study methods? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. On the lines provided, write Psalm 1:3. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 7

### YOU MUST LEARN TO READ

To gain the most benefit from Bible study, we must know two things:

- a. Know how to read.
- b. Know what to look for.

The Bible is a book, which means it must be read to be understood and appreciated. In the next few chapters, we will receive some instructions on how to read.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus addressed the people many times asking, “*Have ye not read...?*” (Matthew 12:3,5) Of course they had read. They spent much time reading. But they did not understand what they read.

If you do not understand what you are reading, then you are not reading – you are wasting your time. Reading the Bible is certainly not a waste of time but it is surely more profitable if we understand what we are reading.

Here are three suggestions to help you learn how to read:

#### 1. Learn To Read Better And Faster.

There is direct correlation between your ability to observe Scripture and your ability to read. Therefore improving your reading skills will also improve your observation skills.

#### 2. Learn To Read As For The First Time.

It has often been said that familiarity breeds contempt. The moment you come to a passage of Scripture and say, “Oh, I know this one already,” you are in trouble. You should come to every text as if you have never seen it before. This requires discipline and involves cultivating a proper attitude toward the Word of God. It helps to read the Bible in different versions if they are available. Be willing to do whatever it takes to approach the Word with a fresh perspective. One of the great killers of Bible study is the statement, “I already know that.”

#### 3. Read The Bible As A Love Letter.

You must fall in love with the Author of the Bible and learn to read it as though it were His love letter to you.

If you want to understand the Bible, you must learn to read – better and faster, as for the first time, and as if you were reading a love letter. God wants to communicate with you – and He wrote His message in a Book.

#### TEN STRATEGIES TO FIRST-RATE READING

Read Thoughtfully  
Read Repeatedly  
Read Patiently  
Read Selectively  
Read Prayerfully  
Read Imaginatively  
Read Meditatively  
Read Purposefully  
Read Acquisitively  
Read Telescopically

#### What Have You Learned?

1. List the two (2) things we must know to gain the most benefit from Bible study. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What New Testament reference quotes Jesus asking the people, “Have ye not read. . .?”  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. List and briefly explain three (3) suggestions that will help you learn how to read your Bible.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. List the ten (10) strategies to first-rate reading.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

8) \_\_\_\_\_

9) \_\_\_\_\_

10) \_\_\_\_\_

5. On the lines provided, write Psalm 1:4. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Read the lessons by Jim Poitras entitled:  
“Bible Study Methods – Selecting What to Study”  
“The Characteristics of Bible Study”  
“Topical Bible Study”

Choose one of the topics suggested from the list given, and follow the guidelines to begin your topical Bible study work. Then, answer the following questions:

7. List and briefly explain (with Scripture reference) the five (5) main characteristics of a Bible study that is life changing, meaningful, and applicable.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 9

### READ REPEATEDLY

#### Read The Bible Repeatedly

One marvelous thing about the Word of God is that it can stand up to repeated exposure. In this way it is different from any other book. Once you have read other books two or three times, you can put them on the shelf and move on to something else. But this is not true with the Bible. Read it over and over again, and you will still see things that you have never seen before.

##### **1. Read entire books at one sitting.**

The value of reading entire books at one sitting is that you will be able to appreciate the unity of each book. You can miss this when you skip from passage to passage, never getting a sense of the whole. Consequently, your perception is fragmented. Each book of the Bible was written as a unit that fits together only when you read its entirety. Reading an entire book at one sitting helps you to see the big picture.

##### **2. Start at the beginning of the book.**

Remember our study of Acts 1:8? The first word “*but*,” signaled us to go back and check the context. By going back eight verses to the beginning of the book, we discovered some interesting things about the purpose of the book, the writer, the man to whom it was written, and the setting in which verse eight takes place.

Suppose that we had chosen to study Acts 2:8, or 8:8, or 28:9. Standing by themselves, these verses make little sense. But when we link them with their surrounding paragraphs, and those paragraphs with their surrounding sections, and those sections with the entire book of Acts, they take on significance. The books of the Bible were written as units.

##### **3. Read the Bible in different translations.**

One way to avoid becoming bored with reading a passage repeatedly is to use a variety of translations when they are available. In doing this you will surely notice new things.

##### **4. Listen to tapes of Scripture.**

An exciting development of the last few years is that of audiocassettes of the Bible. The values of this are many. You can change the sensory experience from the visual to the audible. This is effective especially with the parables of Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount as these were originally presented verbally. The psalms were usually sung, not read.

The voice of the reader helps, too. Hearing the tapes is like reading a new translation. The words may be the same, but the emphases are different. A final benefit of listening to tapes of Scripture is that you can play them over and over to gain the value of repetition.

##### **5. Read the Bible out loud.**

Reading out loud forces you to pay attention to every word. There is even a biblical precedent for doing so. Deuteronomy 6:7 instructs parents to “... *teach them* [the words of Scripture] *diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*” This means that the Word of God should be part of your conversation at home. The result will be that biblical truth will be driven into your memory.

##### **6. Set up a schedule for Bible reading.**

It is possible to read the whole Bible in one year by reading a few chapters each day. If you follow this program over a period of several years, you will have read each verse of the Bible several times. You can choose other daily Bible reading programs or you can come up with your own plan. Be sure to devise a way to evaluate your progress.

#### **What Have You Learned?**

1. List six (6) ways to read the Bible repeatedly, finding new things each time. Briefly explain each one. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 10

### *READ PATIENTLY*

#### **Read The Bible Patiently**

We are part of a very “hurried” generation where everyone seems to be in a hurry. So it is no surprise that when we decide to open our Bibles, we expect instant results with very little effort. However, unless you have highly developed reading habits, it is unlikely that you can spend only five minutes in the Word and gain much significance.

We must remember that the fruit of the Word requires time to ripen. Some people become disillusioned with Bible study, perhaps because they seek for entertainment instead of enlightenment. Others become impatient in their study of Scripture and quickly turn to secondary sources seeking understanding. There is nothing wrong with secondary sources after you have drenched your mind with what the biblical text says.

#### **A Long-term Commitment**

##### **Work with one book for one month.**

With Bible study, five weeks is usually enough time to make significant progress in studying a particular book of the Bible. In five weeks you can read the book through several times. You will be able to observe its structure, identify the key terms, investigate the central characters, do some research work with secondary sources, and decide on some practical ways to apply the truths of the book to your life.

By following this method for one year, you can study twelve books of the Bible and in five-and-a-half years, all sixty-six books.

A few suggestions to get you started are Nehemiah, Jonah, the gospel by Mark, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, James, or 1 Peter. Nehemiah, Jonah, and Mark are “user-friendly” narratives, with plot and characterization. The four other books mentioned are letters to the church that are short and practical.

##### **Zoom in and zoom out.**

To assure the best possible photographs, professional photographers know the importance of a zoom lens. This allows them to bring their subject closer or further away, depending on the desired effect. This same strategy is effective in Bible study.

You can back off and get the “big picture” by reading the entire book. You can determine the flow in the material, a progression of events or ideas. When you see something that seems prominent, take a closer look. You may want to spend some days or a week on that one idea.

For example, in Genesis, the first eleven chapters tell of the Creation, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. Then the next thirty-nine chapters cover just four generations, led by four men – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. That is the big picture of Genesis. But within the book, there are some events you will want to take a closer look at: the Creation (chapters 1-2); the Flood (chapters 6-10); the sacrifice of Isaac (chapter 22); etc.

After spending some time on one of these smaller events, you can look even closer and study one particular feature in detail.

After taking a close look at a particular event, make sure you back away and recall the big picture in the context of the entire book. Remember, you do not want to end up with a lot of disconnected fragments but rather with a unified whole in which all the details fit in with the overall message of the book.

##### **Alter your approach.**

There is more than one way to study Scripture. The more strategies you use, the more insight you will gain.

#### **Two Principles Of Patience**

Here are two keys to reading the Bible patiently:

1. Be patient with the text.
2. Be patient with yourself.

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. List the two (2) keys to reading the Bible patiently. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. We must remember that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word requires \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ . List two (2) reasons why people become disillusioned or impatient with Bible study. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What should you do before you seek understanding of a passage from a secondary source other than the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List & briefly explain three (3) ways to make a long-term commitment to reading the Bible patiently. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which Bible study method will help you study all sixty-six books in five-and-a-half years? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Explain how to “zoom out” and get the “big picture” in Bible study. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Explain the “big picture” of Genesis, using chapter topics. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What events will you want to look at closely in the book of Genesis? What is this called? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the final goal (desired end result) of all your Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Write Psalm 1:5 on the lines provided below. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 11

### READ SELECTIVELY

#### Read The Bible Selectively

Selective Bible reading involves using the right questions when you study the Scriptures. Here are six questions to ask when studying any passage of Scripture.

##### 1. Who?

Who are the people in the text? Once you have identified who is in the passage, you should look for two things.

###### a. What is said about the person or people?

For example, Joshua 2:1 introduces a woman named Rahab who was a harlot. Andrew is introduced in John 1:40 as *“Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”* Whenever anything is said about a person, make a note of it. Be sure to consult other passages to learn everything you can about the person or people.

###### b. What does the person or people say?

You may wonder why God included so many comments and details of conversations in His Word. The reason is because He wants you to see the process people went through in order to come to the conclusions they came to.

##### 2. What?

What is happening in the text? What are the events and in what order? What happens to the characters? What argument is presented? What point is made? What is the writer trying to communicate? What is wrong in this scene? For example, King Saul went to war against the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15. He killed them, captured their king, took their spoils, and prepares to praise God with sacrifices. But what is wrong in this scene? Samuel reveals the problem *“Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD?”* (1 Samuel 15:19) Saul had not obeyed completely. And in God’s view, partial obedience is disobedience.

##### 3. Where?

Where is the event taking place? Where are the people in the story? Where are they coming from? Where are they going? Where is the writer? Where were the original readers of this text? The question *“Where?”* is one reason to have an atlas when you study the Bible. If you are studying someone’s travels, trace them on a map. If you are studying 1 Corinthians, find Corinth on a map. If you are studying Acts 8 with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, locate the road from Jerusalem to Gaza on the map.

##### 4. When?

When did the events in the text take place? When did they occur in relation to other events in Scripture? When did the writer write the book? Always try to determine the time period involved. For example, observe Mark 1:35. *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* Notice what time this took place.

##### 5. Why?

Why is this included? Why is it placed here? Why does it follow that? Why does it precede that? Why does this person say that? *“Why?”* is a question that digs for the meaning. For example, the parable of the prodigal son is found only in the gospel of Luke – not in Matthew, Mark, or John. Why? Why does Luke alone record this powerful parable? The question *“Why?”* probes the text more than any other. Asking it will inevitably lead to new insights.

##### 6. What difference will it make?

What difference would it make if I were to apply this truth? *“Wherefore?”* is the question that gets us started doing something about what we have read. Remember, the Word of God was not written to satisfy our curiosity; it was written to change our lives.



***What Have You Learned?***

1. List and briefly explain six (6) questions to ask when studying any passage of Scripture.

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2. List and explain the two (2) questions you should ask about the people in the text. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. On the lines provided below, write Psalm 1:6. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times.

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## Chapter 12

### READ PRAYERFULLY

#### Read the Bible Prayerfully

We tend to think of Bible study and prayer as separate disciplines, but in fact, they are integrally related. Prayer is really a key to effective Bible study. Learn to pray before, during, and after reading the Scriptures. Prayer is especially crucial when you come to a place in your study where you need understanding.

Here are two suggestions to help you utilize prayer effectively.

##### **1. Do not try to imitate other Christians.**

Christians should pray corporately but that does not mean they should pray identically. I have discovered there are two groups of people who can teach you the most about praying. The first group is children. They are refreshing and realistic in their prayer. The other group is new converts. They have not yet learned all of the fancy phrases that more experienced people use in prayer. They just talk to the Lord from their heart in their own way. After all, the only thing that really moves Him is our heart.

##### **2. Turn Scripture into prayer.**

God loves to be reminded of what He has promised in His Word. So tell Him. Remind Him. Claim His promises. We will look at an illustration of this from Nehemiah of how Nehemiah turns God's Word into prayer. The text is Nehemiah 1:4-11. In this passage, Nehemiah is a high-ranking Jewish official in the Babylonian court. Some messengers arrive telling him that Jerusalem is in trouble. Its walls are broken down, and the people are in distress. So Nehemiah prays. Notice, the first thing he does is to adore God:

*"And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:" (1:5)*

You can write "adoration" next to this verse. Before he does anything else, Nehemiah occupies himself with who God is. Quite often, we focus more on ourselves than on God. However, the prayers of the Bible have one characteristic in common: they always focus on the Person to whom the prayer is addressed. Considering what we need, we should ask, "Who" are we talking to? What kind of Person is this?

Having occupied himself with God, his next step is to confess his sin as well as his people's sin:

*"Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses." (1:6-7)*

You can write "confession" next to this verse. The prayer is now focused on sin – not only the people's sin, but Nehemiah's sin, too. Notice the connection between Nehemiah's focus on sin following his focus on God. The recognition of our sinfulness always follows a perception of God's holiness.

Nehemiah started with adoration, focusing on who God is. Then he moved to confession. Now he concludes by claiming God's promises:

*"O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." (1:11)*

Nehemiah now moves to what we call "petition." His focus is on the needs of his people. And in making his request, he leans on the promises of God. There is a great lesson in this. Always pray on the basis of the promises of God. The important question with any promise is, "Who" made it?

Nehemiah shows you how to pray: Begin with adoration. Occupy yourself with who God is. That will lead you to confession because you will see yourself in proper perspective. Then you are ready to petition God with your need.

There is a powerful example for prayerful Bible study in Psalm 119. This is the longest psalm in the Bible. It has more verses (176) than any other chapter in the canon. And every verse has something to say about the Word of God – its purpose, its benefits, its value, etc. A number of verses relate specifically to reading Scripture prayerfully.

## Chapter 13

### *READ IMAGINATIVELY*

#### **Read The Bible Imaginatively**

Often when we come to the Scriptures, we use the least imaginative, most overworked approaches possible. Here are five suggestions for how to read imaginatively.

**1. Use different translations and paraphrases.**

Reading different versions of the Bible is an excellent way to stimulate your imagination. With major developments in our understanding of ancient Hebrew and Greek, we now have a variety of translations available today with some being extraordinarily accurate translations.

**2. Rewrite the text in your own paraphrase.**

It will challenge your imagination to rewrite the text into words that make sense to you, while using caution not to distort the true meaning.

**3. Read Scripture in a different language.**

If you know a second language, read a translation of the Bible in that language. You will make new discoveries in the text.

**4. Have someone read the text out loud.**

It was mentioned in an earlier chapter that the human voice has a way of bringing life to words on the page. Let your children read the stories of Scripture out loud. If you know someone of a different culture ask that person to read the text for you.

**5. Vary your setting.**

While it is important to have a set time and place to study the Scriptures, sometimes it helps to explore different environments in which to read the Word. Many of Jesus' parables were given by the Sea of Galilee. David composed many of the Psalms when he was a shepherd, out in the fields. The idea here is to do whatever it takes to see the Word from a different perspective. If you always read Scripture in the same way and in the same place time after time, you risk making it into a routine exercise with little interest or excitement.

#### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. We tend to think of Bible study and \_\_\_\_\_ as separate \_\_\_\_\_. They are integrally \_\_\_\_\_. Prayer is really a key to \_\_\_\_\_ Bible \_\_\_\_\_. Learn to \_\_\_\_\_ before, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ reading the Scriptures. \_\_\_\_\_ is especially crucial when you come to a place in your study where you need \_\_\_\_\_.

2. List two (2) suggestions to help utilize prayer effectively. Briefly explain each.

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3. What word can be used as explanation for each portion of Nehemiah's prayer using God's Word as the foundation (Nehemiah 1:4-11)?

Nehemiah 1:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah 1:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah 1:11 \_\_\_\_\_

4. List and briefly explain five (5) ways to read your Bible imaginatively. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 14

### READ MEDITATIVELY

#### Read the Bible Meditatively

This simply means learn to reflect on the Word. We are part of a very “hurried” generation. But there is no such thing as “instant spirituality.” This is why the Scripture speaks so frequently about meditation. Here are a few examples:

##### **Joshua 1:8**

*“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein [when?] day and night, [please note] that thou mayest observe to do [not to know; to do] according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

This verse shows the close connection between meditating on God’s Word and acting on it. This will be an important key when we get to Step 3 – Application.

##### **Proverbs 23:7**

*“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...”*

The Bible teaches that you become what you think. So be careful what you think.

##### **Psalms 1:1-2**

*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*

There is the day-and-night pattern again. That is typical of meditation. It is not an exercise that you do for a few minutes only. It is a mental discipline that you do throughout the day. Biblical meditation means filling your mind with the truth that God has revealed.

##### **Psalms 119:97**

*“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”*

Have you ever observed that most of us waste a lot of time doing routine things? Standing in line, waiting on a taxi, waiting on someone, riding, driving, or walking somewhere. If this time were calculated, it would be surprising the amount of time wasted. What are you doing with your mind during that time? This is a good time to use meditating on the Scriptures.

##### **Psalms 19:7-8**

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”*

This psalm gives some profound insight into Scripture. It focuses on the Word of God, telling you what its characteristics are: *“The law of the LORD is perfect...the testimony of the LORD is sure...the statutes of the LORD are right...”* It also tells you what the effects of the Word are: *“converts the soul...making wise the simple...rejoicing the heart.”*

The psalm ends with this prayer: **Psalms 19:14**

*“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

This shows that the psalmist viewed meditation as an absolute necessity to his spiritual life. If this was important in that day, how much more important is it for our generation? We need to bathe our minds in the waters of the Word so that our words and our thoughts become pleasing in God’s sight.

**What Have You Learned?**

1. On the lines provided, write Joshua 1:8 two (2) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does it mean to “read the Bible meditatively?” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How do each of the following Scriptures teach us to “read meditatively?” \_\_\_\_\_  
Joshua 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Proverbs 23:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 1:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 119:97 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 19:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 19:14 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Write Psalm 19:14 three (3) times on the lines provided. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 15

### READ PURPOSEFULLY

In Chapter 2, we looked at 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which says that all Scripture is given by divine inspiration and is “*profitable*.” It serves a fourfold purpose: *teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteous living*.

#### Read The Bible Purposefully

Purposeful reading looks for the aim of the author. There is no verse of Scripture that is there by accident. Every word contributes to meaning. Your challenge as a reader is to discern that meaning.

One of the keys is to look for, is structure. Every book of the Bible has both grammatical and literary structure. We will look at this and see how they contribute to meaning.

#### 2. Purpose through Grammatical Structure

Many of the biblical writers communicate their thoughts through carefully selected grammar. Grammar is determinative for doctrine. Therefore we need to pay careful attention to the following grammatical features of the text.

##### a. Verbs

Verbs are the critical action words that tell us who is doing what.

One example is Ephesians 5:18. Paul said, “...*be filled with the Spirit*...” The verb “*be filled*” is passive. He does not say, “*Fill yourself with the Spirit*.” He challenges us to open ourselves to the Spirit’s control, to yield to His will.

Another example is found in Genesis 22:10, where Abraham took his son, Isaac, up Mount Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice: “*And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son*.” The verbs used here indicate a completed act, as if Abraham actually slew his son. In his mind, the deed is done; he has obeyed God to the uttermost. This is crucial to understanding the writer’s purpose. He is showing Abraham’s faith – faith illustrated by total obedience. (See also Romans 4:16-21)

##### b. Subject and Object

The subject of a sentence does the acting, and the object is acted upon. It is important not to confuse them.

Philippians 2:3 states “...*let each esteem other better than themselves*.” The order is crucial. “*Esteem*” is the verb; “*each*” is the subject; “*other*” is the object.

A related verse is Galatians 6:4 that says, “*But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*.” Again, the verb is “*prove*”; the subject is “*every man*”; the object is “*his own work*.”

##### c. Modifiers

Modifiers are descriptive words such as adjectives and adverbs. They enlarge the meaning of the words they modify.

An example is seen in Philippians 4. Paul thanked the Philippians for a gift they had sent him. Paul said, “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*.” (4:19) This verse has often been taken out of context and made to appear that God promises to supply all of our wants rather than all of our needs. But it was never intended to stimulate materialism. Rather it is Paul’s statement of confidence in God’s provision. The modifier “*all*” is definitive: “...*my God shall supply all your need*...” literally, “every need of yours.” He not only supplies what we need, He supplies *all* our need.

##### d. Prepositional phrases

Prepositions are the little words that tell you where the action is taking place; *in, on, upon, through, to*, etc. Consider a few prepositional phrases that appear in the Scriptures, and you will see how important it is to recognize them: “*in Christ*,” “*in the beginning*,” “*by the Spirit*,” “*according to the Spirit*,” “*in the flesh*,” “*under the law*,” “*by faith*,” “*according to the Word of the Lord*.”

##### e. Connectives

Two of the most powerful words in the Bible are “*and*” and “*but*.” We saw the importance of “*but*” in Acts 1:8. Other good examples are in Numbers 13:31; 2 Samuel 11:1; Luke 22:26; John 8:1 and 1 John 3:17.

“And” is just as crucial: “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*” (Psalm 37:4); “*Abide in me, and I in you.*” (John 15:4); Paul and Barnabas: “*And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.*” (Acts 13:42-43); “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*” (James 4:8)

Another important connective is “*therefore.*” Whenever you see the word “*therefore,*” go back and see what it is there for. This term is frequently used in Paul’s epistle to the Romans. The Old Testament used “*therefore*” extensively.

## **2. Purpose Through Literary Structure**

In addition to carefully selected grammar, the biblical writers communicate their purposes through literary structure. The Bible has literary structure. When we come to Step 2 – Interpretation, we will see how different kinds of literature use different kinds of literary structure. But for now, here are five literary structures to look for:

### **a. Biographical structure.**

Biographical structure, commonly found in the narrative books, builds on the key persons in the story. Genesis 12-50 focuses on the four patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Judges structures itself around the leaders of Israel in the period between Joshua and Israel’s first king, Saul. In 1 and 2 Samuel, the narrative moves from Samuel to Saul to David. In Acts, the apostle Peter is prominent in chapters 1-12 and the apostle Paul in chapters 13-28.

