

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 1 – Introduction to Interpretation

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Introduction – What is the Bible?

The Bible is a Divine Book

- God is the direct and ultimate author of Scripture

- Four implications of Divine Inspiration:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

The Bible is a Human Book

- The Bible was written by particular people, at a particular time, in a particular place, for a particular reason.

- Verbal–Plenary Inspiration

Can the Bible Be Understood?

- Perspicuity

"The Bible is basically clear and lucid. It is simple enough for any literate person to understand its basic message. This is not to say that all parts of the Bible are equally clear or that there are no difficult passages or sections to be found in it. Laymen unskilled in the ancient languages and the fine points of exegesis may have difficulty with parts of Scripture, but the essential content is clear enough to be understood easily." – (R. C. Sproul, Knowing Scripture, 15)

Reading VS Study

“The goal a reader seeks—be it entertainment, information or understanding—determines the way he reads. The effectiveness with which he reads is determined by the amount of effort and skill he puts into his reading. In general, the rule is: the more effort the better, at least in the case of books that are initially beyond our powers as readers and are therefore capable of raising us from a condition of understanding less to one of understanding more.” (Mortimer Adler & Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, 16)

R. C. Sproul says this in his book about studying the Bible:

“It is important to note that the theme of this book is not how to read the Bible but how to study the Bible. There is a great deal of difference between reading and studying. Reading is something we can do in a leisurely way, something that can be done strictly for entertainment in a casual, cavalier manner. But study suggests labor, serious and diligent.” (*Knowing Scripture*, 17)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 2 – How to Choose A Translation

Every translation is also an interpretation

The Gift of Multiple Translations

John Piper – “I praise God that we have the Bible in English. What a gift! What a treasure! We cannot begin to estimate what this is worth to Christians and churches, and even to the unbelievers and the cultures of the English-speaking world. Ten thousand benefits flow from the influence of this book that we are not even aware of. And the preaching of this Word in tens of thousands of pulpits across America is more important than every media outlet in the nation.

I would rather have people read any translation of the Bible—no matter how weak—than to read no translation of the Bible. If there could be only one translation in English, I would rather it be my least favorite than that there be none. God uses every version to bless people and save people.

But the issue before the church in the English-speaking world today is not “no translation vs. a weak translation.” It is between many precious English Bibles. A Bible does not cease to be precious and powerful because its translators overuse paraphrase and put way too much of their own interpretation into the Bible. That’s the way God’s Word is! It breaks free from poor translations and poor preaching—for which I am very thankful. But even though the weakest translation is precious, and is used by God to save and strengthen sinful people, better translations would be a great blessing to the church and an honor to Christ.” (from an article titled, “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV”)

A Brief History of English Bible Translations

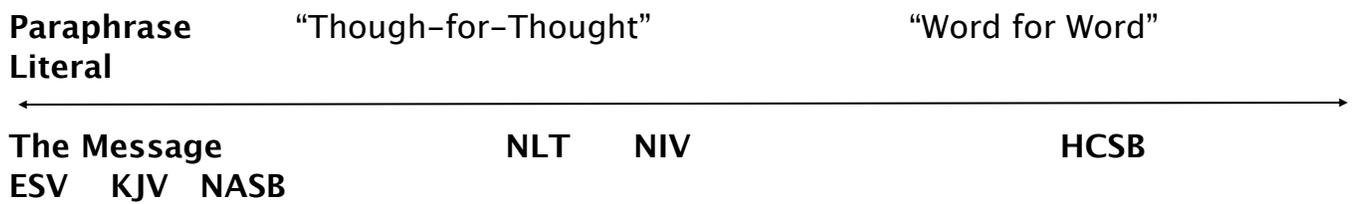
- John Wycliffe (1380s) – wrote the first English translation of the Bible
- Johann Gutenberg (1450s) – his invention of the printing press allowed the Bible to be mass-produced
- William Tyndale (1526) – printed the first English NT and was later martyred for it
- Myles Coverdale (1535) – printed the first complete Bible in the English language
- The Geneva Bible (1560) – the first Bible to include chapter and verse numbers
- The King James Bible (1611) – became the dominant English Bible for 300 years
- English Revised Version (1880s) – the first Bible to exclude the Apocrypha (intertestamental books)

- New International Version (1973) – the best-selling modern English translation of the Bible

Translation Philosophy

Formal equivalence

Functional equivalence



Marks of a Good Translation

Text-Criticism

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 3 - Literary Interpretation

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Genre: An Introduction

“Genre is a way of classifying media according to their type or style rather than their specific content or storyline” (Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach, Digging Deeper, 111)

The following resources will be helpful in developing your ability to read the biblical genres with literary sensitivity:

William W. Klein et. al., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation
 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Mosés Silva, An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics
 Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 2nd ed.
 Tremper Longman III, Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind
 Leland Ryken, Words of Delight, 2nd ed.
 Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, Let the Reader Understand

