

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

Following a Four Step Process

When a man is simply told the truth, it remains external to him and he can quite easily forget it. When he is led to discover the truth himself it becomes an integral part of him and he never forgets." William Barclay, Daily Celebration

Biblical Motivation:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12

What keeps a person from studying the Bible on their own?

- Lack of interest
- Wrong priorities in life
- Never taught "how to study the Bible"
- The attitude of "I don't really need to"
- Takes work

Attitudes in Bible study:

- Prayerful
- Expectation/Excitement
- Open heart

HOW? By doing the following four step process:

- PREPARATION
- OBSERVATION
- INTERPRETATION
- APPLICATION

PREPARATION

STEP ONE: READ ENTIRE BOOK AT ONE SITTING and then DO A BACKGROUND STUDY THE BOOK

Your first step is to gather some general information about the book/passage you will study: You will need to use reference books or a study Bible to answer most of these questions.

Author:

- Family background, Age, Occupation, Jew or Gentile
- Where was the author writing from?
- Any unusual circumstances going on in the life of the author?
- Why would it help me to know who wrote the book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes?

Purpose:

- What is the stated or implied purpose of the book? Historical background becomes very helpful.
- What was the driving force behind this book of the Bible being written?
- How does knowing the purpose of Proverbs help me (Proverbs 1:2-6)?

Receiver:

- Who was the author writing to?

Date:

- When was it written?
- Why is this important?

STEP TWO: SELECT PASSAGE OR VERSE YOU WILL BE STUDYING AND BEGIN...

OBSERVATION

- Gather your facts/become a bible detective
- Once you have gathered some background data you can begin the "observation" process.

ASK THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATION QUESTIONS AND JOT DOWN A FEW NOTES

Ask questions to learn more about the passage. The more questions you can think up to ask, the more you will learn and the easier the interpretation will become. Ask questions that the text answers. If you have a question the text does not answer, this type of question can be used in the interpretation step. We will use Acts 1:8 to illustrate how to ask observation questions about a passage.

Who?

Who shall receive power? You

Who gives the power? Holy Spirit

Who shall be a witness? You

Who shall we witness to? Those in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, remotest part of earth.

Who's witness shall we be: Jesus'

Who does not receive power? Those who do not have Holy Spirit

Who should we not witness to? We should witness to everyone I

What?

What did Jesus tell us to do? Be a witness

What do we need first? Power/Holy Spirit

Where?

Where should we witness? Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and remotest part of earth.

Where does the power to witness come from? Holy Spirit

Where does the Holy Spirit live? in you

When?

When do we receive our power? After Holy Spirit comes upon you

Why?

Why should we witness? Jesus told us to

How?

How shall we witness: In the power of Holy Spirit

Write questions the text (you are presently studying) does not answer on a separate sheet of paper and Write "Interpretation Questions" on the top. These questions will be used later.

As an example:

Who is the Holy Spirit?

How (what technique) should we witness?

How does Holy Spirit come upon you?

What does a witness really do?

What does the word "power" really mean?

Observations to Take You Deeper

Things Alike & Things Different

Matthew 6:19-20

Earth: Treasures

Heaven: Treasures

Earth: Rust destroys / thieves steal

Heaven: Rust does not destroy / thieves do not steal

Cause and Effect

Acts 1:8

We receive power and then we become able to witness.

Things Repeated

"Hypocrite" in Matthew 6:2, 6:5, 6:16, 6:42, 7:5

"Hypocrite" in Matthew 22:18, 23:13,14,15,23,25,27,29

"Immediately" occurs 40 times in the book of Mark

Question and Answer

Malachi 3:7

"How have we robbed Thee?"

Malachi 3:8

"Will a man rob God?"

Micah 6:8

"And what does the Lord require of you?"

Mark 12:28

"What commandment is the foremost of all?"

Problem and Solution

Matthew 19:25

"Then who can be saved?"

Promises Made

Proverbs 3:6

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Contrasts

Matthew 7:24-27

Wise man / Fool -- Rock / Sand

Connectives

(but, therefore, and)

Matthew 7:24

"Therefore everyone who hears these words..."

STEP THREE: INTERPRETATION

Pulling it all together:

How can we take the above information we have learned and "interpret" what the author was really saying?

What did the author mean by the words he used?

What was his purpose or message for the people he was writing to?

Example: Romans 12:2

Author: Paul

Written: to believers in Rome.

Outline: Romans

- I. Introduction/General Data 1:1-17
- II. Righteousness - key to man's relationship to God 1:18 - 8:39
- III. Israel and the Gentiles in the plan of God 9:1 - 11:36
- IV. Attitude and conduct expected of Christians 12:1 - 15:13
- V. Items of personal interest.

STUDY THE CONTEXT OF PASSAGE

In interpretation: First step is to study the overall context. Many times the context of a passage will help clarify exactly what is being taught. Look at the immediate context, and then look at the context for the entire book. Lastly look at the entire Bible.