### **b. Geographical structure.**

The key here is place or location. The structure of Exodus depends heavily on the places that Israel visited on its way from Egypt to the Promised Land.

### **c. Historical structure.**

Key events are the basis of historical structure. The book of Joshua is a good example. The book opens with Joshua receiving his charge from the Lord. Then the people cross the Jordan. Then they take Jericho. Then they face defeat at Ai. And so it continues as the people go in and possess the land. One of the most interesting uses of historical structure is found in the Book of Revelation. In John’s vision there are startling events of global proportion that take place, and the narrative progresses from incident to incident until it reaches a climax in chapter 21, with the presentation of a new heaven and new earth.

### **d. Chronological structure.**

Closely related to historical structure is chronological structure, where the writer organizes material around key times. There is temporal progression; the events of the story happen sequentially. 1 and 2 Samuel employ biographical structure as well as chronological structure. The narrative moves like a diary through the early days of Israel’s kingdom. Incident after incident begins with the word, “*Then...*,” “*Then...*,” “*Then...*”

### **e. Ideological structure.**

Most of Paul’s letters to churches are structured around ideas and concepts. The book of Romans is a classic in this regard. It argues forcefully and comprehensively for one main idea, as summarized in 1:16: “*the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.*” Ideological structure makes it easy to outline a book. Once you understand the central theme and purpose, you can determine what each part contributes to the understanding of that theme and purpose.

## **The Quest for Meaning**

Identifying structure is a critical step in the Bible study process. Structure is the entrance to understanding a writer’s purpose.



### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. What is the fourfold purpose of Scripture as found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Explain what it means to “read the Bible purposefully.” \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What two (2) types of structure are found in every book of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Many of the Biblical writers communicate their thoughts through carefully selected \_\_\_\_\_. Grammar is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. List the five (5) grammatical features of the text we should pay careful attention to. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

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5. In addition to carefully selected \_\_\_\_\_, the Biblical writers communicate their \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ structure. The Bible has \_\_\_\_\_ structure. List the five (5) literary structures to look for. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

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6. \_\_\_\_\_ structure is a critical step in the \_\_\_\_\_ study \_\_\_\_\_. Structure is the \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ a writer's \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chapter 16

### *READ ACQUISITIVELY*

#### **Read The Bible Acquisitively**

This means to read not only to receive what it says, but also to retain what it says; not only to perceive it, but also to possess it. The key to this is personal, active involvement in the process. There is an old proverb that says, “I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.”

Modern psychological studies support this with scientific data: We remember at most only 10 percent of what we hear; 50 percent of what we see and hear; but 90 percent of what we do, see, and hear.

#### **Get Involved In The Process**

This book will have value only to the extent that it gets you involved in the process of effective Bible study. What difference does it make whether you have read every page, and maybe even underlined parts of the text, if in the end you leave your Bible on the shelf and never get into it yourself? The goal is to see life-change as a result of your personal interaction with God’s Word.

If you are studying Elijah on Mount Carmel, try acting out the story involving other people. Try a concentrated, month long biographical study of a particular character in the Scripture. Develop a profile on that person. Do whatever it takes to become an acquisitive Bible reader.

#### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. What does it mean to “read the Bible acquisitively?” Be sure to include the key to reading the Bible acquisitively. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is the old proverb that talks about reading acquisitively? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What scientific data gained from modern psychological studies support this proverb?

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4. This book will have \_\_\_\_\_ only to the extent that it gets you \_\_\_\_\_ in the process of \_\_\_\_\_ Bible \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ is to see \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of your personal \_\_\_\_\_ with God’s Word.

5. Locate the story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel in your Bible, and write the Scripture reference below. Read the story 2 or 3 times. Act out this story as any character other than Elijah. (You will be one of the prophets of Baal, or Ahab, or anyone besides Elijah.) On the lines provided below, write what you learn by becoming a part of this story. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 17

### *READ TELESCOPICALLY*

#### **Read the Bible Telescopically**

Telescopic reading means viewing the parts in light of the whole. The Bible is not simply a collection of parts. It is an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What happens in much of Bible study is that we keep breaking it down and breaking it down, until we have nothing but baskets of fragments. We need people today who can put the parts back together again into a meaningful and powerful whole.

So every time you read and analyze Scripture, every time you take it apart, realize that you have only done half the job. Your next task is to put it back together again.

#### **1. Look for the connectives.**

In chapter 15 we looked at the power in the little words *but*, *and*, and *therefore*. These and other words are “connectives” in that they link the text together. Telescopic reading demands that you pay attention to these links, so that you can tie the writer’s message together in your mind.

#### **2. Pay attention to context.**

We saw the importance of context when we studied Acts 1:8. The principle to remember is that whenever you study a verse or a paragraph; always consult the neighbors of that verse or paragraph to find out what the broader context is. Telescopic reading never settles for close-ups alone; it always demands a wide-angle perspective. It always asks, “What is the big picture?”

#### **3. Evaluate the passage in light of the book as a whole.**

This is the ultimate extension of checking the context. For example, if you rush your way through the gospel of Mark verse by verse, you would probably enjoy the narrative, but you would miss the writer’s message.

It is not until you back off and evaluate the book as a whole that you discover that Mark breaks his account into two major sections. From 1:1 through 8:26, you have the Person of Christ; from 8:31 through 16:20, you have the purpose of Christ. The hinge of the book is 8:27-30, where He asks the crucial question, “*Whom do men say that I am?*” Many insights flow out of this structure. But it is something you can detect only by taking a telescopic look at the book.

#### **4. Look at the historical context of the book.**

History lends relevance to otherwise insignificant details. Whenever you come to a book of the Bible ask questions like: Where does this book fit historically? When was it written? When did the events take place? What was happening elsewhere in the world at that time?

Where does this book fit in the flow of the Bible? Does it come before, during, or after Christ? How much of the Bible was complete when this material was written? How much did the writer and the people in the book know about God?

You will probably have to use secondary sources to discover the historical context of the biblical books. The God of the Bible is the God of history. He works in and through real people in the real world to accomplish His purposes. You will discover a lot about those purposes if you read His Word telescopically.

### **What Have You Learned?**

1. What does it mean to “read the Bible telescopically?” \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Every time you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture, every time you take it \_\_\_\_\_, realize that you have only done \_\_\_\_\_ the job. Your next task is to \_\_\_\_\_ it back \_\_\_\_\_ again.

3. List the four (4) ways to put the things you learn in Bible study back together again. Briefly explain each.

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4. You will probably have to use \_\_\_\_\_ sources to discover the \_\_\_\_\_ context of the \_\_\_\_\_ books. The God of the \_\_\_\_\_ is the God of \_\_\_\_\_. He works in and through \_\_\_\_\_ people in the real \_\_\_\_\_ to accomplish His \_\_\_\_\_. You will \_\_\_\_\_ a lot about those \_\_\_\_\_ if you read His Word \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Write Psalm 1:1-6 on the lines provided below. On a separate sheet of paper write this chapter five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Read “Best Methods of Study” by Samuel Smith. Complete the assignment sheet and return during next class session.

## Chapter 18

### WORK WITH A PARAGRAPH

The paragraph is the basic unit of study – not the verse, not the chapter. A paragraph may be one verse or an entire chapter. The paragraph represents a complete thought. It is a group of related sentences and statements that deal with one main topic or idea. That makes it ideal for observation study.

Originally the Scriptures were not divided into chapters, paragraphs, and verses. Twelve hundred years after Christ, scholars began to divide them up into the divisions we have today. They did so to enhance Bible Study, but the Holy Spirit by no means inspired their efforts. Many of the breaks are artificially imposed on the text. So sometimes we have to ignore them in order to read the books properly.

#### **The Prayer of Nehemiah**

The paragraph we are going to study is Nehemiah 1:4-11. Turn in your Bible to this paragraph.

#### **1. Check the Context.**

Verse four begins, “*And it came to pass, when I heard these words.*” **What is the significance of the word “And?”** It is a connective. It links this paragraph with something else. The phrase “*these words*” compels us to ask, “**What words?**” Both of these questions force us to go back to the beginning of the book to check the context.

The beginning of verse 1 gives an introduction to the book. **What is found there?** There are three very important clues. First, there is something about the nature or contents of the book – these are the words of a particular man. Second, this man is Nehemiah. Third, there is something about the family of Nehemiah that is especially helpful because the name *Nehemiah* appears elsewhere; but it is a different Nehemiah.

The last part of verse 1 says, “*And it came to pass,*” and **then what do we notice?** Three prepositional phrases: “*in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capitol.*” **What does this refer to? What word could be put beside the first two statements?** *Time*, because they tell me the month and the year.

A Bible dictionary can help us with information about the month Chisleu. We will learn that the ancient Hebrew calendar was altogether different from ours. Chisleu was their ninth month, beginning in our November and extending into our December.

We will also see that the Hebrews’ calendar differed from that of the Persians, which becomes significant because Nehemiah was an exile in Persia. He had a very high position in the government but he was marking time by the Jewish calendar.

Next we see that this is taking place “*in the twentieth year.*” **The twentieth year of what?** This is not given until we get to the beginning of chapter 2.

Finally, **what does “Shushan the palace” tell me?** This answers the question “Where?” But what is *Shushan the palace*? In a Bible dictionary we will see that there were two palaces and Shushan was the winter palace. (Remember, this was taking place in November-December.)

**And it came to pass  
in the month Chisleu,  
in the twentieth year,  
as I was in Shushan the palace,  
That Hanani...came  
and I asked them  
concerning the Jews  
and concerning Jerusalem.  
And they said unto me  
The remnant...are in great affliction and reproach  
the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down  
and the gates thereof are burned with fire.  
And it came to pass  
when I heard these words  
that I sat down  
and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed**

Verse 2 – **What does Nehemiah do? What two things does he ask?** First of all, “concerning the Jews” – his people. Then he asks “about Jerusalem” – his home.

Verse 3 – **What relationship does the answer have to the question?** Nehemiah asks about the people and then the place. He is given a three-part answer: (1) “The remnant...in great affliction and reproach” (this has to do with the people); (2) “The wall of Jerusalem is broken down” (this has to do with the place); (3) “The gates are burned with fire” (This also has to do with the place).

Notice that the order of the answer is the same as the order of the question that is: the people first, and then the place. This lets us know that Nehemiah’s first concern was for the people, not the place.

Verse 4 – **What four things does Nehemiah do?** He weeps, mourns, fasts, and prays.

## 2. Label Your Observation.

**Can I find a way to gather these together?** Weeping and Mourning have to do with emotions. Fasting and praying indicate a spiritual response.

In your Bible study, you need to label your observations. This will help you to better understand what is happening. Choose words that summarize the contents for you. No detail is trivial.

Later in verse 11, we see that Nehemiah adds an interesting detail: “I was the king’s cupbearer.” The cupbearer was virtually the prime minister, the second-in-command. The Holy Spirit includes this detail to show us how God accomplished His purpose. God had His man in a strategic position.

Have you ever ask yourself why God has placed you where you are? Whatever your situation, what opportunity has God given you to accomplish His purposes? He places every one of His children in a strategic position. He wants to use you for His honor and glory.

### “I Do Not Know Where To Begin”

There are many more observations to be made about this paragraph. In fact, the book of Nehemiah is one of the most fascinating books to be studied in the Word of God.

You have seen how to observe a verse and now a paragraph. You have also discovered that you must learn to read better and faster, as for the first time, and just as you would a love letter. And you have been exposed to ten strategies that are guaranteed to help you be a first-rate Bible reader.

But not only must you learn to read, you must learn what to look for.

### SIX THINGS TO LOOK FOR

Things that are emphasized  
Things that are repeated  
Things that are related  
Things that are alike  
Things that are unlike  
Things that are true to life

### What Have You Learned?

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the basic unit of \_\_\_\_\_. A paragraph may be one \_\_\_\_\_ or an entire \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents a \_\_\_\_\_. It is a group of \_\_\_\_\_ sentences and \_\_\_\_\_ that deal with one \_\_\_\_\_ topic or \_\_\_\_\_. That makes it ideal for \_\_\_\_\_ study. Originally, the \_\_\_\_\_ were not divided into \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ years after \_\_\_\_\_, scholars began to divide them up into the

\_\_\_\_\_ we have today. They did so to enhance \_\_\_\_\_ but the \_\_\_\_\_ by no means \_\_\_\_\_ their efforts. Many of the breaks are \_\_\_\_\_ imposed on the \_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes we have to \_\_\_\_\_ them in order to \_\_\_\_\_ the books \_\_\_\_\_.





## Chapter 19

### THINGS THAT ARE EMPHASIZED

You could spend hours looking through the Word, but it will be a complete waste of time if you do not know what you are looking for. That is why in Observation, you ask and answer the question, **“What do I see?”**

There are six clues to watch for in Scripture. Each one will give important information. A simple way to remember them is to use your hand. There is a clue for each of the fingers, and one for the palm of your hand.

Start with your thumb. The first clue to look for is:

#### **1. Things That Are Emphasized.**

The Bible uses several ways to emphasize material. We will look at four.

##### **a. Amount of Space.**

A book can emphasize something by devoting a large portion of space to it. We saw this in Genesis, which has fifty chapters. The first 11 cover the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and other details. All of these major events are compressed into just 11 chapters. By contrast, the writer devotes 12-50 to the lives of four individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Through this emphasis, we see that the most important thing in the book is the family that God chose to be His people.

We see the same thing in the gospels. Matthew has 1,062 verses, at least 342, one third of the book, is about the Savior. That has a major bearing on the purpose of the book. Some of the gospels take more space to cover the crucifixion than other events in the life of Christ.

In the epistles of Paul, we frequently find a section of doctrine followed by a section of practical applications based on that doctrine. Ephesians 1-3 tells us what God has done for us. Ephesians 4-6 tells us what we need to do as a result. There is a balance between theology and practice. The same pattern is found in Colossians. However, in Romans the ratio is 11 chapters of doctrine to five of applications, which gives us some idea of the emphasis Paul wants to make there.

Whenever you observe a portion of Scripture, you need to ask the questions: How much space is given to this subject? What is the writer emphasizing?

##### **b. Stated Purpose.**

Another way the biblical writers may emphasize their points is by stating their purpose clearly. A good example is in John 20:30-31:

*“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*

In Proverbs, Solomon begins his list of proverbs on wisdom by telling the reader why he should read the book:

*“To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.”* (Proverbs 1:2-6)

By stating his purpose at the beginning the writer frames the reader’s thinking as he or she approaches the material. Proverbs 1:2-6 lets us know the emphasis is going to be on wisdom.

##### **c. Order.**

A third way to emphasize something is to give it a strategic placement in the material. Look at the order in the Creation as found in Genesis 1-2. Consider the order of the names of the chosen twelve in Luke 6:14-16. Who is mentioned first? Who is paired with whom? Who is last? By choosing where to locate people, events, ideas, and so on, a writer can call attention to something. So look for the order given. It can give major insights into the text.

##### **d. Movement from the lesser to the greater, and vice versa.**

These are really special cases of what we just looked at in terms of order. Often a writer will build up to a climax, where he presents some key information. In the life of David, 2 Samuel 11-12 records what are probably the most crucial events of David’s life – the murder of Uriah

and his sin with Bathsheba. Those chapters form a sort of pivot to the book. Everything before them leads up to them and everything after goes down from them.

When you study the book of Acts, you find that you could not have the book of Acts without Acts 2. It is the pivot. Everything grows out of what happens there.

So the first clue to look for when you come to the Scriptures is that which is emphasized.

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. In Observation, what question do you ask and answer? \_\_\_\_\_

2. List four (4) ways the Bible emphasizes material. Give a brief explanation and example of each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the pivot of the book of Acts? \_\_\_\_\_

4. On the lines provided, write 2 Timothy 3:16-17. On a separate sheet of paper, write these verses five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 20

### THINGS THAT ARE REPEATED

There is probably no tool of teaching more powerful than repetition. Repetition reinforces what has already been said. Paul expresses this in Philippians 3:1, *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.”*

The second clue to look for is:

#### **2. Things That Are Repeated.**

Have you ever noticed how often Jesus repeats things to His disciples? The gospels record at least nine times that He said, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* You get the impression that Jesus wanted His disciples (and us) to pay attention to what He had to say.

Here are five categories of repetition to look for:

##### **a. Terms, Phrases, and Clauses.**

Scripture constantly repeats terms, phrases, and clauses to emphasize their importance. In Psalm 136, the psalmist repeats, *“His mercy endureth forever”* no less than twenty-six times. Why? He was emphasizing the fact that God’s mercy endures forever.

In Hebrews 11, the phrase *“by faith”* appears eighteen times. The writer is talking about different people, living in different times, under different circumstances. But all of them have lived the same *“by faith”* lifestyle.

Look how important the little word *“if”* is to 1 Corinthians 15. Paul uses it seven times in verses 12-28, where he is talking about the critical importance of Christ’s resurrection to our faith. *“If”* emphasizes the fact that everything we believe is conditioned on the resurrection.

##### **b. Characters.**

Sometimes a writer repeats a character again and again to make a point. Barnabas is a good example. His given name was Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, meaning Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36). Perhaps the most important thing is that he was an encourager. We do not know too much about this man, but whenever someone in the early church needed help, Barnabas was sent to help.

##### **c. Incidents and circumstances.**

Sometimes a writer makes a point by repeating a particular incident or set of circumstances. In the book of Judges, for instance, the writer begins each section with the words, *“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD.”* The cycle is repeated until the end of the book, where it gets to the heart of the problem. *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* (21:25). Another example of repeated circumstances occurs in Matthew. Throughout his gospel, the author shows a tension between Jesus and the Pharisees.

##### **d. Patterns.**

A related situation is that of a repeating pattern. Bible students have long recognized the parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of our Lord. Likewise, there are parallels between the experience of Israel and that of Jesus. With Saul and David in 1 and 2 Samuel: whatever Saul did wrong, David did right; Saul was the people’s choice for king, David was God’s choice for king.

##### **e. New Testament use of Old Testament passages.**

If the Spirit of God compelled a New Testament writer to recall a passage from the Old Testament, it is likely that He wanted to emphasize that portion of God’s Word.

Some people in the early days did not want to include the story of Jonah in the canon of Scripture. But Jesus’ reference to it proves it to be divinely inspired.

Consider the epistle to the Hebrews. It would be difficult to imagine what the book would have to say were it not for its heavy reliance on Old Testament Scripture.

Whenever you study the Bible and notice that something is repeated, (said more than once) mark it down. It is not because the writers could not think of anything else to say. It is their way of pointing out matters of crucial importance.

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. There is probably no \_\_\_\_\_ of teaching more \_\_\_\_\_ than \_\_\_\_\_. Repetition \_\_\_\_\_ what has already been said. Write the verse (with Scripture reference) on the lines provided, where Paul expresses this. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Jesus used repetition to teach His disciples. What phrase is used in the gospels at least nine (9) times that He used to get them to pay attention? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. List the five (5) categories of repetition to look for in Bible study. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. When you study the \_\_\_\_\_ and notice something is \_\_\_\_\_, (said more than \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ it down. It is not because the \_\_\_\_\_ could not think of anything else to \_\_\_\_\_. It is their way of pointing out \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ importance.

## Chapter 21

### THINGS THAT ARE RELATED

“Related” means things that have some connection, or some interaction with each other. Just because two things are next to each other does not make them related. There must be a tie that somehow binds them together.

The third clue to look for is:

#### **3. Things that are Related.**

Look for three kinds of relationships in your study of Scripture.

##### **a. Movement from the general to the specific.**

This is the relationship between the whole and its parts, between a category and its individual members, between the big picture and the details.

Here is an illustration from Matthew 6, a part of the Sermon on the Mount. (Verse 1) *“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”*

When you do your righteous acts to be seen by men, this will be your only reward.

Then Jesus moves from the general principle to three specific illustrations: First in the area of giving (verses 2-4), then in the area of praying (verses 5-15), and then in the area of fasting (verses 16-18).

Another example can be found in Genesis 1:1. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*

If the account ended there, we would not have any of the details of how God created the heavens and the earth. We would just know that He did it. But the rest of the chapter gives the specifics: on day one He created light (3-5); on day two He separated the water from the skies (6-8); on day three He formed the dry land and caused vegetation to grow (9-13); etc.

Whenever you come across a broad, general statement in Scripture, look to see whether the writer follows with specific details to further reveal his subject.

##### **b. Questions and Answers.**

The question is one of the most powerful tools of communication. When someone asks you a question, they force you to think. If someone only asks questions and never provides the answers, this can be very frustrating. We will see that biblical writers employ both strategic questions and helpful answers.

The epistle to the Romans is a good example. It is written like a legal treatise, as if Paul were a lawyer. He is constantly raising questions and then answering them. For example, look at Romans 6:1: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* Then he answers that question: *“God forbid.”* In verse 15 he again uses a question: *“What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?”* Again he answers: *“God forbid.”*

Sometimes a question itself carries so much weight that it needs no answer. Job chapters 38-40 are filled with such questions.

The Lord asked some very pointed questions of His disciples. *“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* (Matthew 6:27) *“Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?”* (Mark 4:40) *“What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”* (Matthew 26:40)

Questions and answers demand your attention. They are important keys to help you unlock a text.

##### **c. Cause and Effect.**

In Scripture we find many cause-effect relationships. There is a good illustration found in Acts 8:1: *“...And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem...”* You can ask the question, “At what time?” Checking the context, you will find that it was at the time that Stephen was martyred. This event intensified the persecution, and all the believers except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. But verse 4 says, *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.”* In other words, the persecution was the cause, and the preaching was the effect.

In chapter 18 we studied Nehemiah's prayer. He reminded God of some promises that He had made in the books that Moses had written. God had said that if the people disobeyed Him, He would eventually send them into captivity. The people disobeyed (that was the cause), and God allowed the Babylonians to carry them into captivity (that was the effect). Then Nehemiah himself depended on the cause-effect relationship. God had also promised that if the people repented (cause), He would return them to their land (effect).