“Specifically, literary tools help Bible readers to develop what John Barton calls literary competence. Each kind of literature has its own frame of reference, ground rules, strategy, and purpose. Literary competence is the ability to discern cues within the text that indicate what kind of literature we are working with and, hence, what to expect or not to expect from it. The Bible student who knows the formation and function of each literary type is in the best position to interpret correctly and to avoid serious misunderstandings.” (William Klein et. Al., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 260)

Biblical Genres	
Genre	Book
Historical Narrative/Epic	Genesis, Exodus (first half), Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah
Law	Exodus (last half), Leviticus, Deuteronomy
Wisdom	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Poetry	Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Apocalyptic	Daniel, Revelation of John
Gospel	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts
Epistle	Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude

Biblical Genres

Historical Narrative

“Narrative in its broadest sense is an account of specific space–time events and participants whose stories are recorded with a beginning, a middle, and an end.” (Kaiser, An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, 69)

“Note this carefully: every individual Old Testament narrative (bottom level) is at least a part of the greater narrative of Israel’s history in the world (the middle level), which in turn is a part of the ultimate narrative of God’s creation and his redemption of it (the top level). This ultimate narrative goes beyond the Old Testament through the New Testament. You will not fully do justice to any individual narrative without recognizing its part within the other two.” (Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 80)

Law

Two general guidelines for interpreting law and our relationship to it as Christians (from Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 163–164):

1. DO see the Old Testament law as God’s fully inspired word for you.
DON’T see the Old Testament law as God’s direct command to you.
2. DO see the OT law as the basis for the Old Covenant, and therefore for Israel’s history
DON’T see the OT law as binding on Christians in the New Covenant except where specifically renewed.

John Piper – “What then shall those who are justified do with the Law of Moses?”

“Read it and meditate on it as those who are dead to it as the ground of your justification and the power of your sanctification. Read it and meditate on it as those for whom Christ is your righteousness and Christ is your sanctification. Which means read and mediate on it to know Christ better and to treasure him more. Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30; 14:9). So to know the God of the Old Testament is to know Christ. The more you see his glory and treasure his worth, the more you will be changed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:17–18), and love the way he loved—which is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).” (from a sermon titled, “How to Use the Law Lawfully to Bear Fruit for God”)

Prophecy

“Prophecy is a much larger biblical genre than most people think. All too many connect the word prophecy with the idea of futurology. But the bulk of prophecy in both the earlier prophets, the latter prophets, and the New Testament prophets actually involved God’s messengers speaking the word of God to a contemporary culture that needed to

be challenged to cease its resistance to the word of God. As such, these prophets were ‘forth-tellers.’” (Kaiser, An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, 139)

“To see the prophets as primarily predictors of future events is to miss their primary function, which was to speak for God to their own contemporaries. ...[The prophets] are God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if the Law is kept, blessing will result; but if not, punishment will ensue.” (Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 166, 168)

“The Bible itself offers the best guide to the interpretation of prophecy. It indicates which prophecies were fulfilled during the OT and NT periods and suggests patterns for interpreting OT prophecies today.” (Klein et. al., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 310)

Apocalyptic

The Book of Revelation

ESV Study Bible’s, Introduction to Revelation

Numerous literary genres converge in the book of Revelation, one of the most complex books in the Bible. The overall genre is prophecy (22:19) ... The title of the book indicates further that it belongs to the genre of apocalyptic writing ... The book begins and ends with the standard features of NT epistles. The overall shape of the book, following the introductory letters from Christ to the churches, is narrative or story, with the usual ingredients of setting, characters, and plot (including plot conflict, progression, and resolution). Greek drama was also an influence, seen in the attention John gives to the staging of events, positioning of characters in settings, crowd scenes, and costuming of characters.

The most important thing to know about the literary form of the book of Revelation is that it uses the technique of symbolism from start to finish. Instead of portraying characters and events directly, much of the time the author portrays them indirectly by means of symbols. For example, Jesus is portrayed as a lamb, churches are portrayed as lamps on lampstands, and Satan is portrayed as a dragon with seven heads and 10

horns. The symbols are sometimes familiar, and sometimes original and strange. Whenever a work of literature presents a preponderance of symbols instead of realistic details, readers should recognize the technique of symbolic reality, meaning that as they enter the work in their imaginations, information is presented primarily through symbols. The book of Revelation is one of the most sustained examples of symbolic reality in existence.

Poetry

Ancient—and especially biblical—poetry is not a purely aesthetic object, but is indeed concerned with the communication of truth. So although we call it biblical ‘poetry’ because it is artistic and beautiful language, it is not deliberately ambiguous or mystical. The distinguishing mark of poetry in the OT is not primarily rhyme, alliteration, or meter (although these occur from time to time), but what is commonly called ‘parallelism.’ Parallelism occurs where two (or more) lines of approximately equal length in numbers of syllables and similar grammatical structure deal with the same subject. The second line advances a bit more information or a different depiction than the first line, either by addition, contrast, or specification.” (McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 216)

“Poetry consists of written compositions typified by terseness, vivid words, and a high degree of structure. Put differently, poetry displays a higher degree of structure, sound, and language than prose.” (Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 216)

“One needs to be aware that Hebrew poetry, by its very nature, was addressed, as it were, to the mind through the heart (i.e., much of the language is intentionally emotive). Therefore, one needs to be careful of over-exegeting the Psalms by finding special meanings in every word or phrase, where the poet may have intended none.