Illustration:

In studying Genesis 7:1-4. the context is Genesis 6:1 - 8:22.

In studying Matthew 6:1. the context is Matthew 5:1 - 7:29.

What precedes it?

What follows it?

In what context is it really being used.

Entire Bible

Old Testament / New Testament

CROSS REFERENCE THE PASSAGE

You can do cross references on a word to help you better understand/interpret the passage. "Let the Word of God explain the Word of God."

Example:

Word: *World* Verse Romans 12:2

Cross References:

Matthew 13:22 and the worry of the world ...choke the word/becomes unfruitful

Galatians 1:4 out of this present evil age

I John 2:15 do not love the world, not the things in the world

You can also use a Concordance or Topical Index to research words such as *World*

James 4:4 Friendship toward the world is hostility toward God
A friend of world is an enemy of God

I John 4:1 The world has many false prophets.

DIG EVEN DEEPER FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION

Do word or character study for added meaning.

If studying a passage in Matthew, learn more about Matthew (the tax collector.)

If studying the gospels, learn more about who the scribes and Pharisees really were.

Use Bible and/or secular dictionary:

CONFORM: "To make the same or similar, to conform one's ideas to another, to bring into harmony or agreement, to be in accord or agreement, to behave in a conventional way, accepting without question customs, traditions, prevailing opinion." (Webster's New World Dictionary)

Use Bible Encyclopedia

Use Maps

If studying the nation of Israel, determine how many miles they travel to get from Egypt to Jericho. (Remember they walked)

Read other translations

This will help you gain added clarity.

Illustration: Romans 12:2

NAS "And do not be conformed to this world..."

NIV "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world

KJV "And be not conformed to this world..."

LIV "Don't copy the behavior of this world, but be a new and different person
With a fresh newness in all you do and think."

NKJ "An do not be conformed to this world..."

Summarize your interpretation/write out your conclusions:

The author: Paul was instructing the Christians at Rome,

- NOT to be conformed (pressed/squeezed/molded)
to this world (which is passing away/is evil/is foolish/ & has satan as it's
"god")
- BUT to be transformed
by renewing their mind (using the Word of God)
- IN ORDER to do/prove the will of God!

FINALLY: Your last step in interpretation is to use commentaries. You should use a commentary to see how your interpretation is similar or different from someone else. This is a fine-tuning process for your thoughts. You are taking your interpretation and now seeing what others have said about the passage. Let commentaries fine-tune your thinking, not be your primary teacher or resource.

STEP FOUR: APPLICATION

Using Romans 12:1-2 -- How can I apply this passage in my life?

As a Christian, I

SHOULD NOT be conformed (pressed/squeezed/molded)
to this world (which is passing away/is evil/is foolish/ & has Satan as it's "god")

BUT, be transformed

BY - renewing my mind (using the Word of God)

IN ORDER to do/prove the will of God!

Write out in a concise sentence how you can apply this passage in your life. Be as specific as possible. Use the following questions to help develop application point(s).

- What is the most important aspect of this teaching?
- How can I apply this passage in my daily life?
- What is one practical thing I should do?

Example:

I should be careful not to be deceived by what the world teaches is important in life. I should be asking "what is important to God?" It appears the key to the application of this passage is "transforming my mind." Therefore, I would like to commit to memorizing one verse of Scripture each week.

How will this be accomplished? By writing one verse each week on a 3 X 5 card and carrying it with me. I will be able to review it when walking or driving somewhere.

BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

TOPICAL BIBLE

Nave's Topical Bible (Moody Press)

BIBLE DICTIONARY

The New Bible Dictionary (Eerdmans)

GENERAL INFORMATION/FACTS/PURPOSE/BOOK OUTLINES

Walk Thru The Bible (Nelson)

Eerdmans Handbook To The Bible (Eerdmans)

Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan)

What The Bible Is All About (Regal)

COMMENTARIES

The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Victor Books) (2 Volumes)

The New Bible Commentary (Eerdmans)

The Expositors Bible Commentary (Zondervan)

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (5 volumes)

The Macmillan Bible Atlas (Macmillan)

CONCORDANCES

New American Standard (Holman)

King James (Strong's)

CUSTOMS OF THE BIBLE

Manners and Customs of the Bible (Logos)

TRANSLATIONS

The New King James Bible

New American Standard Bible

New International Version

Holman Christian Standard Bible

English Standard Bible

New Living Translation

New Century Version

STUDY BIBLES

Men's Study Bible NIV (Zondervan)

Life Application Bible NLT (Tyndale)

The Ryrie Study Bible (Moody Press)

Life Essentials Study Bible – Biblical Principles to Live By (Holman)

THEOLOGY

Basic Theology. Ryrie (Victor)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE BOOKS

Guide To Understanding Your Bible, Josh McDowell (Here's Life)

The Joy of Discovery In Bible Study, Wald, (Augsburg)

Methodical Bible Study. Robert Traina, (Zondervan)