Psalm 1 says that the person who plants himself in the counsel of God's Word will flourish like a well-watered tree. This is a direct cause-effect relationship between the Word and God's blessing.

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. What does it mean to look for things that are related? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. List the three (3) kinds of relationships in your study of Scripture. Give a brief explanation and example of each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Explain how Psalm 1 is an example of the cause and effect relationship found in God's Word. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Write Psalm 1:1-6 on the lines provided. On a separate sheet of paper, write this chapter five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 22

### THINGS THAT ARE ALIKE, AND UNLIKE

The moment that we see two of anything alike – especially when we do not expect it – the similarity immediately draws our attention. This is also true in Bible study. Both similarities and contrasts draw our attention.

The fourth clue to look for is:

#### 4. Things That Are Alike.

##### a. Similes.

The biblical writers give you a number of terms that signal similarities. The two most common words are *as* and *like*. They indicate the figure of speech called a “simile,” which is a word picture that draws a comparison between two things.

For example, Psalm 42:1 says, “*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*” The psalmist compares his longing for God to a hot, thirsty deer.

In 1 Peter 2:2, Peter uses a simile: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*” He makes a comparison between the appetite of a baby for its mother’s milk and the appetite of the believer for the nourishment of God’s Word.

In Isaiah 40:25, the Lord asks the question: “*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*” The answer is nobody. God alone is God, uniquely supreme and sovereign. But the word *like* usually signals similarity; in this case it is contrast.

##### b. Metaphors.

Related to the simile, the metaphor is where comparison is made without using *as* and *like*. Jesus says, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*” (John 15:1) He is obviously speaking figuratively and not literally. He is painting a picture that illustrates His relationship to the Father and to believers as well.

Jesus uses an extended metaphor in John 3 when he talks with Nicodemus. “*Except a man be born again.*” (verses 3,5,7) Jesus is making a comparison, “just as you were born physically, Nicodemus, and received the equipment for this life, so you need to be born again spiritually to receive the equipment for eternal life.”

So Nicodemus asks, “*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*” (3:4) He did not understand Jesus’ use of the metaphor. That’s why the Lord responded, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.*” (3:5-6)

Then Jesus employed a simile: “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:*” (3:14) Nicodemus was a Pharisee, so he knew better than anyone the significance of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9). Jesus was making a comparison between that incident and His own crucifixion to come.

Keep in mind that similarities have a way of attracting attention to themselves. Get into the habit of looking for them. You will find them especially in the wisdom literature, particularly in the Psalms. When you find one, mark it. The writer is trying to communicate with you through the effective tool of comparison.

The fifth clue to look for is:

#### 5. Things That Are Unlike.

The opposite of comparison is contrast, things that are unlike. You could say that in Bible Study, opposites attract. At least, they attract the eye of the observant reader. There are several ways the biblical writers signify contrast.

##### a. Use of *but*

The word *but* is a clue that a change of direction is coming. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly said, “*Ye have heard that it was said...But I say unto you...*” (Matthew 5).

In Galatians 5 Paul writes, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest...*” (5:19), and he lists them. Then in verse 22 he says, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is...*” and he lists them. He sets up a contrast between what the flesh produces and what the Spirit produces.

Acts 1:8, which looked at in detail, begins with “*But.*” The disciples wanted to know if He was about to establish the kingdom. He replied that it was not for them to know the time for that. “*But...*” and then comes all that we saw in verse 8.

Another example can be seen in Acts 8:26 where the word *but* is used in a contrast.

The little word, *but* signals a change in direction. *But* is one of the most important words you will ever come across in your study of Scripture. Whenever you see it, always stop and ask, what is the contrast being made?

### **b. Metaphors**

Just as things that are alike can be shown through metaphors, so can things that are unlike. Remember the parable of the unrighteous judge in Luke 18? What do we see in this story? The unrighteous judge is in the position that God is in. Does that make sense? The key is to notice that Jesus is setting up an effective contrast. He is saying, “If a corrupt and indifferent human judge finally gives in to the persistent pleas of a widow, *how much more* will the heavenly Father respond to the petitions of His Children?” The whole parable revolves on the skillful use of contrast.

### **c. Irony**

Another interesting example of contrast is found in Luke 8. Jesus is traveling around the Galilee region, teaching and healing. Great crowds are following Him. Luke makes a point of showing how many people are around him: the twelve are there (8:1); a group of women; (8:2-3); and “*much people*” followed Him. (8:4)

Luke is careful to tell us in verse 42, “*as he went the people thronged him.*” At this point an ironic contrast occurs. A woman with a chronic problem of bleeding somehow fights her way through the crowd and comes up behind Him. Upon touching Him, she is healed. And suddenly Jesus stops, and the crowd stops. He asked, “*Who touched me?*” Look at the disciple’s reaction: “*Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?*” (8:45)

But Jesus has felt the touch of faith. And this is the contrast that Luke wants us to see: In the midst of a crisis, in the middle of the crowd, an unknown woman privately and quietly approaches the Savior in faith, and He recognizes it. She stands out from the crowd because of her faith. Luke sets it up so that we notice her and benefit from her example.

Things that are alike and unlike make use of the strong human tendency to compare and contrast. As you study the Scriptures listen to that voice in your head saying, “Is this like the passage that I studied yesterday?” or “This section is different from anything else in this book.” That is a clear signal that the author is using things alike and unlike to communicate his message.



### **What Have You Learned?**

1. The moment we see \_\_\_\_\_ of anything \_\_\_\_\_ - especially when we do not expect it - the \_\_\_\_\_ immediately draws our \_\_\_\_\_. This is also true in \_\_\_\_\_ study. Both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ draw our \_\_\_\_\_.

2. List two (2) things that point to similarities in Scripture. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Keep in mind that \_\_\_\_\_ have a way of attracting \_\_\_\_\_ to themselves. Get into the \_\_\_\_\_ of looking for them. You will find them especially in the \_\_\_\_\_ literature, particularly in the \_\_\_\_\_. The writer is trying to \_\_\_\_\_ with you through the effective tool of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of comparison is \_\_\_\_\_, things that are \_\_\_\_\_. You could say that in Bible study, \_\_\_\_\_ attract. At least, they attract the eye of the \_\_\_\_\_ reader.

5. List three (3) ways Biblical writers signify contrast. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Things that are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ make use of the strong human tendency to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. As you study the Scriptures, listen to that voice in your \_\_\_\_\_ saying, "Is this \_\_\_\_\_ the passage I \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday?" or "This section is \_\_\_\_\_ from anything else in this \_\_\_\_\_." That is a clear \_\_\_\_\_ that the \_\_\_\_\_ is using things \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to communicate his \_\_\_\_\_.

7. Write Joshua 1:8 on the lines provided. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times.

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## Chapter 23

### THINGS THAT ARE TRUE TO LIFE

There are two essential components to quality observation.

- a. You have to learn how to read.
- b. You have to learn what to look for.

We have seen five clues to look for when you open the Word of God. The sixth and final clue is:

#### **6. Things That Are True To Life.**

The issue here is authenticity. What does this passage tell you about reality? What aspects of the text relate to your experience?

You must use your imagination and you need to look for principles. We obviously live in a culture that is greatly different from the cultures of the biblical era. Yet the same things that the biblical characters experienced, we experience. We feel the same emotions they felt. We have the same questions they had. They were real, live people who faced the same struggles, the same problems, and the same temptations you and I face.

As you read about them in Scripture, you need to ask: What were this person's ambitions? What were his goals? What problem was he facing? How did he feel? What was his response? What would be my response?

We are missing the best lessons of God's Word by failing to pick up on the experience of the people in it. Let me mention a few individuals that help us see truth in realistic terms. Notice that the Bible points us to reality. It never covers up the character of its subject.

#### **a. Abraham** (Genesis 22:2)

*"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."*

So Abraham walks up Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, who is about twenty-two years old. Isaac says to him, *"Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"* Abraham knows that his son is to be sacrificed. How do you think he felt? How would you feel?

#### **b. Moses** (Numbers 20:1-13)

Moses was probably the greatest leader of all time. But he never enters into the Promised Land. Why? Because he struck the rock twice. How did that punishment affect him? How might it have made him feel toward God? Toward life? (See Psalm 90) How do you respond to the consequences of your own sin?

#### **c. Noah** (Genesis 9:20-21)

Noah was a man of great righteousness. He obeyed God and thereby saved his family from the Flood. And yet the account tells us that he also became drunk. How was this possible? Well, the Scriptures paint him not as a perfect individual, but as a real, live person. Righteous? Honored by God? Absolutely. But also failing, weak, and sinful. What implications does that have for you?

#### **d. David**

King David was brilliant and gifted in many areas. He was a great warrior, a great athlete, a great poet, a great musician, and a great leader. He is the one person in Scripture that God describes as *"a man after his own heart"* (1 Samuel 13:14).

Yet this choice man of God fails God one day, when he is home instead of out on the battlefield with his troops. It only takes one woman to cause his fall. What is the Spirit of God saying to us by including this tragedy in the Scripture? What warning does it give us? What does it indicate about our humanity?

#### **e. Peter**

The reason most of us like Peter is because he reminds us so much of ourselves. He was willing to fight one hundred men by himself to rescue the Lord (John 18:10). Yet one young girl comes and says, *"Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"* He keeps repeating, "Who me?" She keeps insisting. And Peter starts swearing and cursing at this young girl. We ask why is the man saying this? Is this the same man that told Jesus, "You can depend on me?" But at the moment of crisis he failed – just as you or I might have. Peter was human.

#### **f. John Mark**

John Mark is easily overlooked because so little is said about him. He started out with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Early into the voyage, John Mark decided to go home. (Acts 13:13) Later when Paul and Barnabas were preparing for their second missionary journey, Barnabas suggested they take John Mark. Paul refused. Acts 15:36-39 says that they had a strong disagreement about this and they parted company. Then at the end of Paul's life, he wrote, *"Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."* (2 Timothy 4:11) What changed that John Mark became useful? It was not Paul but rather Barnabas who developed John Mark into a useful worker.

We see reality revealed in the lives of all these people. But this is easily missed if our eyes are not looking for things that are true to life. When you study the Bible, be sure to apply it to real life. You will discover that the people in the Scriptures are just like you and me.

Here are the six clues to look for every time you open your Bible.

1. What things are emphasized? (Thumb)
2. What things are repeated? (First finger)
3. What things are related? (Second finger)
4. What things are alike? (Third finger)
5. What things are unlike? (Fourth finger)
6. What things are true to life? (Palm of the hand)

Proverbs 20:12 speaks of the importance of observation:

*"The hearing ear, [The audio component] and the seeing eye, [The visual component] the LORD hath made even both of them."*

***Learn to listen – Learn to look.***

### **What Have You Learned?**

1. List the two (2) essential components to quality observation.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write 2 Timothy 2:15 on the lines provided. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times.

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3. When looking for things that are \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, the issue is \_\_\_\_\_. What does this passage tell you about \_\_\_\_\_? What aspects of the \_\_\_\_\_ relate to your \_\_\_\_\_?

4. You must use your \_\_\_\_\_ and you need to look for \_\_\_\_\_. We obviously live in a \_\_\_\_\_ that is greatly \_\_\_\_\_ from the cultures of the \_\_\_\_\_ era. Yet the same things that biblical \_\_\_\_\_ experienced, we experience. We \_\_\_\_\_ the same \_\_\_\_\_ they felt. We have the same \_\_\_\_\_ they had. They were \_\_\_\_\_, live people who faced the same \_\_\_\_\_, the same \_\_\_\_\_ and the same \_\_\_\_\_ you and I face. As you read about these characters in Scripture, what six (6) questions should you ask?

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5. We are \_\_\_\_\_ the best \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word by failing to pickup on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ in it. The Bible points us to \_\_\_\_\_. It never \_\_\_\_\_ up the \_\_\_\_\_ of its \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Given the following Bible characters, what "true to life" experience did they have that we can learn from? Give Scripture reference for each.

Abraham \_\_\_\_\_

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Moses \_\_\_\_\_

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Noah \_\_\_\_\_

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David \_\_\_\_\_

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Peter \_\_\_\_\_

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John Mark \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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7. We see \_\_\_\_\_ revealed in the lives of all these \_\_\_\_\_. But this is easily \_\_\_\_\_ if our eyes are not \_\_\_\_\_ for things that are \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

8. On the lines provided, write in full the verse that speaks of the importance of observation.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Using the six (6) clues to look for every time you open your Bible, write the part of your hand to use for remembering each. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 24

### SEE THE BIG PICTURE

In this chapter, we will go a step further in the process of Observation. Remember that we started with a verse, Acts 1:8. Then we observed a paragraph, Nehemiah 1:4-11. Now we are going to look at a section or a group of paragraphs united by a common theme.

#### Start With An Overview

We will look at Mark 4-5. Open your Bible and read the passage.

#### Two Segments

There are two segments in these chapters. Mark 4:1-34 contains the parable segment that begins with Jesus teaching by the Sea of Galilee. Verse 2 says, “*And he taught them many things by parables.*” This is a teaching situation, and parables are the main medium of communication. (See verses 33-34)

Then, from chapter 4:35 through 5:43 we have the miracle segment. This gives four miracles: the miracle of the storm (4:35-41); the miracle of the demoniac (5:1-20); the miracle of the woman with the issue of blood (5:25-34) and the miracle of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:21-24; 35-43). What can we observe about the order in which Mark has related these miracles? Notice that they are arranged climactically.

Looking over the parables, what key expression is repeated? “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” (4:9,23)

#### Create A Chart

After Jesus finished teaching, He moved into the testing. Good teachers always give tests. When Jesus gave tests He tested at the reality level of life-experience. So Mark 4:1-34 represents the lecture; then things moved into the laboratory. Jesus knew that you learn faith, not in a lecture but in the laboratory of life. You are going to discover many things during the process of Observation. You need to organize the material in order to make efficient use of it. One way to do this is by making a *grid chart*. When there is much material, a grid chart can help in summarizing it.

We will list the miracles in the left column and compare them in five areas, as listed across the top: What was the realm in which the miracle took place? Who were the people involved? What means did Christ use to perform the miracle? What was the result? What was the element of faith?

Miracle	Realm	People	Means	Results	Faith

#### 1. The Realm.

The miracle of the calming of the storm clearly took place in the physical realm. Write that on the chart. With the demoniac, the problem was spiritual and may have been mental. The issue of blood was a physical need but since it had lasted twelve years, the woman may have had an emotional need as well. The raising of Jairus’ daughter really involves all three – physical, emotional, and spiritual. That is why this miracle climaxes the section.

So the miracles are arranged climactically: Jesus not only has power over the mental, psychological, and physical, He also has power over death.

## **2. The People.**

Notice the connection between the realm of the miracle and the people involved. Many of the disciples who experienced the calming of the storm had been fishermen. They had experienced many storms on the sea but never like that.

In the miracle of the demoniac, certainly Jesus and the man himself were involved but also the citizens of that area were there. These citizens were more concerned about losing their pigs than in the deliverance of the man.

The healing of the woman with the issue of blood, the disciples were there and played an important role. Of course the woman was there and also Jesus.

The raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead, there was Jairus, his daughter, and the mother. Jesus also took Peter, James and John with Him. There was also a group of professional mourners.

## **3. The Means.**

Now let us observe the means that Jesus used in each of the miracles. In the storm, all He did was speak, "*Peace, be still.*" With the demoniac, again all He did was speak. With the woman, He used a touch; she touched Him. Then with Jairus' daughter, He used both touch and words.

## **4. The Results.**

The result in the calming of the storm was a great calm. With the demoniac, the spirits came out, and the man returned to normal. For the woman, the result of touching Jesus was immediate healing. Finally, Jairus' daughter immediately stood up, which indicates instant restoration.

## **5. Faith.**

The element of faith is critical in each of these miracles. In the storm, the disciples lost all faith. They feared for their life. As for the demoniac, his faith began with the recognition of who Jesus is. The woman acted on what she had heard about Jesus, and Jesus said that her faith had healed her. Jairus demonstrated faith in two ways. First he came to Jesus saying, "*My little daughter lieth at the point of death...*" Then his friends come telling him that his daughter is dead. Then Jesus said to him, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" Not only did he begin with faith, he continued with faith. Notice that the disciples (those who had no faith) saw this.

### **Using The Chart**

Now look over the grid chart. There is a large quantity of material, but it summarized in a way that we can understand it. You can study the chart in two ways.

First, you can study it compositely by moving across from left to right, looking at each of the miracles for evaluation in terms of the realm, the people, the means, the result, and the element of faith.

Secondly, you can study it comparatively by moving from top to bottom. What kind of faith did the disciples have? What kind of faith did the demoniac have? What kind of faith did the woman have? What kind of faith did the Jairus have?

A chart such as this is invaluable, because it gives you much fruit for your investment in Bible study. You can go back to the chart often and even use it in teaching or preaching. In the next chapter, we will go into more detail to show the importance of making a chart.

### **How To Study A Section**

Here are a few suggestions on how to glean the most out of a section of Scripture.

1. Read the entire section completely (Nehemiah 1:4-11). Try reading it two or three times, perhaps in different translations.
2. Identify the paragraphs, and put a short title (one or two words) on each one. Remember that the paragraph is the basic unit of study.
3. Evaluate each paragraph in light of the other paragraphs, using the six clues given earlier in the book, while looking for relationships.
4. Evaluate how the section as a whole relates to the rest of the book, using the same principles (things emphasized, repeated, etc).
5. Try to state the main point of the section in one word or a short phrase that summarizes the content.
6. Keep a list of observations on the section. Record them in your Bible, using brief, descriptive words.
7. Study the persons and places mentioned. List what you can learn about them that casts light on the entire section.

8. Make a list of your unanswered questions and unresolved problems. These will become avenues for further investigation.
9. Ask yourself: What have I seen in this section that challenges the way I live? What practical issues does this passage address? What change do I need to consider in light of this study? What prayer do I need to pray as a result of what I have seen?
10. Share the results of your study with someone else.

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. List the ten (10) suggestions given on how to get the most from a section of Scripture.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

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4) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) \_\_\_\_\_

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6) \_\_\_\_\_

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7) \_\_\_\_\_

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8) \_\_\_\_\_

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9) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In the process of Observation, we started with a \_\_\_\_\_, then observed a \_\_\_\_\_, and now we are going to look at a \_\_\_\_\_ or a group of \_\_\_\_\_ united by a common \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Open your Bible to Mark chapters 4 and 5. Read this passage two (2) times. List the two (2) segments contained in these two chapters. Briefly explain each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



4. List and briefly explain the two (2) ways you can study the grid chart.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Use the chart found on page 47 of this lesson. Each heading of the chart is explained on page 48. Write the information needed in each area of the chart, using the information given.

6. Write Psalm 19:14 on the lines provided. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 25

### SUMMERIZE YOUR OBSERVATIONS

Bible study is information-intensive. If you do the job of Observation as described in the previous chapters, you will have more data than you can possible handle. And that is a problem, because what good is information if you cannot access it? One solution is the strategy of show rather than tell. Summarize your findings in a chart.

#### The Value Of Charts

A chart is to the Bible student what a map is to a mariner. It aids him or her in navigating an ocean of words, pages, books, ideas, characters, events and other information.

A good chart can keep you on course in several ways. First, it uses the power of the picture. This is especially helpful in our culture. We have come to prefer images rather than text. Charts make use of that. They can show the relationship between verses, paragraphs, sections and even books. Using a chart, you can comprehend the purpose and structure of a portion of Scripture at a glance.

A well-constructed chart also tends to be memorable. Again this is largely a function of visual appeal. Suppose you have never memorized the names of the books of the Bible. If you were given a list of them, it would probably take you some time to memorize that list perfectly. But, if you are shown a chart of the books arranged by categories, you could memorize their names much more quickly. That is because a chart gives you some visual landmarks.

A chart can illustrate your Observations and illustrate the parts in view of the whole. It can highlight the important ideas and characters. It can point out key terms and phrases. Most important, it can reveal the structure, which is crucial to the author's purpose.

#### The Art of the Chart

The chart is a very useful tool in Bible study, but keep in mind that it is only a means to an end. Your ultimate goal in studying God's Word is not to produce charts, but to produce a change in your life. The chart is a simple way to handle information that you get from the text.

We will look at some examples of charts and then some suggestions of how to get started in effective charting.

#### Mark

The first chart shows the gospel by Mark, the whole book at a glance, on one sheet of paper. The person who made it, observed that the key verse that actually summarizes the book's structure is 10:45: *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* That helped him observe that the book is divided into two major sections: the first half deals with Jesus' service, and the last half deals with His sacrifice.

#### The Gospel of Mark

<b>"Came to Serve"</b>		<i>and</i>	<b>"Give His Life"</b>	
<b>PROLOGUE</b>	<b>SERVICE</b>		<b>SACRIFICE</b>	<b>EPILOGUE</b>
<b>Jesus Came</b>	<b>Who Is He?</b>	<b>Who Do People Say That I Am?</b>	<b>Where Is He Going?</b>	<b>Jesus... Received Up</b>
<b>1:1-45</b>	<b>2:1 8:26</b>	<b>8:27 30</b>	<b>8:31 15:47</b>	<b>16:1-20</b>
<b>His Person</b>		<b>And</b>	<b>His Purpose</b>	

You can see how he charted these and other observations, so that both visually and verbally he could understand at a glance. This chart is simple. We know immediately what Mark is all about.

**1 Peter**

The next chart is for 1 Peter, and is called a “Syllabus for Suffering Saints.” (2 Peter is the “Syllabus for Significant Saints.”)

There are 3 major divisions that address three major issues in 1 Peter: salvation, submission, and suffering. It is interesting to think of them in reverse order: Suffering will never make sense until you have submitted yourself to the Father’s will; and submission will never make sense until you understand what salvation is all about. That is how the writer unfolds his argument through the five chapters of the book.

**1 Peter**  
**SYLLABUS FOR SUFFERING SAINTS**  
*How to Hold Up – Not Fold Up*

<b>SALVATION</b>	<b>SUBMISSION</b>	<b>SUFFERING</b>
<b>Privileges of salvation</b> 1:2-12  <b>Products of salvation</b> 1:13-25  <b>Process of salvation</b> 2:1-10	<b>In the state</b> 2:13-17; <b>civil</b>  <b>In the household</b> 2:18-25; <b>social</b>  <b>In the family</b> 3:1-7; <b>domestic</b>	<b>As a citizen</b> 3:13 – 4:6  <b>As a saint</b> 4:7-19  <b>As a soldier</b> 5:8-11
<b>DOCTRINE IS DYNAMIC</b>	<b>THE CHRISTIAN’S LIFESTYLE</b>	<b>THE CHISEL TO SHAPE THE SOUL</b>
1:3                      2:10	2:11                      3:12	3:13                      5:11
<b>The DESTINY of the Christian</b>	<b>The DUTY of the Christian</b>	<b>The DISCIPLINE of the Christian</b>

**Malachi**

The next example shows Malachi. This chart has been titled “The Wail of Wounded Love.” This is a good Old Testament book to study. We talked about using the question and answer method in chapter 11. Malachi was a prophet with a question. Over and over he asks the question, “Who me?”

In Malachi, God is rebuking the nation of Israel for its sins. And every time He does, the people respond, “Prove it.” That is exactly what you have in this book.

**MALACHI**  
*“The Wail of Wounded Love”*

	<b>REBUKE</b>	<b>WARNING</b>	<b>APPEAL</b>	
<b>Introduction</b> 1:1-5	<b>Priests</b> 1:6 – 2:9	<b>Accusation</b> 2:17	<b>Response</b> 3:7-18	<b>Conclusion</b> 4:4-6
	<b>People</b> 2:10-16	<b>Announcement</b> 2:17    3:6	<b>Reason</b> 3:7    4:3	
	1:6    2:16	2:17    3:6	3:7    4:3	

**Luke**

You need to think of charts as more than a final product of your study. They are actually powerful tools to help you investigate the text. This chart shows an overview of the gospel by Luke that is called “The Law Of Proportion.” We talked about looking for things that are emphasized by the amount of space devoted to them. The law of proportion says that the importance of material to an author’s meaning is in direct proportion to the amount of space he gives to it. A chart such as this one illustrates that principle.

### Luke – Law of Proportion

				cf. <b>MATTHEW</b> (2 Chapters)					
				<b>MARK</b> (20 Verses)					
<b>1</b>	<b>4:13</b>	<b>4:14</b>	<b>9:50</b>	<b>9:51</b>	<b>19:27</b>	<b>19:28</b>	<b>23:56</b>	<b>24:1</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>30 Years Preparation</b>		<b>2 ½ Years Galilean</b>		<b>½ Year Samaritan</b>		<b>8 Days Jerusalem</b>		<b>50 Days Resurrection</b>	

### Ephesians

By observing the epistle to the Ephesians, you will notice that there are four themes that appear often: the grace of God, the activity of Satan, the lifestyle of the believer and prayer. You should ask: Are there any relationships between these themes? Is one more dominant than the others? How much space is devoted to each one? How do they relate to the overall theme and structure of the book? A grid chart can help you follow these four themes through the epistle so that when you are finished you can see the relationships.

### Ephesians

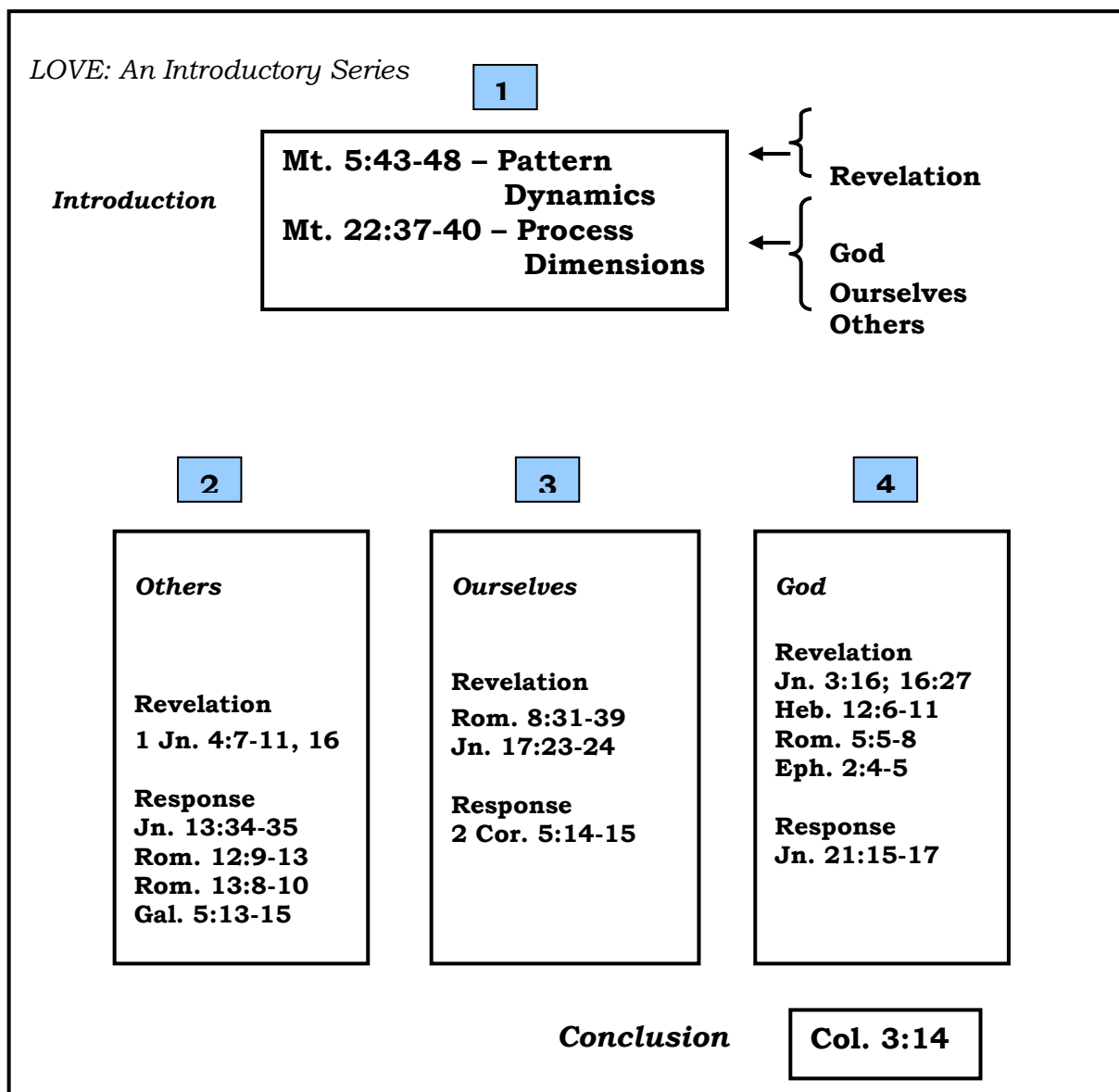
<b>Grace</b>					
<b>Satan</b>					
<b>Walk</b>					
<b>Prayer</b>					

**Love**

The last chart is different from others. It summarizes a topical study on love. Topical studies are fascinating because they look at one subject that appears in many passages and then correlate the results. Here, the study revealed that two key passages in Matthew are central texts on the subject of love. One gives the pattern for love, which is God’s love, and the other describes the process of love, which is to love others as you love yourself. Notice that a related text is 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter.

The study also discovered that when it comes to practicing love, there are three domains, loving God, loving ourselves and loving others. In each case, there is revealed truth to be considered and a response to that truth.

The chart makes sense to the person who constructs it. It needs to show what he has found in the text. It is his tool or his way of understanding the text.



## ***Making A Start with Your Chart***

Here are a few suggestions to help you get started making a chart.

1. As you study a text, assign titles and labels to the content in a way that summarizes the material. Be creative. Using the acquisitive reading method, make the text your own. Placing your own titles on the verses, paragraphs, sections, and books of the Bible is one way to do that. They help you retain your insights.
2. As you visualize your chart, ask: What are the relationships? What am I trying to show? What is this chart all about? When I have finished it, how am I going to use it?
3. Keep your charts simple. You can always add details. What key ideas, characters, themes, verses, terms, and other data from the text ought to take priority? What is the big idea? What structure needs to be shown? What material do you want to see at a glance?
4. If you find that you have got too much material to include in a chart, divide it into several charts. Too much unrelated data is a clue that you need to go back to the text and do some more observing.
5. Be creative. Only a few possibilities have been shown in the charts we have looked at. There are many other ways to show relationships in the text. Use your imagination. Draw illustrations or symbols if they help. It is your chart, so make it work for you.
6. Revise your charts in light of your study. No chart can summarize everything. As you continue to study a passage, you will gain new insights that should cause you to revise or even redo your chart. Remember, charts are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. They are useful to the extent that they accurately represent what is in the biblical text.

## ***What Have You Learned?***

1. You need to think of charts as more than a \_\_\_\_\_ product of your study. They are actually powerful \_\_\_\_\_ to help you \_\_\_\_\_ the text.

2. List six (6) suggestions to help make a chart.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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4) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) \_\_\_\_\_

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6) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Your ultimate goal in studying God's Word is not to produce \_\_\_\_\_, but to produce a \_\_\_\_\_ in your life. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a simple way to handle \_\_\_\_\_ that you get from the \_\_\_\_\_.

4. List three (3) ways a good chart can keep you on course. Briefly explain each.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Below are the titles of the six (6) charts given as examples. Briefly explain how each one helps you understand the material better.  
Mark \_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Malachi \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Love \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. On a separate sheet of paper, make a chart using Psalm 1:1-6 as your Scripture reference. Follow the guidelines given on page 54. Choose one of the chart examples shown in this lesson, or make your own. (You will have 2 weeks to complete this portion of your assignment.)

## Chapter 26

### “FACTS ARE STUPID THINGS UNTIL...”

If students of Scripture were given only one instruction, it should be: Look! Look! Look! The truth of God is in the Bible, but most people miss it primarily because they do not look for it. They never take the time and effort required to answer the fundamental question of Observation, “*What do I see?*” As a result they have no basis for understanding what God has revealed. Observation is only the first step in Bible study method, but it is an absolutely critical step, and most people give it little attention. To properly observe Scripture, you must learn to read: read better, read faster, read as for the first time, and read the Bible as if it is a love letter.

Then there are the six clues that unlock the text for our understanding: things emphasized, things repeated, things related, things alike, things unlike, and things that are true to life. These skills can be used on a verse, a paragraph, and a section. Then the use of charts can help to summarize the facts of Bible study.

This brings us to the second step in Bible study method. “*What does it mean?*” – the second step in the process, Interpretation.

#### You Try It

Observe the account of the Fall in Genesis 3:1-7. It is an excellent opportunity to use all of the skills that you have learned.

#### Monday

Read Genesis 3:1-7 from the perspective of the heavenly Father witnessing the sin of His children from heaven.

#### Tuesday

Read the account with the goal in mind of finding the most important verse in the paragraph.

#### Wednesday

Read it from Satan’s perspective as he tempts God’s children.

#### Thursday

Read with the goal in mind of determining how this passage affects your understanding of what Jesus did on the cross.

#### Friday

Read from the perspective of Adam and Eve as they are sinning. What was going through their minds?

#### Saturday

Read from the perspective of someone who knows nothing of the Bible or “religious” things and who is reading this passage for the first time.

#### What Have You Learned?

1. List the four (4) ways you must learn to read so you can properly observe Scripture.

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2. List the six (6) clues that unlock the text for understanding. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. The above skills are useful on what three things? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Why is the use of charts helpful in Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In the next week, use the above observation skills to observe the account of the Fall in Genesis 3:1-7. Follow the schedule given for Monday through Saturday. Be prepared to discuss your findings in class at the end of the week.



# **Part III**

## **Interpretation**

### **What Does it Mean?**

## Chapter 27

### THE VALUE OF INTERPRETATION

The primary task of any teacher of Scripture is to explain what the text means. It is impossible to apply the Word of God until you understand it. The better you understand it, the better you can apply it. David said, *“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.”* (Psalm 119:34)

The second major step in Bible study is the step of Interpretation. Here you ask and answer the question, *“What does it mean?”*

#### **“Do You Understand What You Are Reading?”**

Acts 8 records the story of Philip. He preached the Gospel in Samaria, and the entire region responded. But one day the Spirit of God said to him, *“... go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”*(Verse 26) He could have argued, but instead he headed south and met a man, an Ethiopian eunuch, and he was reading a passage of Scripture.

Philip asks him, *“Understandest thou what thou readest?”* (Verse 30) The man answered, *“How can I, except some man should guide me?”* (Verse 31)

This man had a copy of the Scriptures, but he needed help in understanding them. He was deeply involved in the process of Interpretation. That is clear from the question he asks after reading the passage: *“I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?”* (Verse 34)

Philip helped the man gain insight into what the text meant. And after he understood it, he was able to respond in faith. So in a real sense, the step of Interpretation helped to open Africa to the Gospel.

#### **What Do We Mean By Interpretation?**

Every book of Scripture has a message, and that message can be understood. God intended it as a revelation. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, *“All scripture is . . . profitable.”* That is, it has purpose and it has meaning. God does not invite you into His Word only to confound you. He is more interested that you understand it than you are.

What do we mean by “Meaning”? An illustration, a person that is color-blind, cannot distinguish between certain colors. Perhaps it is the colors of greens and blues. Suppose two people, one color-blind, one not, was looking at a shirt, and one said, “I love this blue shirt.” They would both be looking at the same shirt, but the color one would see would not be same as the color the other one sees.

That happens all the time in biblical interpretation. Two people will look at the same verse and have two completely different interpretations. In fact, they may be opposing interpretations. Can they both be correct? Not if the laws of logic apply to Scripture.

If we are going to have any hope of interpreting God’s Word accurately, we have got to start with a fundamental premise: “Meaning” is not our subjective thoughts read into the text but God’s objective truth read out of the text. Someone has said, the task of Bible study is to “think God’s thoughts after Him.” He has a mind, and He has revealed it in His Word.

The step of Interpretation can be referred to as the re-creation process. We are attempting to re-create the authors experience, think as he thought, feel as he felt, and to decide as he decided. We are asking, “What did this mean to him?”, before we ask, “What does it mean to us?”

#### **The Construction of Meaning**

So how does Interpretation relate to Observation? In Observation we asked and answered the question, “What do I see?” After that we need to move on to Interpretation, where we develop the superstructure.

In Observation we excavate. In Interpretation we erect. And buildings are always determined by their foundation. The more substantial the foundation – the more substantial the building.

The quality of your interpretation will always depend on the quality of your observation. It is impossible to understand what a writer means until you notice what the writer says. Therefore, to

observe well is to interpret well. You always need to observe with the intention of interpreting and eventually of applying the Scripture. Observation is never an end in itself but always a means to an end.

## **Why Interpretation?**

Why must we interpret Scripture? Why can't we just open the Word, read what we are supposed to do, and then do it? Why do we have to go to so much trouble to understand the text? The answer is that time and distance have put up barriers between us, and the biblical writers, which block our understanding.

### **1. Language Barriers.**

Have you ever learned a foreign language? If you have you know that learning words is not enough. You have to learn the culture of those who speak it if you really want to understand what they are saying.

We have some excellent translations of the Bible from Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages in which it was originally written. But the English (French) text leaves us a long way from a complete understanding. That is the reason the process of Interpretation involves the use of a Bible dictionary and similar resources. We have to go back and recover the meaning that translated words alone cannot convey.

### **2. Cultural Barriers.**

Cultural barriers are closely related to language barriers because language is always bound by culture. The Bible is the product of cultures that are dramatically different from our own – and also different from each other. To appreciate what is going on in Scripture, we have to reconstruct the cultural context in areas of communication, transportation, trade, agriculture, occupations, religion, perceptions of time, etc.

### **3. Literary Barriers.**

We cannot read the Song of Solomon with the same logic that we bring to Romans. We will not get the point of parables through the same exhaustive word studies as you might unlock truths in Galatians. We will see more about the different types of literature in chapter 29.

### **4. Communication Barriers.**

Sometimes when a teacher teaches, he may wonder what the students are hearing and the students may be wondering what is the teacher talking about. It is the problem of communication. And even though God Himself is speaking through Scripture, we still must contend with the breakdown in the communication process.

So can we interpret anything? Is it possible to interpret the Bible? Yes. But you need to know that you will always encounter problems. You can never answer every question. Do not get tied up over the problems and unanswerable questions that come up in your study of the Bible. The miracle is that you understand all of the essential things that God wants you to understand for your eternal salvation and for your daily living.

## **I Do Not Know Greek or Hebrew**

Have you ever felt hindered from understanding the Bible because you do not know the languages in which it was originally written? There are many extra-biblical resources that have been developed in recent years. Here is a preview of what is available to help you interpret Scripture accurately.

**TYPE OF RESOURCE**

**DESCRIPTION**

**USE IT TO OVERCOME:**

Atlases	Collections of maps showing places mentioned in the text, and perhaps some description of their history and significance.	Geographic barriers
Bible Dictionaries	Explain the origin, meaning, and use of key words and terms in the text.	Language barriers
Bible Handbooks	Present helpful information on subjects in the text.	Cultural barriers
Commentaries	Present a biblical scholar's study of the text.	Language, cultural, and Literary barriers
Interlinear Texts	Translations with the Greek or Hebrew text positioned in between the lines for comparison.	Language barriers

***What Have You Learned?***

1. What is the primary task of any teacher of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. It is impossible to \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God until you \_\_\_\_\_ it. The better you \_\_\_\_\_ it, the better you can \_\_\_\_\_ it. What did David say about this? Write the verse here with Scripture reference. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The second major step in Bible study is \_\_\_\_\_. Here you ask and answer the question, "\_\_\_\_\_ does it \_\_\_\_\_?"
4. What example from Scripture explains how this step of Interpretation helped open Africa to the Gospel? Give Scripture reference and briefly explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Every \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture has a \_\_\_\_\_, and that message can be \_\_\_\_\_. God intended it as a \_\_\_\_\_. On the lines provided, write 2 Timothy 3:16-17. On a separate sheet of paper, write these verses five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What four (4) barriers block our understanding of Scripture? Briefly explain each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. If we are going to have any hope of \_\_\_\_\_ God's Word \_\_\_\_\_, we have to start with a \_\_\_\_\_ premise: "\_\_\_\_\_ " is not our subjective \_\_\_\_\_ read \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, but God's objective \_\_\_\_\_ read \_\_\_\_\_ of the text. The task of Bible study is to "think \_\_\_\_\_ thoughts after Him." He has a \_\_\_\_\_, and He has \_\_\_\_\_ it in His \_\_\_\_\_.

8. The step of \_\_\_\_\_ can be referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_ process. We are attempting to re-create the \_\_\_\_\_ experience, \_\_\_\_\_ as he thought, feel as he \_\_\_\_\_, and to \_\_\_\_\_ as he decided. We are asking, "What did this mean to \_\_\_\_\_?", before we ask, "What does it mean to \_\_\_\_\_?"

9. Briefly explain how Interpretation relates to Observation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Is it possible to interpret the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_ But you need to know that you will always encounter \_\_\_\_\_. You can never answer every \_\_\_\_\_. Do not get tied up over the problems and \_\_\_\_\_ questions that come up in your \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible. The \_\_\_\_\_ is that you understand all of the \_\_\_\_\_ things that God wants you to understand for your \_\_\_\_\_ salvation and your \_\_\_\_\_ living.

11. List five (5) of the resources that will help overcome barriers to understanding Scripture. Briefly describe each, and the barrier it is effective against.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 28

### *HANDLE WITH CARE*

The problem is not with the Word of God, but with misinterpretation of the text.

#### **Hazards to Avoid**

We will look at six pitfalls of interpretation.

##### **1. Misreading the Text.**

You will never gain a proper understanding of Scripture if you do not or cannot read the text properly. If Jesus says, *"I am the way"* (John 14:46), but you read it as, "I am a way," you are misreading the text. If Paul writes, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil,"* (1 Timothy 6:10), but you read it as, "Money is the root of all evil", you are not reading the text correctly. If the psalmist says, *"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."*(Psalm 37:4), but all you pay attention to is, "He will give me the desires of your heart", you are misreading the text.

This is why we said that if you want to study God's Word, you must learn to read. Ignorance of what the text says is the unpardonable sin of misinterpretation. It shows you have skipped the first step in Bible study method – Observation.

##### **2. Distorting the Text.**

Apparently Peter saw this same problem in the early church because in 2 Peter 3:16 he writes, *"Also in all his (Paul's) epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood."*

It is one thing to struggle with difficulties in Interpretation; it is another thing to distort the meaning of God's Word. That is serious. That is something He will bring to judgment. So we need to learn how to interpret Scripture accurately, practically, and profitably.

##### **3. Contradicting the Text.**

Contradicting the text is worse than textual distortion. It is the same as calling God a liar. An illustration is Satan in the Garden of Eden:

He said to the woman, *"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* The woman said to the serpent, *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."* *"Ye shall not surely die:"* the serpent said to the woman. (Genesis 3:1-4)

That is a direct contradiction of God's Word (Genesis 2:16-17. *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* No wonder Jesus called Satan a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan has been lying from the beginning of history, and he is still lying today by encouraging people to contradict the biblical text.

One of his favorite strategies is to use the Word of God to authorize a belief or practice that goes against the character of God.

##### **4. Subjectivism.**

Most Christians tolerate a form of mysticism in reading their Bibles. They violate every tenet of reason and common sense. Their Bible study is totally subjective.

Do you love the Lord with all your mind? If you want to interpret Scripture accurately and perceptively, you must use your mind. The Bible does not yield its fruit to the lazy, and that includes the intellectually lazy.

##### **5. Relativism.**

Some people approach Scripture assuming that the Bible changes meaning over time. They think that the text meant one thing when it was written but something else today. They believe it's meaning is relative.

After the departure of Jesus, His disciples sincerely believed in a bodily resurrection. That is what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15. But today, some teachers have changed Paul's meaning. They say, "Yes, he is talking about a resurrection, but now it means a spiritual resurrection, a newness of life." It does not matter to them if Jesus actually got up and walked

out of that tomb, just as long as He “lives in your heart.” That is a relativistic interpretation of Scripture.

When we get to the step of Application we will see that a passage can have numerous practical applications. But it can have only one proper interpretation – ultimately, the meaning it had to the original writer. We must reconstruct his message if we want an accurate understanding.

**6. Overconfidence.**

In Bible study as in life, pride goes before a fall. When you think that you have mastered a portion of Scripture, you are setting yourself up for a fall. Why? Because knowledge puffs up (1 Corinthians 8:1). It can make you arrogant and un-teachable. Some of the worst abuses of doctrine occur when someone sets himself up as the ultimate authority on text.

Do not expect that when you come to the Bible and spend thirty or forty-five minutes, you are going to have the ultimate answers. That is not to say that you should not come to conclusions about what the text means, or that you cannot feel confident in what you believe. Just keep in mind that Interpretation never ends.

**The Right to Disagree**

Even though a Bible passage ultimately has only one correct interpretation, you will always find two Christians who disagree about what interpretation ought to be right. Differences in interpretation are okay as long as we keep in mind that the conflict is not in the text, but in our limited understanding of the text. God is not confused about what He said, even if we are.

**What Does the Bible Really Say?**

Almost every major heresy begins with a misreading of the Bible text. Here are some common misstatements, as well as what the Bible actually says.

**What Some People Say**

**What The Bible Says**

“Money is the root of all evil.”	“For the love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10)
“We are all gods or part of God.”	“The LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.” (Deuteronomy 4:35) “Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.” (Isaiah 44:8)
“Jesus was just a great moral teacher.”	“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 20:31)
“The Bible says that Christians should give away their possessions.”	“Charge them that are rich in this world . . . not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;” (1 Timothy 6:17). “Work with your own hands . . . that ye may have lack of nothing.” (1 Thess. 4:11-12)
“All religions lead to the same end. No one religion is right.”	“Neither is there salvation in any other.” (Acts 4:12)
“Jesus never claimed to be God.”	“I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30)

**What Have You Learned?**

1. The problem is \_\_\_\_\_ with the Word of \_\_\_\_\_, but with \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. Even though a Bible \_\_\_\_\_ ultimately has only one \_\_\_\_\_ interpretation, you will \_\_\_\_\_ find \_\_\_\_\_ Christians who \_\_\_\_\_ about what interpretation ought to be \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ in interpretation are okay as long as we keep in mind that the \_\_\_\_\_ is not in the \_\_\_\_\_, but in our limited \_\_\_\_\_ of the text. God is not \_\_\_\_\_ about what He \_\_\_\_\_, even if we are. Almost every major \_\_\_\_\_ begins with a \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ text.

2. List the six (6) pitfalls of interpretation. Briefly explain and give an example of each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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4) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) \_\_\_\_\_

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6) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. One of Satan's favorite \_\_\_\_\_ is to use the Word of God to \_\_\_\_\_ a belief or \_\_\_\_\_ that goes against the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

4. Given the following common misstatements, write what the Bible actually says for each. Include Scripture reference.

"Money is the root of all evil." \_\_\_\_\_

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"We are all gods or part of God." \_\_\_\_\_

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"Jesus was just a great moral teacher." \_\_\_\_\_

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"The Bible says that Christians should give away their possessions." \_\_\_\_\_

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"All religions lead to the same end. No one religion is right." \_\_\_\_\_

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"Jesus never claimed to be God." \_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 29

### WHAT TYPE OF LITERATURE IS THIS?

In “*A Preface to Paradise Lost*, C. S. Lewis writes: “The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is – what it is intended to do and how it is meant to be used. The first thing is to understand the object before you – as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral was meant for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them.”

The same can be said of the Word of God. Before starting a study of a book in the Bible, the first thing a reader needs to know is what that book’s author meant it to be. In other words, what kind of literature was he writing? What literary form did he employ? Literary genre is crucial to Interpretation.

#### Biblical Genres

We will look at six kinds of writing that appear in the Bible, and how they influence our understanding. There are more kinds of writing than we will mention here, but these are the major literary genres that God used to communicate His message.

##### 1. Exposition.

An exposition is a straightforward argument or explanation of a body of objective truth. It is a form of writing that appeals primarily to the mind. The argument usually has a tight structure that moves from point to point in logical fashion.

Paul’s letters are outstanding examples of expository form in Scripture. The book of Romans is a tightly reasoned explanation of the Gospel. For example he links his paragraphs and chapters together with transitional, connective words such as: *for, therefore, and, and but*. He uses the rhetorical question. He uses long, elaborate sentences but he also uses short, quick passages that buffet the mind.

Expositional books are ideal if you are just getting started in Bible study. Their meaning lies close to the surface. They appeal to the average person’s preference for logic, structure, and order. And their purposes are easy to understand, they practically reveal themselves. The key to understanding a work of exposition is to pay attention to its structure and the terms it employs.

##### 2. Narrative and biography.

Narrative means story. The Bible is full of stories. What are we to make of the stories in the Bible? How do we determine their meaning and significance? There are three things to pay attention to.

- a. *The plot*. In other words, what movement is there in the story? This could be physical, such as the Israelites moving across the Sinai in Exodus; it could be spiritual, as the case of Samson in Judges; it could be relational, as in Ruth; or political, as in 1 and 2 Kings. The question is, what development is there in the story? What is different at the end of the book, and why?
- b. *Characterization*. Who are the characters? How are they presented? What roles do they play? What decisions do they make? How do they relate to each other, and to God? What progress or regress do they make? Do they fail? If so, why? Why are they in the story? In what ways are they individuals, and in what ways are they representative of others? What do we like or dislike about them? What would we do in their place?
- c. *In what ways is this story true to life?* This is one of the clues to look for under Observation and is our path to understanding. The stories of Scripture show us life as God wants us to see it. So we can ask: What questions does the story raise? What problems do the characters have to deal with? What lessons do they learn or not learn? What things do they encounter that we should be sure to avoid? Or how do they deal with things in life that are unavoidable? What do they discover about God?

There is much more to the narratives in the Scripture. But if you start by asking yourself these kinds of questions, they will help you toward understanding what the stories are all about.

##### 3. Parables.

A parable is a brief tale that illustrates a moral principle. The parable was Jesus' preferred method of communication. *"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them."* (Matthew 13:34)

Parables are simple, memorable, and entertaining. Most are rather easy to understand. They deal with everyday matters such as farming, fishing, travel, and money. Parables can have a powerful impact. They make use of basic ethical principles such as right and wrong (the sower and the three kinds of seed), love and compassion (the prodigal son, the good Samaritan), justice and mercy (the Pharisee and the tax collector).

#### **4. Poetry.**

The Bible contains some of the best lines of poetry ever composed. *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."* (Psalm 23:1) *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."* (Psalm 46:1) *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."* (Ecclesiastes 3:1) *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9)

The distinctive feature of poetry is its appeal to the emotions, as well as the imagination. The Psalms express some of the deepest feelings, desires, rapture, and pain of the human heart.

But when you study biblical poetry, make sure you understand the dynamics of Hebrew poetry. Most of the Psalms were meant to be sung, not read. They were composed for worship, and many include prefatory notes on what kinds of instruments were to accompany them.

One of the main features of Hebrew poetry is its extensive use of "parallelism." If you look through the psalms you will notice that the majority of the verses have two lines. Sometimes the second line will reinforce what the first line says by repeating its thought. For example: Psalm 103:15 *"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth."*

Another key to understanding Hebrew poetry is to recognize "hyperbole," which is extreme or exaggerated language. Example: Psalm 139: 19-22 *"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, And thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies."*

This is strange language to find in the Bible. What is going on here? The answer is to notice who David is talking about – "the wicked," people who have shed blood, spoken against God, taken His name in vain (all violations of the Ten Commandments), and otherwise demonstrated their hatred of the Lord.

Here are some other interpretive questions to consider as you read the poetry of the Bible: Who composed this material? Can you determine why? What is the central theme of the poem? What emotion does the verse convey, and what response does it produce? What questions does it ask? Which ones does it answer, and which does it leave unanswered? What does the poem say about God? About people? What images does the poet use to activate the imagination? Are there references to people, places, or events that you are familiar with? If so, what can you find out about them elsewhere in Scripture or through secondary sources?

#### **5. The Proverbs and Wisdom Literature.**

In this genre, the writer assumes the role of a wizened veteran of life prepared to share his insights with a younger, inexperienced, but teachable reader.

The book of Proverbs obviously belongs to this category. A proverb is a short, poignant nugget of truth, typically practical, and often concerned with the consequences of a course of behavior. Proverbs make strategic use of parallelism, especially the pairing of opposites.

For Example: Proverbs 15:27 *"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live."*

And Proverbs 20:3 *"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."*

The Proverbs come right to the point. Of all biblical material, they are perhaps the easiest to understand, but sometimes the most difficult to apply.

#### **6. Prophecy and Apocalyptic.**

Perhaps the most challenging type of literature in the Bible is the prophetic. We tend to think of prophecy as a prediction for the future. And certainly the prophetic books look ahead. But a

more striking feature is their tone of warning and judgment and the use of a formula to denote direct words of God: *“Thus saith the Lord.”*

The role of the prophet in Scripture was not to tell futures but to proclaim the words of the Lord; not to foretell but to “forth-tell.”

In reading the prophets, it is critical that you re-create the situation. It is absolutely critical that you ask six questions while reading the text – who, what, where, when, why, and wherefore. Answering these questions will give you valuable information concerning these additional issues: What is the main problem that the prophet is addressing? What images does he use to describe it? What is the response of the people? What does this prophet’s message tell you about God? What happens after this prophet delivers his message? Why do you think God included this book in His Word?

A special category of prophetic literature is apocalyptic, of which Revelation is the primary example. Apocalyptic literature deals with the cataclysmic events of global proportions having to do with the end of the world. The language of apocalyptic literature is highly symbolic, and the events unfold in quick displays of light, noise, and power.

This makes this genre fertile ground for speculation and subjective interpretation. To avoid that, when you study Revelation, pay close attention to the structure of the book. What movement is there from the opening to the close? What changes come about? Who is the material written to? What is the historical and cultural context in which the writer was working? How might that have influenced his method of communication? In terms of understanding the books symbols, look carefully at the Old Testament for insight into what the author is describing. Rather than worry about a time line for future events, ask what implications this book would have had for Christians in the early church.

### Literary Genres of the Bible

<b>GENRE</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>BIBLICAL BOOKS AND EXAMPLES</b>
Apocalyptic	Dramatic, highly symbolic material; vivid imagery; stark contrasts; events take place on a global scale; frequently narrated in the first-person as an eyewitness account; portrays a cosmic struggle between good and evil.	Revelation
Biography	Close-up view of an individual’s life; subject is often portrayed in contrast to someone else; selected events reveal character development, either positively (comedy) or negatively (tragedy).	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, Elijah, Jesus
Encomium	Sings high praise of someone or something; rehearses in glowing terms the subject’s origins, acts, attributes or superiority; exhorts the reader to incorporate the same features into his own life.	1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 19; 119; Proverbs 8:22-36; Proverbs 31:10-31 Song Solomon; John 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 13; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1-3
Exposition	Carefully reasoned argument or explanation; well-organized; logical flow; terms crucial; builds to a logical, compelling climax; the aim is agreement and action.	Paul’s letter, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1,2,and 3 John, Jude.
Narrative	A broad category in which story is prominent; includes historical accounts; structure is conveyed through plot; characters undergo physiological and spiritual development; selected events used to convey meaning; events juxtaposed for contrast and comparison.	Genesis-Ezra The Gospels; Acts

<b>GENRE</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>BIBLICAL BOOKS AND EXAMPLES</b>
Oratory	Stylized oral presentation of an argument; uses formal conventions of rhetoric and oratory; frequently quotes from authorities well known to listeners; usually intended to exhort and persuade.	John 13-17, Acts 7, 17:22-32; 22:1-21; 24:10-21; 26:1-23
Parable	Brief oral story illustrating moral truth; frequently relies on stock characters and stereotypes; presents activities common to everyday life; encourages reflection and self-evaluation.	2 Samuel 12:1-6 Ecclesiastes 9:14-16 Matthew 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 15:1-16:31
Pastoral	Literature dealing with rural, rustic themes, especially shepherds; heavy on description, lean on action; often meditative and quiet; emphasis on the bond between a shepherd and his sheep; idealized presentation of life away from urban evils.	Psalm 23 Isaiah 40:11 John 10:1-18
Poetry	Verse intended to be spoken or sung rather than read; emphasis on the sounds of words; vivid images and symbols; appeals to the emotions; may employ features of encomium, pastoral, and other literary styles; in Old Testament, heavy use of parallelism.	Job Psalm Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon
Prophecy	Strident, authoritative presentation of God's will and words; frequently intended as a corrective; intended to motivate change through warnings; foretells God's plans in response to human choices.	Isaiah-Malachi
Proverb	Short, strong statement of moral truth; basic life issues; often addressed to youth; frequently employs parallelism; points readers toward the right and away from evil; heavy use of metaphors and similes.	Proverbs
Satire	Exposes and ridicules human vice and foolishness; is employed by various literary styles – narrative, biography, and proverb; warns readers through a negative example.	Proverbs 24:30-34 Ezekiel 34 Luke 18:1-8 2 Cor. 11:1-12:1
Tragedy	Relates the downfall of a person; uses selected events to show the path toward ruin; problems usually revolve around a critical flaw in the person's character and moral choices; warns readers through a negative example.	Lot Samson Saul Acts 5:1-11
Wisdom Literature	A broad category in which an older, seasoned person relates wisdom to a younger; gives observation on fundamental areas of life – birth, work, money, power, time, the earth, and so on; appeals to human experience.	Job; Proverbs Psalm 37; Psalm 90 Ecclesiastes

### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. Before starting a \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible, the first thing a \_\_\_\_\_ needs to know is what that book's \_\_\_\_\_ meant it to be. What kind of \_\_\_\_\_ was he writing? What literary \_\_\_\_\_ did he employ? \_\_\_\_\_ genre is crucial to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. List the six (6) kinds of writing that appear in the Bible. Briefly explain how each of these influence our understanding of God's Word.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

3. In the narrative and biography literary form, list and briefly explain the three (3) things to pay attention to.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4. List eleven (11) interpretive questions to consider as you read the poetry of the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name and describe one special category of prophetic literature, giving an example.

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6. In reading the \_\_\_\_\_, it is critical that you \_\_\_\_\_ the situation. It is absolutely critical that you ask six questions while reading the text - \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Answering these questions will give you valuable \_\_\_\_\_ concerning these additional issues: List six (6) questions here.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

7. We tend to think of prophecy as a \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_. The prophetic books certainly look \_\_\_\_\_. But a more striking \_\_\_\_\_ is their tone of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and the use of a \_\_\_\_\_ to denote \_\_\_\_\_ words of God: “\_\_\_\_\_ the Lord.” The \_\_\_\_\_ of the prophet in \_\_\_\_\_ was not to tell \_\_\_\_\_ but to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord; not to \_\_\_\_\_ but to “\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.”

8. To avoid \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ interpretation, when you study Revelation pay close attention to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the book. List five (5) questions that will help.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Rather than a time line for future events, what question should we ask about Revelation?

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10. What should we do to help understand the symbols found in Revelation? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Give characteristics (with Scripture reference) for each of the following literary genres of the Bible.

Encomium \_\_\_\_\_

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Oratory \_\_\_\_\_

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Pastoral \_\_\_\_\_

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Satire \_\_\_\_\_

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Tragedy \_\_\_\_\_

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Wisdom Literature \_\_\_\_\_

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Hyperbole \_\_\_\_\_

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Parallelism \_\_\_\_\_

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## ***Part IV***

# ***Five Keys to Interpretation***

***Content***

***Context***

***Comparison***

***Culture***

***Consultation***

## Chapter 30

### CONTENT

*“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.”* (Psalm 119:34) In this psalm, the psalmist realized that apart from understanding the meaning of the text, there could be no application of the Word to his life. Once the Spirit opened his understanding, he was prepared to act on it.

Are you? Is your purpose in studying the Scripture life-change?

In this chapter we will look at five keys that will help you unlock the biblical text, five basic principles of Interpretation. The first key is one you already possess:

#### 1. Content

There is a direct cause-effect relationship between content and meaning. The content is the material or the database with which you will interpret the text. Because of your work with Observation, you already know much about how to determine the content of a passage. Remember, in Observation you look for terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere. You ask the questions who, what, where, when, why, and wherefore. You look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, and true to life.

You have used a variety of strategies aimed at answering the question, *“What do I see?”* If you have done your study well, you have uncovered the content of the passage. In other words, you have answered the question; *“What do I see?”* you know what the author is saying.

The more time you use in Observation, the less time you will have to use in Interpretation, and the more accurate will be your result. The less time you use in Observation, the more time you will have to use in Interpretation, and the less accurate will be your result.

Whatever you do in Observation will provide the basic content out of which you will interpret the meaning of the text.

#### ***What Have You Learned?***

1. List the five (5) keys to interpretation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Write Psalm 119:34 on the lines provided. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In this psalm, the psalmist realized that apart from \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the text, there could be no \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word to his \_\_\_\_\_. Once the Spirit opened his \_\_\_\_\_, he was prepared to \_\_\_\_\_ on it.
4. What is the direct cause-effect relationship between content and meaning? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The more time you use in \_\_\_\_\_, the less time you will have to use in \_\_\_\_\_, and the more \_\_\_\_\_ will be your \_\_\_\_\_. The less time you use in \_\_\_\_\_, the more \_\_\_\_\_ you will have to use in \_\_\_\_\_, and the less \_\_\_\_\_ will be your result. Whatever you do in \_\_\_\_\_ will provide the basic \_\_\_\_\_ out of which you will \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the text.



## Chapter 31

### CONTEXT

The Bible is a sixty-six-book collection, but it fits together as one Book. It is a unified whole. And that is the principle on which the second key of biblical interpretation depends.

#### 2. Context

Context refers to that which goes before and that which comes after. Every major cult is built upon a violation of the principle of context.

Remember our observation of Acts 1:8? We broke into a paragraph at verse 8, and because the verse begins with “*but*,” a contrast, we were forced to look at the preceding context. There we discovered the disciples asking Jesus a question about the kingdom. Verse 8 is part of His answer.

But we also discovered that immediately following verse 8 is the ascension and that had a profound effect on verse 8. What Jesus said was to be His last words before His ascension. And of course, last words are lasting words. So given the context, His listeners would never forget what happened and what Jesus said.

Whenever you study a verse, a paragraph, a section, or an entire book – always consult the neighbors of that verse; that paragraph; that section; that book.

#### Several Kinds of Context

##### a. Literary Context

In Acts 1:8, we saw an illustration of literary context, that is, the words before and after verse 8. The literary context of any verse is the paragraph of which it is a part, the section of which that paragraph is a part, and the book of which that section is a part. And considering the unity of Scripture, the ultimate context of any book is the entire Bible.

##### b. Historical Context

In other words, when is this taking place? Where does this passage fit in history? What else was taking place in the world at this time? What were some social, political, and technological influences on the writer and on those to whom he was writing?

##### c. Cultural Context

Culture has a powerful influence on all forms of communication, and the cultures in biblical times had a profound effect on the creation of the Bible. Therefore the more you know about ancient cultures, the more insight you will have into the text.

##### d. Geographic Context

Investigating the geographical context answers questions such as: What was the terrain like? What topographic features made this region unique? What was the weather like? How far was this town from places mentioned in the text? What were the transportation routes for these people? What size city was this? What was the layout of this town? What was the location known for?

##### e. Theological Context

The question here is, what did this author know about God? What was the relationship of his readers to God? How did people worship God at that time? How much Scripture did the writer and his audience have at that time? What other religions and worldviews were competing for influence?

A central issue here is where does this passage fit in the unfolding of Scripture? The Bible was not dropped out of the sky as a finished piece of work. It took thousands of years to put it all together. And during that time, God revealed more and more of His message to the authors. The process the Bible went through is called “progressive revelation.” Over time, God slowly unveiled the truth of His Word.

It is important to locate your passage in the flow of Scripture. If you are studying Noah in Genesis, you are before the Ten Commandments, before the Sermon on the Mount, before John 3:16. In fact, Noah did not have any biblical text to work with. So what does it tell you when you read, “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD?*” (Genesis 6:8) One of the helpful resources to investigate theological context is a commentary.

### **What Have You Learned?**

1. What does context refer to? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Every major \_\_\_\_\_ is built upon a \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of context.
3. Whenever you study a \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_, or an entire \_\_\_\_\_ - always consult the \_\_\_\_\_ of that \_\_\_\_\_; that \_\_\_\_\_; that \_\_\_\_\_; that \_\_\_\_\_.
4. List and briefly explain the five (5) different kinds of context.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. A central issue here is \_\_\_\_\_ does this passage \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture? The Bible was not dropped out of the sky as a \_\_\_\_\_ piece of \_\_\_\_\_. It took \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ to put it all together. And during that time, God \_\_\_\_\_ more and more of His \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_. The process the Bible went through is called "\_\_\_\_\_." Over \_\_\_\_\_, God slowly unveiled the \_\_\_\_\_ of His Word.
6. What is one helpful resource to investigate theological context? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Write Psalm 119:130 on the lines provided. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 32

### COMPARISON

We are all familiar with the Protestant Reformation. One of its rallying cries was *sola scriptura* – Scripture alone is our final authority for faith and practice. That led to a crucial development in the history of Christianity, the right to private interpretation.

However, as R. C. Sproul says, “Private interpretation never meant that individuals have the right to distort the Scriptures. With the right of private interpretation comes the responsibility of accurate interpretation. Private interpretation allows us to interpret, not to distort.”

How can you avoid distorting God’s message? We have already seen two keys to help you unlock the door of accurate understanding – content and context. Now we come to the third key, which is perhaps the best insurance against distortion.

#### 3. Comparison

In comparison we compare Scripture with Scripture, because the greatest interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.

Donald Grey Barnhouse said this, “You very rarely have to go outside the Bible to explain anything in the Bible.” He realized the more you compare Scripture with Scripture, the more the meaning of the Bible becomes apparent. The parts take on meaning in light of the whole.

#### The Value Of A Concordance

Comparison points out the great need you have for a concordance. A concordance is a tool that enables you to find terms and concepts from one book of the Bible to the next. Using a concordance, you can put together things that appear isolated in the text; and they take on greater meaning in relation to each other. Here are several illustrations.

##### A. “Belief”

The word *belief* is one of the most determinative terms in the Bible. But it is used in a variety of ways. If you look it up in a concordance, you will find that it is especially prominent in the gospel by John. For example, in John 2:23-25 we read:

*“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many **believed** in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto (or believe in) them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”*

They “*believed*” superficially, on the basis of the miracles. It was obvious He had done them, the facts were known to all. But facts do not save. Facts are an essential basis for salvation, but one must *believe*, that is, embrace the truth, and use those facts on a personal basis.

That is the connection between facts and faith in John’s gospel. Jesus knows that, which is why John says in verse 24, “*he knew all men.*” In fact, John goes on in chapters 3 and 4 to give three interesting exhibits of the Lord’s omniscience concerning what is “in a man”: Nicodemus (3:1-21); the woman at the well in Samaria (4:1-42); and the nobleman (4:46-54).

##### B. “Equip”

A second illustration of comparative Bible study is found in Ephesians. When you read Ephesians you will see two remarkable verses:

*“And He (That is, the risen Christ, verses 7-10) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (4:11-12)*

A crucial term to research in this passage is *perfecting*. How is it used? Turn to your concordance and look it up and you will discover three things.

- a. The word *perfecting* is used in the mending of broken nets.
- b. The same word, *perfecting* is used for the setting of broken bones. (It is a medical term)
- c. The word *perfecting* is also used of outfitting a ship for a journey.

Good preaching and teaching of the Word should “*perfect*” (equip) people for their journey through life. It should “*perfect*” (equip) them so that when they are out in the marketplace, when they are in a crisis, when they really need to know God’s mind, they know it. Somebody has “*perfected*” (equipped) them to be and to do what God wants them to be and to do.

**C. Moses**

Comparative study goes beyond studying terms. Suppose you want to study a character in Scripture. Perhaps you want to study the life of Moses, get a concordance and look him up.

The first thing you will find is that the most of his life story can be found in Exodus. In order to see his beginning, you will need to do a concerted study of the book of Exodus. You will want to study his parents, who hid him from the king, so that ultimately he became the leader of Israel.

You will also discover in your concordance that there is something about Moses in Acts 7.

Moses can be found in Hebrews 11. In fact he takes up more space in Hebrews than any other character. You will find his life described from God’s perspective in that passage. What does He think of him? What does He call significant in Moses’ life?

***What Have You Learned?***

1. What was one of the major rallying cries of the Protestant Reformation? What did this mean? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ This led to a \_\_\_\_\_ development in the history of \_\_\_\_\_, the right to \_\_\_\_\_ interpretation.

2. Write the quote by R. C. Sproul about private interpretation.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the best insurance against distortion? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Write the quote by Donald Gray Barnhouse about interpreting Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. In \_\_\_\_\_ we compare Scripture with \_\_\_\_\_, because the greatest \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_ itself. The more you \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture with \_\_\_\_\_, the more the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ become apparent. The \_\_\_\_\_ take on \_\_\_\_\_ in light of the \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Comparison points out the great need you have for a \_\_\_\_\_. A concordance is a \_\_\_\_\_ that enables you to find \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ from one book of the Bible to the next. Using a \_\_\_\_\_, you can put together things that appear \_\_\_\_\_ in the text; and they take on greater meaning in \_\_\_\_\_ to each other.

7. List the three (3) exhibits of the Lord’s omniscience concerning what is “in a man” as found in John chapters 3 and 4. Give Scripture reference for each. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. List three (3) things discovered from a concordance about the term “perfecting” as found in Ephesians 4:11-12. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. List three (3) things this discovery helps us understand about the word “perfect” found in Ephesians 4:11-12 in our every day lives. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_ study goes beyond studying \_\_\_\_\_. In studying the life of \_\_\_\_\_, you will find his \_\_\_\_\_ described from God’s \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ chapter \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chapter 33

### CULTURE

In chapter 31 we saw the importance of context in terms of the text of Scripture – paying attention to what comes before and what comes after the passage you are studying. In this same way, you have to pay attention to the cultural and historical context – to the factors that led to the writing of the passage, the influences they had on the text, and what happened as a result of the message. That is the fourth key in making accurate Interpretation of the Scriptures.

#### 4. Culture

Here are several illustrations that show what is meant by cultural context.

##### A. Ruth

The Old Testament book of Ruth, for example is a beautiful story of love and courage. But most people overlook the fact that it takes place during a period of the Judges. That is because they fail to observe Judges 21:25, which sets up the context for Ruth 1:1. It was a time in the culture when they could not tell the difference between good and evil. Reading the account, you have to wonder, was anyone faithful to God during this time?

Answer? Look in the book of Ruth. It is as a light in the midst of a dark period. Here is a family, faithful to Jehovah, even in the midst of apostasy.

Often we read the Bible according to our own culture, as through a pair of glasses that distorts the context.

##### B. The Last Supper

The best illustration of this tendency is Leonardo de Vinci's masterpiece, *The Last Supper*. It is an incredible work of art, but that would not be the place to go if you wanted to find out what the Last Supper was really like. It gives a distorted picture of the setting – actually a fifteenth-century interpretation of it.

First, Leonardo has Jesus and His disciples sitting at a table. But people did not sit at tables to eat in the time of Christ; they reclined. They lay on couch-like furniture, leaning on an elbow, which left the other hand free to eat. That is important, because remember that Peter asked John, "Who was Jesus talking about when he said that one of us is going to betray Him?" (John 13:24) The rest of the disciples could not hear Peter. Why? Because he was able to lean back, John could come forward, and the two could communicate.

Leonardo also has them all seated on the same side of the table, as at a speaker's table. By reading the account in the Scriptures, we see no indication of this.

Leonardo has painted a fifteenth-century frieze on the back wall. This obviously reflects Leonardo's time, not the first century. If you observe carefully you will notice that in Leonardo's painting, it is daylight outside. But according to Scripture the Last Supper took place at night.

The painting is a valuable piece of art, but people often get a flawed interpretation of a passage of Scripture by looking at a beautiful piece of art. Accuracy demands that one go back to that period and culture to find out what is really going on.

##### C. Psalm 24

When you read this psalm, you may ask, "What is this talking about?" In studying the life of David look at a map of Palestine. The story says that before he became king, whenever he wanted to go from the southern part of the country to the north, he had to pass a city by the name of Jebus. Jebus was an ancient fortress from the days of Joshua.

So whenever David went by Jebus, its defenders appeared on the wall and taunted him. "Hey David," they yelled, "When you become king, do not try to take this place. We will put lame men at the gates. We will put blind men on the watchtowers. But you still will not conquer us."

When David became king he did not forget those words. He said to his warriors, "The first thing we are going to do is to take Jebus." That is what Psalm 24 is talking about. David defeated Jebus and made it his capital (which we know as Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 5:3-10). One of the first acts as king was to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jebus. Psalm 24 is the processional hymn that he and the people sang as they brought it up the incline to the city: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Then the question is asked, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer is given, "The LORD strong and

*mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.*" Once you understand the historical background, Psalm 24 comes alive.

When you study any portion of the Word of God, make sure you study the historical background. Re-create the culture, because then and only then will the text come alive.

***What Have You Learned?***

1. You have to pay \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ context – to the \_\_\_\_\_ that led to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the passage, the \_\_\_\_\_ they had on the \_\_\_\_\_, and what \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of the \_\_\_\_\_.

2. What is the best illustration of the Last Supper? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. List three (3) reasons why this illustration is a distorted picture of the setting. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Briefly explain the historical and cultural setting for Psalm 24. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. When you study any \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word of \_\_\_\_\_, make sure you study the historical \_\_\_\_\_. Re-create the \_\_\_\_\_, because then and only then will the \_\_\_\_\_ come \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chapter 34

### CONSULTATION

In Bible study you can go a long way just with your own eyes and the English (French) text. But you can go farther if you add some tools to the process. Now we go to the fifth and final key to Interpretation.

#### 5. Consultation

Consultation involves the use of secondary resources. They can give light on the text that will help you better understand what you are observing.

But one word of caution: Never forget the order: First, the text of Scripture and then secondary sources. The first thing you need, before you ever obtain any of the resources mentioned below, is a good study Bible.

Here is a list of five resources that will get you started on building a valuable tool chest to use in your interpretation of Scripture.

##### A. Concordances

A concordance is like an index to the Bible. It lists all of the words of the text alphabetically, with references for where they appear, along with a few of the surrounding words to give some context. A concordance is helpful in doing word studies. A concordance can also help you locate a passage when you cannot remember its reference.

Make sure you get an *exhaustive concordance* rather than an abridged one. An exhaustive concordance is one that lists each and every instance of each and every word of the text. Every major translation of the Bible has its own concordance. Make sure to use the one that corresponds with the translation of the Bible being used.

A concordance is probably the most essential tool to have for Bible study.

##### B. Bible dictionaries

When you find a strange word in the Bible, a Bible dictionary will provide much helpful information on the subjects of the text. Much knowledge is available to you in Bible dictionaries.

##### C. Bible handbooks

A Bible handbook is like a one-volume encyclopedia. After consulting a resource such as this and getting the background, you discover many insights into the Scripture that eluded you before. These details help to make God's Word come alive.

##### D. Atlases

Geography is one of the most helpful sciences to Bible study. You need a good atlas. A good study Bible will have maps included in the back.

##### E. Bible commentaries

Bible commentaries offer you the insights of someone who has perhaps spent his entire life studying the text. A commentary cannot do your study for you, but it certainly is an excellent means of evaluating your own study.

Commentaries can be a blessing and a curse. The negative side is the tendency to depend on them rather than familiarizing yourself with the biblical text. Keep in mind that a commentary is just one person's opinion. Commentaries are not inspired works.

#### Getting Started

To begin with you need a good study Bible and a corresponding concordance. These are crucial. With these, you will be able to navigate freely among the passages, using skills you have learned in Observation and Interpretation.

Then if you can obtain a good Bible dictionary, a Bible handbook, an atlas, and a simple one-volume commentary, you will have the basic tools, a basic library with which to work. You can add other resources, as you are able to do so.

*A word of warning, beware of relying too much on secondhand resources. The use of extra-biblical resources should never be a substitute for personal Bible study, but rather a stimulus for it. The order is always the same: First the Word of God: then secondary sources.*

### **What Have You Learned?**

1. In Bible study, what do we mean by “consultation?” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the correct order of Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the first thing you need for Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_
4. List and explain the five (5) resources needed to get you started building a valuable tool chest to use in your interpretation of Scripture.
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Define an exhaustive concordance and explain its significance. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ can be a blessing and a \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ side is the tendency to \_\_\_\_\_ on them rather than \_\_\_\_\_ yourself with the Biblical text. Keep in mind that a \_\_\_\_\_ is just one person’s \_\_\_\_\_. Commentaries are not \_\_\_\_\_ works.
7. A word of \_\_\_\_\_, beware of relying too much on secondhand \_\_\_\_\_. The use of \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ resources should never be a \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ Bible study, but rather a \_\_\_\_\_ for it. The order is always the same: \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_ sources.



## Chapter 35

### COMING TO TERMS

A “term” is a key word or phrase that an author uses to make his point. He may use the word repeatedly to give it emphasis. He may place it on display in some prominent verse. He may build a story around it to illustrate its significance. Or he may put it in the mouth of the central character in his narrative. The author wants you to pay attention to his terms. Unless you “come to terms with the terms” you will never understand his message.

Two secondary resources mentioned in the last chapter are especially helpful in this process – the concordance and the Bible dictionary.

#### 1. Using A Concordance

##### A. For A Word Study

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, *joy* and *rejoice* appear to be the key terms for that book. Open your concordance and look up *joy*. The first thing you notice is that there are many references, in both Old and New Testaments. That is significant, *joy* is a very common biblical term. If you want to do an exhaustive study of the term, you need to look up each and every passage where it is used. You want to evaluate what clarification the various contexts give on the meaning and significance of the word *joy*.

##### B. To Study Obscure Words

Another use for a concordance is to research obscure references. For example in the books of 1 and 2 Kings, you see the name *Molech* in 1 Kings 11:7. *“Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.”*

Who or what was Molech? The text tells you that it was an abomination and that Solomon was apparently building a center of worship for it. But you decide to do a comparative study. So you look up Molech in your concordance and find that the name appears eight times in the Old Testament and never in the New Testament. That tells you something about the time span of Molech.

You notice that of the eight references, five are in Leviticus, one in 1 Kings and one in 2 Kings, and one more in Jeremiah. That ought to draw your attention to Leviticus. Just looking at the concordance entries, you read in four or five cases about children being offered to Molech. So already you have a clue as to why the author calls Molech an “abomination.” People were sacrificing their children to it. And apparently that was what Solomon was getting into.

Of all the tools of Bible study, a concordance is the one you will use most frequently. It is ideal for word studies because it locates terms in the text. It also helps you compare Scripture with Scripture, which is the best way to understand the meaning of biblical terms. If you can buy only one secondary resource for your Bible study, make sure it is an exhaustive concordance that corresponds to the translation of your study Bible.

#### 2. Using A Bible Dictionary

The other tool to use when investigating terms in Scripture is a Bible dictionary. Words are the basic building blocks of language. To understand any piece of literature, you have to come to terms with the author; you have to interpret his words. Concordances and Bible dictionaries are invaluable in helping you do that. However some words have a meaning that lies beneath the surface. We call them figures of speech, and we will look at how they work in the next chapter.

**What Have You Learned?**

1. In Bible study, explain what is meant by a “term.” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What two (2) secondary resources are especially helpful in coming to terms with a “term?” \_\_\_\_\_

3. List and briefly explain two (2) ways to use a concordance. Give an example of each. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Of all the tools of Bible study, a \_\_\_\_\_ is the one you will use \_\_\_\_\_ frequently. It is ideal for \_\_\_\_\_ studies because it locates \_\_\_\_\_ in the text. It also helps you \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture with \_\_\_\_\_, which is the best way to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ of Biblical \_\_\_\_\_. If you can buy only \_\_\_\_\_ secondary \_\_\_\_\_ for your Bible study, make sure it is an \_\_\_\_\_ concordance that \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_ Bible.

5. On the lines provided, write Psalm 1:1-6. On a separate sheet of paper, write these verses five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Using the information on page 80, answer the following questions about *Molech*. Read 1 Kings 11:7 to get you started.  
Who or what was Molech? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many references are made to Molech in the whole Bible – both Old and New Testaments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many concordance entries talk about children being offered to *Molech*? How does this help us understand the “abomination” of *Molech*, and Solomon’s involvement? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 36

### FIGURING OUT THE FIGURATIVE

An example of figurative speech is seen in Genesis 49, where Jacob calls his twelve sons and prophesies of the future of each one's lineage.

If you read the account you will notice the odd descriptions assigned to several of them. Judah is called a *"lion's whelp"* (verse 9); Zebulun is a *"haven of ships"* (verse 13); Issachar is *"a strong ass"* (verse 14); Dan is a *"a serpent by the way, an adder in the path,"* (verse 17); Naphtali is *"a hind let loose:"* (verse 21) Joseph is a *"a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well"* (verse 22); and Benjamin is *"ravin as a wolf"* (verse 27).

What are we to make of these descriptions? Are we to take them literally? If not, why not? How do we know when Scripture is actually representing reality and when it merely describes reality?

The issue here is figurative language. The biblical writers and characters laced their material with vivid images, and peculiar ways of speaking. David says that the person who follows God's Word will be like a tree, but the wicked are like chaff (Psalm 1:3-4). The bride in Song of Solomon 2:1 says she is *"rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."* She calls her lover a gazelle or young stag *"leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills"* (2:8-9), Jesus called Herod a fox, *"tell that fox"* (Luke 13:32), the Pharisees *"whited sepulchers"*, (Matthew 23:27), and James and John the *"Sons of Thunder"* (Mark 3:17). Paul called certain false teachers *"dogs"* (Philippians 3:2).

When we come to John's Revelation, we see some very unusual language. A ruler in heaven appears as a jasper stone surrounded by a rainbow, *"a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald"* (4:3). He sees a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, *"Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes"* (5:6). He also sees a beast rising up out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, *"a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns,"*(13:1). And at the end of the book, an entire city covering more than two million square miles drops out of heaven, *"And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."* (21:16).

These things make interesting reading, but what do they mean? How are we to interpret them in our Bible study process? How do we know when to read the Bible literally and when to read it figuratively?

When we speak of "literal interpretation" we mean taking the language in its normal sense, accepting it at face value as if the writer is communicating in ways that people normally communicate.

According to this principle when Jesus tells us to *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's,"* (Luke 20:25), we do not need to look for some hidden meaning or elaborate interpretation. It is clear that He is telling us to pay our taxes. On the other hand, when He calls Herod a fox, He obviously is not saying that the man is a roving carnivore. He is speaking figuratively, comparing Herod to that sly, dog-like animal.

#### Figuring Out The Figurative

There are some rules that govern when we should interpret Scriptures figuratively and when we should take them literally. Here are ten principles that will help you.

**1. Use the literal sense unless there is good reason not to.**

In reading the Bible, we have to assume that the writers were normal, rational people who communicated in the same basic ways that we do. And yet time and time again, people "spiritualize" the text, trying to make it say everything but what it clearly says.

**2. Use the figurative sense when the passage tells you to do so.**

Some passages tell you from the beginning that they involve figurative imagery. For instance, when you come across a dream or vision, you can expect to find symbolic language because that is the language of dreams.

**3. Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning is impossible or absurd.**

This is where we must use common sense. God does not shroud Himself in unknowable mysticism. When He wants to tell us something, He tells us. He does not confound us with nonsense. However, He often uses symbolism to make His points. Yet, He expects us to read them as symbols, not absurdities. Figurative language can be both descriptive and precise.

**4. Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning would involve something immoral.**

In John 6:53-55, Jesus confounds certain Jews who opposed Him with these words:

*“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”*

Was He suggesting that His followers become cannibals? No, that would have been a repulsive violation of the Old Testament law. And none of His listeners took it that way. They recognized that the Lord was talking figuratively.

God never violates His character. And since He bases His Word on His character, we can be sure that His commandments are consistent with who He is. He never asks us to do something that He would not do or has not done Himself.

**5. Use the figurative sense if the expression is an obvious figure of speech.**

The biblical text often signals its use of figures of speech. Similes for instance, use the words *like* or *as* to make comparisons.

Scripture uses other figures of speech that make sense only when read figuratively. For example, when Isaiah said, *“Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed”* (Isaiah 24:23), he is obviously using figurative speech. When Paul said, *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55), he used a form called apostrophe, which means addressing a thing as if it is a person.

**6. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the context and scope of the passage.**

Revelation 5:1-5 describes a fascinating scene before the throne of God. We read about the *“Lion of Judah.”* Is the writer talking about a literal beast? Obviously not, as that would make no sense in the context. A comparative study shows that he is using a title given to the Messiah. So we need to determine what that title represents and why he uses it.

Remember when figuring out the figurative one of your best guides is the context.

**7. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the general character and style of the book.**

This is really an extension of what we just looked at. Remember, the context of any verse is the paragraph, the section, and ultimately the book of which it is a part. This principle applies especially to two types of literature: the prophetic, which often makes sense only if read figuratively; and the poetic, which employs imaginative language as matter of routine.

**8. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the plan and purpose of the author.**

Again, context is crucial. Have you ever heard someone come up with an interpretation of a verse that sounds plausible in isolation but heretical in comparison with the neighboring verses? Something is out of place. In fact, a good habit to practice whenever you interpret a passage is to look at the interpretation and ask: Does everything fit together?

**9. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation involves a contradiction of other Scripture.**

The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture. The Bible is unified in its message. Although it sometimes presents us with paradox, it never confounds us with contradiction.

**10. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation would involve a contradiction in doctrine.**

We need to be consistent in our interpretation of Scripture and in the beliefs that we arrive at using Scripture.

## Figures Of Speech

### Anthropomorphism

The attribution of human features or actions to God.

*“Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”* (Isaiah 59:1)

### Apostrophe

Addressing a thing as if it were a person, or an absent or imaginary person as if he were present.

*“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

**Euphemism**

The use of a less offensive expression to indicate a more offensive one.

*"I would they were even cut off which trouble you."* (Galatians 5:12)

**Hyperbole**

Exaggeration to say more than is literally meant.

*"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service."* (2 Corinthians 11:8)

**Hypocatastasis**

A comparison in which likeness is implied rather than stated directly.

*"Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* (Luke 12:1)

**Idiom**

An expression peculiar to a particular people.

And Samson said, *"I will go in to my wife into the chamber."* (Judges 15:1)

**Merism**

A substitution of two contrasting or opposite parts for the whole.

*"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,"* (Psalm 139:2)

**Metaphor**

A comparison in which one thing represents another.

*"Ye are the light of the world."* (Matthew 5:14)

**Paradox**

A statement that seems absurd, self-contradictory, or contrary to logical thought.

*"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."*(Matthew 16:25)

**Personification**

Ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or animals.

*"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed,"* (Isaiah 24:23)

**Rhetorical question**

A question that requires no response, yet forces one to answer mentally and consider its ramifications.

*"In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."* (Psalm 56:11)

**Simile**

A comparison using "like" or "as."

*"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,"* (Psalm 1:3)

**What Have You Learned?**

1. What is meant by the term “literal interpretation?” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Give one example, with a brief explanation and Scripture reference of “literal interpretation.”  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. List and briefly explain the ten (10) principles that help you know when to interpret Scriptures figuratively and when to take them literally.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
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2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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4) \_\_\_\_\_  
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5) \_\_\_\_\_  
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6) \_\_\_\_\_  
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7) \_\_\_\_\_  
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8) \_\_\_\_\_  
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9) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Give one example, with a brief explanation and Scripture reference, of “figurative language.”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Given the following “figures of speech,” write the definition and a Scripture reference for each.

Anthropomorphism \_\_\_\_\_

Apostrophe \_\_\_\_\_

Euphemism \_\_\_\_\_

Hypocatastasis \_\_\_\_\_

Idiom \_\_\_\_\_

Merism \_\_\_\_\_

Paradox \_\_\_\_\_

Personification \_\_\_\_\_

Rhetorical question \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 37

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So far in this section you have been given much information on the interpretation of Scripture. We have looked at some obstacles to understanding the text, along with some of the dangers to avoid. We have discussed the importance of genre and how that influences what we read. You have been given five keys to unlocking the meaning of the text – content, context, comparison, culture, and consultation.

In terms of consultation, we reviewed some of the many secondary resources that can assist you in the process. We focused on the use of the concordance in investigating terms. And finally a list of ten principles for figuring out the figurative passages in the biblical account.

In this chapter we will demonstrate how to put these parts together by looking at a specific passage, Romans 12:1-2. These verses form a paragraph. Remember that the paragraph forms the basic unit of Bible study.

#### 1. What Is “Therefore” There For?

We said that the first key to accurately interpreting Scripture is context. This is based on observation of the text.

The first thing that we notice in this text is the sense of urgency Paul used: “*I beseech you...*” The first key word in the paragraph is “*therefore*.” When you see a “*therefore*”, stop to see what it is there for. Here it compels you to go back and observe the preceding context.

Investigation shows that the book of Romans finds its theme in chapter 1:17, where the writer tells us he is talking about the “*righteousness of God*” – not our own righteousness, but one that He provides.

There are 3 major divisions to the book of Romans. Chapters 1-8 deals with a righteousness that God has revealed but we must receive. Chapters 9-11 turn to the subject of Israel. Beginning with chapter 12 (where we find our passage, beginning with *therefore*), we come to the practical section of the book that talks about righteousness reproduced in the believer’s life.

Another phrase that we should consider is “*by the mercies of God*.” This shows that the mercies of God are the basis of Paul’s appeal. This phrase summarizes the first eleven chapters of the book. Paul is saying, essentially, “On the basis of what God has done for you, I want you to do something.” That is an important spiritual truth. God never asks us to do anything for Him until He fully informs us of what He has done for us.

What is it He wants us to do? Verse 1 clearly states what He wants us to do, “*present your bodies*.” What does that mean? The word “*present*” is a key term and is actually a technical term. It was used of the presentation of a sacrifice to God in the Old Testament Temple. It has the idea of giving something over to another and to relinquish one’s claim on it. To “*present*” something means you cannot give it and then later take it back. There is an element of decisiveness involved.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,  
that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,  
holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.  
And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed  
by the renewing of your mind,  
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

#### 2. Investigating Terms.

Whenever you find a term like “*present*”, you need to make extensive use of a concordance. You will see in Luke 2:22 that the child Jesus, was presented to God in the Temple by his parents. You will also see the use of this word in Ephesians 5:25-27 and in Colossians 1:28.

In Romans 12, Paul is talking about presentation of your body. What is the “*body*?” A word study will reveal that it means the total person – the instrument for sacrifice.

#### 3. Insights Through Consultation.

In Romans 12, we need to notice several things about the presentation of our bodies to God. First, we are presenting a “*living sacrifice*.” That is a contradiction in terms – except in the spiritual realm. We are not talking about offering a dead body but a very alive body. It is to be sacrificed to God. And it must be both holy and acceptable.



Paul concluded this with the expression, “*which is your reasonable service.*” This shows that the presentation of ourselves to God is really the most logical thing we can do, in light of what He has done for us.

Verse 2 says, “*And be not conformed to this world.*” If we look up *conformed* in a Bible dictionary, we discover that it has the idea of putting something into a mold. In other words, do not take on the shape of the world. Do not allow the world to do the opposite of what God wants to do.

Now the step of consultation: by consulting a commentary on this passage, we learn that the word for “*be ye transformed*” is actually the passive form of a verb, whereas the word for “*renewing*” is active. Anything passive is being acted upon; if it is active, it is doing the acting. So Paul is saying that we do not do the transforming; God does that. But we can renew our minds – that is our job.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,  
that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,  
holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.  
And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed  
by the renewing of your mind,  
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “ninety-nine percent of the will of God will be found from your neck up.” God begins to do His work of conforming us to Christ, in the mind. Unfortunately, most of us are conformed to this world. For the most part, we do not sit down, think through all our options, and make an informed decision. Instead we act according to our culture. Our society squeezes us into its mold by working on our minds. That is why it is so dangerous to put our mind in neutral and just go with the flow.

#### **4. “Proving” God’s Will.**

What is the purpose of God’s transforming work? What is it going to do for us? Paul writes, “*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”

A word study reveals that the word *prove* means to test or approve. The term *good* has been devalued by our culture. Our generation has so corrupted the word good that if something is not “fantastic,” we think it is useless. The word used in Romans 12 is the same word used in relation to God elsewhere in Scripture. You want to now how “*good*” it is? It is as good as God is.

Paul says it is “*acceptable.*” We cannot add anything to the will of God and improve it. We cannot take anything away from it and make it better. His will is totally, absolutely acceptable.

His will is also perfect. Again, it is as perfect as God is. It matches His character and His holiness. Most people spend the bulk of their lives trying to find the will of God, when all the while they have never presented their bodies as a living sacrifice.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,  
that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,  
holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.  
And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed  
by the renewing of your mind,  
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Now look back over Romans 12:1-2 as we have discussed it in this chapter. We observed the content of the text, and we also looked at the context. “*Therefore*” led us to examine the book as a whole. We did some comparison of Scripture, using a concordance. We studied the verbs “*to present*” and “*be conformed.*” We discovered that “*present*” indicates a decisive commitment of ourselves to Jesus Christ. We also discovered what transformation involves. It is something God does; the renewing of our mind is something that we do.

## Chapter 38

### *DO NOT STOP NOW!*

How do we find the information we are searching for? How do we use this information? The majority of the people who study Scripture get bogged down in the step of Interpretation. They acquire very much information about the text, and much speculation about what it means. But what difference does it make in their lives? The Bible becomes no more than theological questions, rather than a road map of how to live.

This is a tragedy because the Word of God does not bear fruit just by being understood, but only when it is applied. That is the reason James exhorts us to, “*receive with meekness the engrafted word...*” (James 1:21) In other words, let God’s truth take root in your life. How? By proving to be a doer of the word, not a hearer only.

Imagine plowing a field, dropping in the seed, carefully tending the plants that come up, pulling out the weeds, waiting for the rains, and then, just as harvest time arrives, walking off to do something else. A person could starve quickly doing that. Yet that is what happens if you fail to move on to the next step in the Bible study process – Application. You can go to the trouble of preparing a rich harvest and yet starve spiritually by neglecting to follow through.

I hope by now you are hungry to see results in your life. If so, move on to the next section, where we will explore some ways to turn biblical investigation into practical application.

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. List and briefly explain the four (4) steps to putting all the parts of Bible study together.

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2. Open your Bible to Romans 12:1-2. On the lines provided, write these verses, then read them aloud five (5) times.

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3. Following the guidelines and information on pages 87 and 88, answer the following questions about Romans 12:1-2.

1) Romans 12:1-2 forms a \_\_\_\_\_. Remember that the paragraph forms the \_\_\_\_\_ unit of Bible \_\_\_\_\_.

2) The first key to \_\_\_\_\_ interpreting Scripture is \_\_\_\_\_. This is based on \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.

3) What is the first thing we notice in this text? \_\_\_\_\_

4) What is the first key word in the paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_  
When you see a “therefore,” \_\_\_\_\_ to see what it is \_\_\_\_\_ for. Here it \_\_\_\_\_ you to go back and \_\_\_\_\_ the preceding \_\_\_\_\_.

5) \_\_\_\_\_ shows that the book of \_\_\_\_\_ finds its theme in \_\_\_\_\_, where the \_\_\_\_\_ tells us he is talking about the “\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_” – not our \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness, but one that He \_\_\_\_\_.

6) There are \_\_\_\_\_ major divisions to the book of Romans. Chapters \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ deals with a righteousness that God has \_\_\_\_\_ but we must \_\_\_\_\_. Chapters \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ turn to the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. Beginning with chapter \_\_\_\_\_ (where we find our passage, beginning with \_\_\_\_\_), we come to the \_\_\_\_\_ section of the book that \_\_\_\_\_ about righteousness \_\_\_\_\_ in the believer’s \_\_\_\_\_.

7) What is another phrase we should consider? \_\_\_\_\_  
This shows that the \_\_\_\_\_ of God are the \_\_\_\_\_ of Paul’s \_\_\_\_\_. This phrase \_\_\_\_\_ the first \_\_\_\_\_ chapters of the book. Paul is saying, essentially, “On the basis of what God has done for \_\_\_\_\_, I want you to do \_\_\_\_\_.” That is an important spiritual \_\_\_\_\_. God never \_\_\_\_\_ us to do anything for Him until He fully \_\_\_\_\_ us of what He has done for us.

8) What is it God wants us to do? Verse \_\_\_\_\_ clearly \_\_\_\_\_ what He wants us to do, “\_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_.” What does that mean? The word “\_\_\_\_\_” is a key \_\_\_\_\_ and is actually a \_\_\_\_\_ term. It was used of the presentation of a \_\_\_\_\_ to God in the Old Testament \_\_\_\_\_. It has the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ something over to another and to \_\_\_\_\_ one’s \_\_\_\_\_ on it. To “\_\_\_\_\_” something means you cannot \_\_\_\_\_ it and then later \_\_\_\_\_ it back. There is an element of \_\_\_\_\_ involved.

9) Whenever you find a \_\_\_\_\_ like “\_\_\_\_\_,” you need to make extensive \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_. List three Scripture references that use this term. What is being “presented” in each verse? \_\_\_\_\_

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10) In Romans \_\_\_\_, Paul is talking about \_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_. What is the  
“\_\_\_\_\_?” A word \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ that it means the total \_\_\_\_\_ - the  
\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What phrase in Romans 12:1 is a “contradiction in terms?” \_\_\_\_\_  
Since the Bible never contradicts itself, explain what this means. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Write Donald Grey Barnhouse’s quote about the will of God on the lines provided.

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6. What does a Bible dictionary tell us about the word “conformed?” \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is learned by consulting a commentary on this passage (Romans 12:1-2)? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. God begins to do His work of \_\_\_\_\_ us to Christ, in the \_\_\_\_\_. Unfortunately,  
most of us are conformed to this \_\_\_\_\_. For the most part, we do not sit down, think through  
all our \_\_\_\_\_, and make an informed \_\_\_\_\_. Instead we \_\_\_\_\_ according to our  
\_\_\_\_\_. Our \_\_\_\_\_ squeezes us into its \_\_\_\_\_ by working on our \_\_\_\_\_. That  
is why it is so \_\_\_\_\_ to put our mind in \_\_\_\_\_ and just go with the \_\_\_\_\_.

9. What is the purpose of God’s transforming work, according to Paul’s writing? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What do we learn from a word study of the above purpose? Include information about the  
“good, acceptable, and perfect” descriptions of God’s will. \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Describe the tragedy of the way most people study the Word of God. \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Part V**

## **Application**

### **How Does it Work?**

## Chapter 39

### THE VALUE OF APPLICATION

The situation confronting people in terms of Bible study is, they pick up the Bible to read it, then put it down and then go to something else. They promise to study the Word but never do it. The real question is this: Even if they did read and study God's Word faithfully, what would they do about it? What practical difference would they let it make in their life?

This is a question you need to ponder as we come to the third step of Bible study, Application. Application is the most neglected yet the most needed stage in the process. Too much Bible study begins and ends in the wrong place. It begins with Interpretation, and it also ends there. But we have learned that you do not start with the question, "*What does this mean?*" But rather, "*What does this say?*" Furthermore, you do not end the process by asking, "*What does this mean?*" But rather, "*How does this work?*" Again, not does it work, but how?

Understanding is simply a means to an end – practicing biblical truth in day-to-day life. Observation plus Interpretation without Application equals abortion. In other words, every time you observe and interpret but fail to apply, you perform an abortion on the Scriptures in terms of their purpose. The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life. The ultimate goal of Bible study is, not to do something to the Bible, but to allow the Bible to do something to you, so truth becomes tangent to life. We frequently come to the Bible to study it, to teach it, to preach it, to outline it, everything except to be changed by it.

#### Make The Truth Attractive

Titus 1:1 provides a clear statement of the purpose of Scripture. Paul describes it as, "*truth which is after godliness.*" Then in chapter 2 he gives a specific case in point:

*"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."* (Titus 2: 9-10) This means that they put on the doctrine of God like clothes. Biblical truth is the wardrobe of the soul.

Attractive truth is applied truth. There is a danger in Bible study: it can degenerate into a process that is intellectually fascinating but spiritually frustrating. You can get mentally excited about the truth yet fail to be morally changed by it. If that happens, you know there must be something wrong with your study of the Bible.

Our task is two-sided. First, we must get into the Word of God for ourselves. But then we must allow that word to get into us, to make a permanent difference in our character and conduct.

#### Four Substitutes For Application

What happens when you fail to apply Scripture? Listed below are four substitutes for Application, four routes that, unfortunately, many Christians take in their daily study of the Word. Each one is a dead-end street.

##### 1. We substitute Interpretation for Application.

It is easy to settle for knowledge rather than experience. According to the Bible, to know and not to do is not to know at all. Knowledge creates responsibility. From cover to cover the Bible teaches that the moment you know God's truth, you are responsible for putting it into action. That is why Jesus so often said that to whom much has been given, much is required. (Matthew 13:12; Luke 12:28) And to His disciples, "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46) Implication: either stop calling me "Lord," or start doing what I tell you.

On another occasion, Jesus said, "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*" But He rejects them, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (Matthew 7:22-23) What does that mean? Jesus was omniscient; He knew everything that was going on. But He was talking about relational knowledge: "I never knew you in terms of a personal relationship."

The danger is well expressed in James 4:17: "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" In God's mind knowledge without obedience is sin.

**2. We substitute superficial obedience for substantive life-change.**

Here, we apply biblical truth to areas where we are already applying it, not to new areas. Result: no noticeable change in our lives.

**3. We substitute rationalization for repentance.**

Most of us have a built-in warning system against spiritual change. The moment truth gets too close, too convincing, we start to defend ourselves. Our favorite strategy is to rationalize sin instead of repenting of it. You build up a reserve of responses so that when the truth gets too convincing, you have plenty of reasons why it applies to everyone but you.

**4. We substitute an emotional experience for a volitional decision.**

We study the Word of God, but we make no real change. There is nothing wrong with responding emotionally to spiritual truth. But if that is our only response and we say a few mournful prayers, and then go happily on our way without altering our behavior, then our spirituality is nothing more than an emotional experience.

**A Look In The Mirror**

The apostle James asks a penetrating question in the first chapter of his book: Does the Word work? Answer: Yes, it does, if it is "received." (James 1:21) He uses an interesting word. It basically means to welcome the truth into your life.

James basically said, "You have got to embrace biblical truth." And he offers an interesting illustration to make his point – the analogy of the mirror (verses 23-25).

James described it as when you look in the mirror and see that you hair needs combing, you need to shave, or there is dirt on your face, yet you turn and walk away and do nothing, that is exactly what you do every time you study the Word of God but are not changed by it.

There is an alternative, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25)

**What Have You Learned?**

1. As we begin the third step of Bible study, what is the question we need to ponder?

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2. How is it possible to perform an abortion on the Scripture in terms of their purpose?

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3. What verse provides a clear statement of the purpose of Scripture? How does Paul describe it?

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4. When studying the Bible, what question should you start with?

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What question should you end your Bible study with?

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5. Write the verses in full that tell us that Biblical truth is the wardrobe of the soul. Be sure to give the reference.

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6. Attractive \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ truth. There is a \_\_\_\_\_ in Bible study: it can \_\_\_\_\_ into a \_\_\_\_\_ that is \_\_\_\_\_ fascinating but \_\_\_\_\_ frustrating. You can get \_\_\_\_\_ excited about the truth yet \_\_\_\_\_ to be morally \_\_\_\_\_ by it. If that happens, you know there must be something \_\_\_\_\_ with your study of the Bible.

7. Our \_\_\_\_\_ is two-sided. First, we must get \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God for \_\_\_\_\_. But then we must \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ to get into \_\_\_\_\_, to make a \_\_\_\_\_ difference in our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

8. List and briefly explain the four (4) things that happen when you fail to apply Scripture. Give one example or result of each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

9. On the lines provided below, write James 1:21-25. Briefly explain how these verses talk about the “working word.” What does this have to do with the third step of Bible study – application?

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10. On the lines provided, write Psalm 119:9-11. On a separate sheet of paper, write these verses five (5) times.

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 40

### FOUR STEPS IN APPLICATION

Most Christians have had much input from the Word of God, but what difference has it made in their lives? Spiritual growth is a commitment to change. But the human heart resists nothing as strongly as it resists change. In this chapter we will look at a four-step process of Application, four principles that will help you apply Scripture in any circumstance.

#### **Step 1: Know**

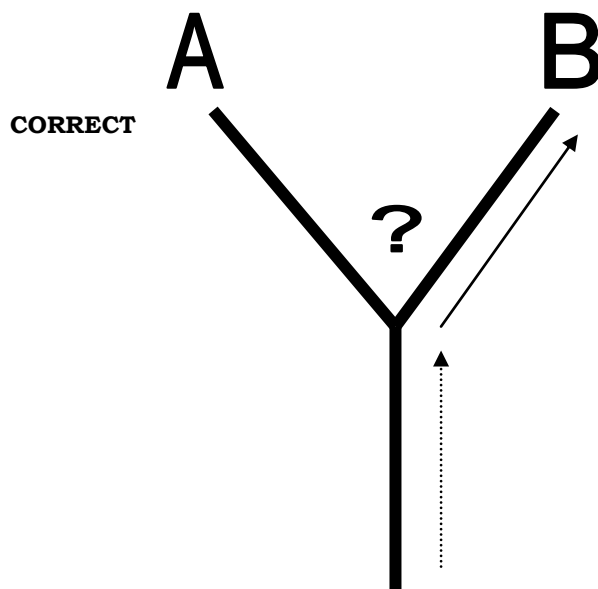
If you want to apply the Bible, you need to know two things.

##### **a. Know the text.**

First, you have got to know the Interpretation of the biblical text. Application is based on Interpretation, so if your interpretation of a passage is erroneous, your application will probably be erroneous. If your interpretation is correct, you have a possibility that your application will be correct.

Here is a statement to keep in your mind: *Interpretation is one: Application is many.* There is only one ultimate interpretation of a passage of Scripture. The text does not mean one thing today and something else tomorrow. Whatever it means, it means forever. But you will never cease the process of applying that truth to your life. Implication: Be careful how you interpret.

In Bible study there is the possibility of getting off course. It is what we can call “the error of the fork.” Suppose you are coming down the road of biblical Interpretation and you come to an interpretation problem. As an illustration, let us say there are two possible interpretations: interpretation **A** and interpretation **B**. Suppose that **A** is actually the correct one; but you choose **B**. Then the further down the road you go, the more divergent your application becomes from biblical truth.



#### **THE ERROR OF THE FORK**

The better you understand a passage, the better you will be able to use it.

##### **b. Know yourself.**

Not only must you know the Interpretation, you must know yourself. In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul warns Timothy, “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.*” Notice the order: Pay attention to yourself first, then the communication of that truth to others. Why? Because if you do not know yourself, it is difficult to help other people apply the Bible to their lives.

Insight is the first step toward spiritual growth, insight into the passage, and insight into yourself.

## **Step 2: Relate**

Once we know the truth of the Word of God, we must relate it to our experience. Christianity is best understood as a series of new relationships. The biblical pattern for that is 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

Jesus wants to renew every area of your life. That is why Christian growth is a process, a dynamic process. We must come to the Word of God throughout our lifetime. Spiritual growth is a long-term process. And unless we heed the Word of God, we will never arrive at the goal of Christ likeness.

In Observation and Interpretation, you gain new insights – things that you have never seen before. These new insights will create a series of new relationships.

**1. A new relationship to God:** He is now your heavenly Father. You have a personal and intimate relationship with Him. He has provided His Son for your salvation and His Spirit to help you grow and accomplish His purposes.

**2. A new relationship to yourself:** Your life takes on new meaning and purpose.

**3. A new relationship to other people:** You discover that other people are not the enemy. He calls you to treat them with Christ likeness.

**4. A new relationship to the enemy:** You move from Satan’s side to God’s side. The enemy is not happy with that. That is why your Christian life will be a constant battle.

Once you realize that Jesus Christ wants to impact your life in a profound way, you need to look for areas in which to relate the Word to life. We will look at these in terms of what is called the “Working Word.” The new insights that you have gained from Scripture need to be applied in all areas of these new relationships. Notice how that takes place.

### **The Working Word**

**1. The Word exposes your sin:** Remember 2 Timothy 3:16? Scripture has a reproofing and corrective function. It tells you when there is sin in your life.

**2. The Word gives you God’s promises:** It tells you what you can expect from God and what you can rely on Him to do.

**3. The Word gives you God’s commands:** Just as there are promises in Scripture, there are conditions to be met. Commands and principles are laid down that lead toward health and life.

**4. The Word gives you examples to follow:** Studying biographies in Scripture gives us examples of people who lived their lives in the sight of God. Some offer a positive example and others present a negative example. By using the Working Word, Jesus Christ produces life-change for those who want to apply biblical truth.

## **Step 3: Meditate**

We saw in chapter 14 that meditation is useful in the step of Observation. It is absolutely essential to the step of Application. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-2, tell us that the key to spiritual prosperity is to meditate on the Word *day and night*. In other words we are to weave Scripture into our every day living.

There is a direct link between meditation and memory. Memory provides the mind with the fuel it needs to make meditation profitable.

If you memorize two verses each week for one year, you will have memorized 104 verses of Scripture. Can that make a difference in your life? Yes. It will sustain you during times of illness and trouble. Memory is the key to meditation. And meditation is the key to changing our outlook.

## **Step 4: Practice**

The ultimate goal of Bible study is to practice the truth. The more you understand it, the more you use it; and the more you use it, the more you understand it. Both are necessary.

In the end you will always find two sides to Christian living: you need food, and you need exercise. Food is transformed into energy, and energy enables you to do that which God wants you to do. Yet in the process, you become exhausted and tired. You lose your perspective. So you have got to come back to the Word of God for refreshment. Remember that the Word of God experienced is the Word of God enjoyed.

### **What Have You Learned?**

1. If you want to apply the Bible, what two (2) things do you need to know? Briefly explain each. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Most \_\_\_\_\_ have had much \_\_\_\_\_ from the Word of God, but what \_\_\_\_\_ has it made in their \_\_\_\_\_? Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. But the human \_\_\_\_\_ resists nothing as strongly as it resists \_\_\_\_\_.

3. List the four (4) steps to application. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Explain what is meant by "the error of the fork." \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Once we know the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word of God, we must \_\_\_\_\_ it to our \_\_\_\_\_. Christianity is best \_\_\_\_\_ as a series of \_\_\_\_\_ relationships. Write the verse (with reference) that is the Biblical pattern for this. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Jesus wants to \_\_\_\_\_ every area of your \_\_\_\_\_. That is why Christian \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_ process. We must come to the Word of God throughout our \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ growth is a long-\_\_\_\_\_ process. Unless we \_\_\_\_\_ the Word of God, we will never arrive at the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ \_\_\_\_\_. In \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you gain new \_\_\_\_\_ - things that you have never \_\_\_\_\_ before. These new \_\_\_\_\_ will create a series of new \_\_\_\_\_. List four (4) new relationships and briefly explain each.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. List and briefly explain four (4) ways the Word of God works.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

8. In chapter \_\_\_\_ of this book we learned that \_\_\_\_\_ is useful in the step of \_\_\_\_\_. It is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ to the step of \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, tell us that the key to spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_ on the Word \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. In other words, we are to weave \_\_\_\_\_ into our every day \_\_\_\_\_.

9. There is a direct link between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Memory provides the \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ it needs to make meditation \_\_\_\_\_. What will you accomplish if you memorize two (2) verses each week for one year? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is the key to \_\_\_\_\_. And \_\_\_\_\_ is the key to \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_.

10. The ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ of Bible study is to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_. The more you \_\_\_\_\_ it, the more you \_\_\_\_\_ it; and the more you \_\_\_\_\_ it, the more you \_\_\_\_\_ it. In the end you will always find \_\_\_\_\_ sides to Christian \_\_\_\_\_.: you need \_\_\_\_\_, and you need \_\_\_\_\_. Food is transformed into \_\_\_\_\_, and energy \_\_\_\_\_ you to \_\_\_\_\_ that which God wants you to do. Yet in the process, you become \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. You lose your \_\_\_\_\_. So you have got to come back to the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. Remember that the Word of God \_\_\_\_\_ is the Word of God \_\_\_\_\_.

11. On the lines provided, write Joshua 1:8. On a separate sheet of paper, write this verse five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 41

### NINE QUESTIONS TO ASK

When we studied the steps of Observation, we said that one of the things to do with any passage of Scripture is to bombard the text with questions. The same is true when it comes to Application. Here are nine questions of application that you can ask whenever you come to the Word:

#### **1. Is there any example for me to follow?**

Notice that much of the Bible is biographical. God filled His Word with people because nothing helps truth come alive the way people do. The challenge is to draw parallels between your situation and that of the character you are studying.

#### **2. Is there a sin to avoid?**

One of the values of the Word is that it raises your consciousness in regard to moral issues.

#### **3. Is there a promise to claim?**

God's word is filled with promises – promises that are made by the One who does not lie, and who is totally capable of fulfilling them. Of course, not all of the promises in Scripture are given to you and me. Some promises God made to certain individuals, not to people in general. Others were made to groups of people, such as the nation of Israel. We cannot claim promises that have not been made to us, but we can certainly claim promises made to the church as well as those made to “the righteous” in Proverbs and other portions of the wisdom literature.

#### **4. Is there a prayer to repeat?**

Abraham teaches us something about prayer in Genesis 18. So does Nehemiah. Make a study of the great prayers in Scripture. David's prayer of confession in Psalm 51; Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2; Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55; Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21; Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46.

As you study them, ask yourself, *“What is there in these prayers that I need to be praying?”*

#### **5. Is there a command to obey?**

The Bible is full of clear commands. There are fifty-four in the book of James alone. A wise old scholar was asked how to determine the will of God. His response was simple: “Ninety-five percent of the will of God is revealed in the commands of Scripture. If you spend your time attending to them, you will not have much trouble working out the other five percent.”

#### **6. Is there a condition to meet?**

Many of the promises of God are based on conditions set forth in the text. For example, Jesus said, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7) Do you notice the conditions? If you abide in me, and (if) My words abide in you. Jesus makes an incredible promise, *“ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* But the conditions must first be met.

#### **7. Is there a verse to memorize?**

Obviously, any verse of Scripture can be memorized. But some will carry more significance for you than others.

#### **8. Is there an error to mark?**

Biblical truth should produce love and concern for people and their needs. As you investigate God's Word, ask yourself: What doctrines and truths is that passage teaching? What theological errors is it exposing? And then: What changes do I need to make in my thinking in order to bring it in line with what Scriptures teach?

#### **9. Is there a challenge to face?**

Have you ever read a portion of the Bible and felt convicted that you needed to act on the basis of what you have read? The Spirit of God will prompt that. When you read the Word, He will challenge you to respond in some area of your life, or in some situation that you are facing. The Spirit uses Scripture to promote changes in your life.

The question is, are you open to such change? Are you prepared to take on His challenges?

**What Have You Learned?**

1. List and briefly explain nine (9) questions of application to ask whenever you study God's Word.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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4) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) \_\_\_\_\_

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6) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Write the response given by the wise old scholar when asked how to determine the will of God. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Write Psalm 119:130 five (5) times on the lines provided. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 42

### NOW AND THEN

If you ask someone that has a high regard for the Bible if it is the revealed Word of God, he will say, "Absolutely." Is it authoritative for belief and practice? "Yes."

But when that person goes to work, he leaves the Word at home, not physically, but mentally. It never occurs to him that the Word might have something to do with the way he conducts his business. Why? Because he perceives the Bible to be irrelevant in that context.

What about you? Do you believe that the Word of God is relevant in day-to-day life? Would you like to apply the Word to the issues of today, but do not know how to do it? The place to start is context. Context makes a profound difference in how a person applies biblical truth.

#### Never Changing Truth in an Ever-Changing World

Remember in Genesis 2:24, where God instituted marriage?

*"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

Imagine the level of communication, trust, partnership, and intimacy they must have experienced. Then they sinned. Then there was mistrust, selfishness, pride and lust. Yet God left intact the expectation to live as one flesh. That is a whole new context.

Look at Moses as he relates the Genesis account to the people of Israel. They are coming out of Egypt, where polygamy is common. For that matter, even Israel's patriarchs had concubines. What does a one-flesh relationship look like there? Again, a change in the context.

Later we find Jesus discussing marriage with the Pharisees (Matthew 19:1-9). By that time divorce had become common. Yet Jesus cites Genesis 2 to reinforce the sanctity of the marriage bond. Apparently His words shocked His listeners. There is the same biblical truth but a completely different context.

What does biblical marriage look like in the context of the twenty-first century?

The point is that the Word of God is eternal and unchanging, but the world is not. Therefore, living out God's truth demands that we apply it into our particular circumstances. But we do not change the truth to fit our cultural agenda. Rather, we change our application of truth in light of our needs.

#### Context, Context, Context

How can that happen? How can we take a message that was written in 100 A.D. or earlier and make use of it in 2100 A.D. and later? The key is the context. What was the context then? What is the context now?

We saw the importance of context to Interpretation. Now we discover its importance to Application. We must understand the ancient culture. The more we know about the culture in which a passage was written and to which it was originally applied, the more accurate will be our understanding and the more we will be able to make use of it in our own cultural setting.

We also need to understand our own culture. Where are we especially in need of biblical truth? What would the apostles say to us if they were writing to our churches today?

When David was putting together his army to establish his kingdom, he recruited the sons of Issachar. The text describes them as "...men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." (1 Chronicles 12:32)

#### Studying Culture

The same questions of: How? What? Where? When? Why? Wherefore? are questions that must be asked as you evaluate today's cultural context. We have seen how to use them to study societies in the ancient world. But they also apply to the modern situation.

There are many more issues to consider, but these will get you started.

- 1. **Power**
- 2. **Communication**
- 3. **Money**
- 4. **Ethnicity**
- 5. **Gender**
- 6. **Generations**
- 7. **Religion and worldview**
- 8. **The Arts**
- 9. **History and time**
- 10. **Place**

### Making Use of Your Data

If you diligently answer questions such as these about the world around you, you will develop profound insights into how our society operates. But how do you apply your data with the truth of Scripture? How do you apply God’s Word in the context of your own situation? How can you make the connection? We will find out in the next chapter.

### What Have You Learned?

- 1. Why do people leave the Word at home when they go to work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2. Use the example of Genesis 2:24 to explain this statement: “*The Bible is God’s never changing truth in an ever-changing world.*” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3. Explain the importance of context to Application. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4. Use Scripture (with reference) to explain why David chose the sons of Issachar for his army when establishing his kingdom. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5. List the six (6) questions to ask when evaluating today’s cultural context.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_ 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_ 6) \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 6. List ten (10) issues to consider when applying cultural context to modern days.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_ 6) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_ 7) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_ 8) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_ 9) \_\_\_\_\_  
5) \_\_\_\_\_ 10) \_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 43

### *THE PRINCIPLE OF THE THING*

What does the Bible have to say about generic engineering, nuclear power, abortion, and euthanasia? Can we find any verse on AIDS?

If we are going to read the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, we have got to face these kinds of issues. We have got to ask what connection there is between the revealed truth of the Word and the world as we find it.

The Bible's primary subject is God and His relationship with humankind. And it is our responsibility to work out the implications of that for everyday life. We have to think them through and make biblically informed choices.

#### The Importance Of Principles

There are many specific matters that the Bible never mentions, things that were not issues in the days when it was written. But that does not mean it has nothing to say to those issues. On the contrary, it tells us the fundamental truths or principles that God wants us to apply to human need.

A principle is a compact and precise statement of a universal truth. When we talk about principles, we move from the specific to the general. Principles get us started in the right direction.

#### Principles That Govern Principles

*If you can discern principles from your study of Scripture, you will have some powerful tools to help you apply biblical truth. You will bridge the gap between the ancient world and your own situation with the timeless truth of God's Word. But how can you determine whether your perception is accurate? What is to ensure that you stay practical? Here are three guidelines to consider.*

**1. Principles should correlate with the general teaching of Scripture.**

This brings us back to comparing Scripture with Scripture. As you state a principle from a particular passage, think about other passages that reinforce that truth. You can get into trouble by finding a "principle" from a single verse and then attempt to build a doctrine on the basis of that one reference.

We have to be very careful in generalizing from Scripture. It is not that we cannot apply the Word in a broad sense, but we need to be sensible and consistent.

**2. Principles should speak to the needs, interests, questions, and problems of real life today.**

You must become a perceptive student of your culture. You should know where the needs and problems are. Then you look for biblical truths that apply to the situation. A simple principle from God's Word is that God wants us to pray about the people and problems around us.

**3. Principles should indicate a course of action.**

For biblical principles to be effective they must produce action. God's Word was given to transform our lives. As we search out the principles in Scripture, we constantly need to ask, "What am I going to do with this truth? When, where, and how am I going to apply it?"

#### **Multiplying The Truth**

*Often we face situations that do not afford us the comfort of reflection but instead requires reaction. If we compile principles from Scripture, we will have a powerful set of resources to deal with the situations of life. Principles multiply truth. Remember, there is only one Interpretation but many Applications.*

## What Have You Learned?

1. Explain how to make the connection between the revealed truth of the Word of God and the world as we find it today. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. There are many \_\_\_\_\_ matters that the Bible never \_\_\_\_\_, things that were not \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ when it was \_\_\_\_\_. But that does not mean it has nothing to \_\_\_\_\_ to those \_\_\_\_\_. On the \_\_\_\_\_, it tells us the \_\_\_\_\_ truths or \_\_\_\_\_ that God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ to human \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What is a principle? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. If you can discern \_\_\_\_\_ from your study of \_\_\_\_\_, you will have some powerful tools to help you \_\_\_\_\_ Biblical \_\_\_\_\_. You will \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ between the \_\_\_\_\_ world and your own \_\_\_\_\_ with the timeless \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word. List and briefly explain three (3) guidelines to help your perception remain accurate and practical.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Often we face situations that do not afford us the comfort of \_\_\_\_\_ but instead requires \_\_\_\_\_. If we compile \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, we will have a powerful set of \_\_\_\_\_ to deal with the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. Principles \_\_\_\_\_ truth. There is only one \_\_\_\_\_ but many \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture.

6. On the lines provided, write Psalm 119:9-11. On a separate sheet of paper, write these verses five (5) times. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 44

### *A PROCESS OF LIFE-CHANGE*

#### **Where Do I Begin?**

Where do I begin? That may be the most determinative question to ask about Application. Until you answer that question, all you have is good intentions. How are you going to study the entire Bible when you do not know what verse you are going to study tomorrow? How can you memorize a hundred verses when you have never even tried to memorize one?

Too much “*application*” stays at the level of good intentions because we talk about the end of the journey without specifying when, where, and how we are going to take the first step. As someone has well said, “We do not plan to fail, we fail to plan.”

Here are three steps for translating good intentions into life-changing action.

#### **1. Make a decision to change.**

Determine what sort of change you need to make, and then choose to pursue it. This is a matter of setting objectives. A well-stated objective describes what a person will be doing once he achieves the intended outcome. What are you prepared to set in order to accomplish change? The more clearly your objectives are, the more likely it is that you will accomplish them. Clearly defined objectives help us see truth as actions, not abstractions. Objectives keep our expectations within reach.

#### **2. Come up with a plan.**

This is the step where you ask, “how”? How am I am going to accomplish the task? If you have done a good job stating your objectives, this should be easy to answer. If not, you need to go back and revise your objectives and make them clearer. A plan is a specific course of action for how you are going to reach your objectives. Planning a course of action means deciding specific ways to achieve an objective and then thinking through what you need to do to reach your goal. It assigns names, dates, times, and places to your intentions. The more specific your plan, the more likely it is that you will succeed in it.

#### **3. Follow through.**

Get started. The first step is always the hardest. Three strategies can help you in this process. First, consider using a checklist, especially if your plan calls for repeated activity or a number of progressive steps. Second, set up a method of accountability. Third, evaluate your progress.

#### **God Is At Work In You**

You have to take responsibility for making choices and taking action in order to grow as a believer. “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” (Philippians 2:13) As you set your objectives, make plans, and do them, God will help you. That is the encouraging thing about the spiritual life – you are never alone. God provides His resources to help you in the process. He will not make decisions for you or do what you are able to do. But He does work in ways known and unknown to help you become like Christ.

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. What is the most determinative question to ask about Application of your Bible study?

2. Until you answer that \_\_\_\_\_, all you have is good \_\_\_\_\_. How are you going to study the \_\_\_\_\_ Bible when you do not know what verse you are going to study \_\_\_\_\_? How can you \_\_\_\_\_ a hundred \_\_\_\_\_ when you have never even tried to memorize \_\_\_\_\_?

3. Too much “\_\_\_\_\_” stays at the level of good \_\_\_\_\_ because we talk about the \_\_\_\_\_ of the journey without specifying \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ we are going to take the first \_\_\_\_\_. As someone has well said, “We do not plan to \_\_\_\_\_, we fail to \_\_\_\_\_.”

4. List and briefly explain the three (3) steps for translating good intentions into life-changing action.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

5. You have to take \_\_\_\_\_ for making \_\_\_\_\_ and taking \_\_\_\_\_ in order to \_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_. As you set your \_\_\_\_\_, make \_\_\_\_\_ and do them, \_\_\_\_\_ will help you. That is the \_\_\_\_\_ thing about the \_\_\_\_\_ life – you are never \_\_\_\_\_. God provides His \_\_\_\_\_ to help you in the \_\_\_\_\_. He will not make \_\_\_\_\_ for you or do what you are \_\_\_\_\_ to do. But He does \_\_\_\_\_ in ways \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to help you become \_\_\_\_\_ Christ.

6. On the lines provided, write the verse (with Scripture reference) that confirms the above promises. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 45

### THREE SUGGESTIONS TO GET STARTED

There are too many church members today who listen but do not learn. They are spectators, not students. They are passive, not participating. Why? Because we who teach fail to show them how to grow for themselves by discovering the truth God has revealed in His Word.

How can you make permanent what you have started to learn from this process? Here are three suggestions.

#### 1. Begin A Personal Bible Study Program.

All you have to do is solve four problems.

##### a. Determine your objectives.

First, you have to determine your objectives. What do you want? Not just now, but at the end of your life? Ask yourself, *“Do I want to have a personal Bible study program? Have I seen the crucial need for it from this book?”*

##### b. Establish your priorities.

Second, you have to establish your priorities. How much do you want it? What price are you willing to pay? Ask yourself, *“Do I want to develop a Bible study program on a personal basis? If so, what price am I willing to pay?”*

##### c. Set a schedule.

The third thing you need is a schedule. That involves asking, *“What means can I employ to maintain my priorities and accomplish my objectives?”* A schedule is actually a tool to accomplish what you have decided you want to accomplish and are willing to pay the price to do.

##### d. Develop discipline.

The fourth thing you need is discipline. Ultimately, that is a fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can provide the dynamic whereby you maintain your schedule, keep your priorities, and accomplish your objectives. Ultimately, what matters, is not when you have your Bible study, but the fact that you do, and that you do it regularly and consistently. Remember that if you make this commitment, Satan will do anything to destroy your schedule. So your question has to be, *“Where is my heart? What is my objective? What is my priority?”*

##### e. Get started.

Now you must decide where to begin. Start with a small book. You can begin with the book of Philippians. It has four chapters and 104 verses, or the book of James with five chapters and 108 verses. Then, if you want to try something more difficult, go to the Old Testament and try Jonah. It is a beautiful narrative with an easy to follow story line with only four chapters. This way you can gradually work your way up to tackle something that is longer and more difficult. Then move on to Nehemiah. This book is filled with practical principles for organization and administration.

Keep a notebook. It is a good habit to write down what God gives you. Record it, and seek opportunity to share it with someone, because then you will retain it.

#### 2. Form A Small Bible Study Group.

What is the ideal size for a study group? Six to eight people. What happens if you cannot find this many people? Then start with what you have got. Have you got one other person? Two people? Start with them. Are you married? Start a study with your spouse.

##### Leadership is the key

Small group Bible study can be incredibly profitable. But the key is always the leader. As with any team, good Bible studies are the result of good leadership.

##### a. Look for a good leader.

Bible study leaders should be reliable, organized, able to keep a discussion on track, and willing to prepare for a group meeting. They need to be relaxed and confident in their ability to handle Scripture. And of course they should be people who love God’s Word.

##### b. Determine the purpose of the group.

There are a variety of reasons for forming a Bible study group: to focus on a deeper understanding of the text; to apply biblical truth to felt needs and current issues; to use the

Word as a launching point for prayer; to introduce unbelievers to Scripture. Make sure you state the purpose of the study clearly.

**c. Recruit people who want to study the Bible.**

The goal is not to fill the room with people, but to produce life-change for the participants. Invite people who are genuinely interested in the Bible.

**d. Make sure everyone gets a chance to participate.**

The leader's goal is to get everyone involved with the Word and with each other. The danger to avoid is letting anyone dominate the process – including the leader.

**e. Encourage discussion.**

Discussion can be effective for a small group.

**f. Stay in the Bible.**

This is a matter of keeping the discussion on track. Participants will have questions that require digression, but you should never get too far from the passage.

**g. Show enthusiasm.**

One of the best ways to motivate people in personal Bible study is to celebrate their discoveries. Get excited over people's insights, no matter how simple.

**h. Keep the group small.**

Remember the goal is 100 percent participation, and it is difficult to accomplish that if the group gets too big.

**i. Divide the time between Observation, Interpretation, and Application.**

Group studies tend to have the same problem as individual Bible study: they spend too much time on Interpretation, to the neglect of Observation and Application. Balance the time between all three.

**j. Keep your commitment – to the purpose and to the time.**

Make sure the group stays on course, that it carries out the objectives for which it was formed. As for time, begin and end when you say you will begin and end. When setting up the group, determine a date for terminating the group.

**3. Share Your Results With Others**

The best way to keep what you have learned through this material is to share it with someone else. There are two ways to share the fruit of your Bible study. First, you can share it by teaching. The ultimate way to share your results is by living it.

Does your life tell others everything they need to know about your commitment to Christ and your values and beliefs? The great need for God's people today is to get into Scripture for themselves.

In Ezra 7:10 we have a model of the value of personal Bible study. The text reads, *“For Ezra had prepared his heart (to do three things) to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”*

***What Have You Learned?***

1. Why are there so many church members today who listen but do not learn, and are not participating in Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. List three (3) suggestions for how you can make the things you have learned in this book a permanent way of life. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. List and briefly explain the four (4) problems you need to solve in order to begin a personal Bible study program.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the ideal size for a small Bible study group? \_\_\_\_\_  
What should you do if you cannot find this many people? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Small \_\_\_\_\_ Bible study can be incredibly \_\_\_\_\_. But the key is always the \_\_\_\_\_.  
As with any team, good Bible \_\_\_\_\_ are the \_\_\_\_\_ of good \_\_\_\_\_.

6. List and briefly explain ten (10) points to help form a small Bible study group.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

8) \_\_\_\_\_

9) \_\_\_\_\_

10) \_\_\_\_\_

7. List the two (2) ways you can share the fruit of your Bible study. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. On the lines provided, write the verse (with Scripture reference) that is a model of the value of personal Bible study. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_