...It is likewise important to remember that the vocabulary of poetry is purposefully metaphorical. Thus one must take care to look for the intent of the metaphor.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 189, 190)

Wisdom

“Proverbs are brief sayings that are memorable, embody the wisdom of many, possess a fullness of meaning with a wide application, and have a bit of kick or bite to them to ensure their saltiness and continued usefulness.” (Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 99)

“A common mistake in biblical interpretation and application is to give a proverbial saying the weight or force of a moral absolute. Proverbs are catchy little couplets

designed to express practical truisms. They reflect principles of wisdom for godly living. They do not reflect moral laws that are to be applied absolutely to every conceivable life situation.” (R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 89)

“Proverbs state a wise way to approach certain selected practical goals but do so in terms that cannot be treated like a divine warranty of success. The particular blessings, rewards, and opportunities mentioned in Proverbs are likely to follow if one will choose the wise courses of action outlined in the poetical, figurative language of the book.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 220)

“Each inspired proverb must be balanced with others and understood in comparison with the rest of Scripture. ...No proverb is a complete statement of truth. No proverb is so perfectly worded that it can stand up to the unreasonable demand that it apply in every situation at every time.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 222, 223)

Gospels

“[Gospels are] not biographies—although they are partly biographical. ...They are, to use the phrase of the second-century church father Justin Martyr, ‘the memoirs of the apostles.’ Four biographies could not stand side by side as of equal value; these books stand side by side because at one and the same time they record the facts about Jesus, recall the teaching of Jesus, and each bears witness to Jesus.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed., 116)

“In reading and studying the Gospels one must take seriously not only the evangelists’ interest in Jesus per se, what he did and said, but also their reasons for retelling the one story for their own readers. The evangelists, we have noted, were authors, not merely compilers. ...They were authors in the sense that with the Spirit’s help they creatively structured and rewrote the material to meet the needs of their readers.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 126–127)

“Although it is not uncommon for scholars to argue that the gospel narratives are unreliable, we cannot really preserve the message of the New Testament if we minimize its historical foundation. Nevertheless, the Gospels were written not merely to communicate factual information, nor were they composed according to the methods and expectations of modern history-writing. The authors were very selective in the material they chose to include and, furthermore, presented it in a way that reflected their own (inspired) interpretation and application of the facts. They wrote as both historians and theologians.” (Mosés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 104)

Parables

“Most parables are stories or depictions of earthly life which both illustrate the spiritual truth and provoke a response to it.” (McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 221)

“It is this ‘call for response’ nature of the parable that causes our great dilemma in interpreting them. For in some ways to interpret a parable is to destroy what it was originally. It is like interpreting a joke.

...The two things that capture the hearer of a joke and elicit a response of laughter are the same two things that captured the hearers of Jesus’ parables, namely their knowledge of the points of reference and the unexpected turn in the story.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 138–139)

Epistles

“[Epistles] are all what are technically called occasional documents (i.e., arising out of an intended for a specific occasion), and they are from the first century. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus belonging to all time, they were first written out of the context of the author to the context of the original recipients.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 48)

“Most of our problems in interpreting the Epistles are due to this fact of their being occasional. We have the answers, but we do not always know what the questions or problems were, or even if there was a problem. It is much like listening to one end of a telephone conversation and trying to figure out who is on the other end and what that unseen party is saying. Yet in many cases it is especially important for us to try to hear ‘the other end,’ so that we know what our passage is an answer to.” (How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 48)

Exercise: Debunking Misinterpretations of Genre

Passage #1 – Isaiah 7:10–14, 8:3

[10] Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, [11] “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” [12] But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” [13] And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? [14] Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel...[8:3] And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son.

Interpretation: “Christians have been wrong to see this prophecy (in 7:14) as referring to Jesus. In the Old Testament context, the sign is given to Ahaz. Moreover, the prophecy is fulfilled in the next chapter.”

Passage #2 – Exodus 20:8–11

[8] “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. [11] For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Interpretation: “No one will argue that the Ten Commandments aren’t binding on Christians today. But then why do we disregard the Sabbath command? We should observe Saturday, not Sunday, as a day of rest because that is when the Jews rested. Furthermore, work of any kind on the Sabbath should be prohibited.”

Passage #3 – Psalm 44:18–25

[18] Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way; [19] yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death. [20] If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, [21] would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart. [22] Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. [23] Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! [24] Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? [25] For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground.

Interpretation: “This psalm is troubling. It teaches us that sometimes God forgets about us, and even ‘goes to sleep.’ Or, I suppose it could be teaching us that it is okay to question God or to get angry with him. Either way, it’s hard to see why this is in the Bible.”

Passage #4 – Judges 4:4–9

[4] Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. [5] She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. [6] She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh–naphtali and said to him, “Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. [7] And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?’” [8] Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” [9] And she said, “I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Interpretation: “This text clearly demonstrates that women had positions of leadership within the Old Testament. Therefore, we should not bar a woman from being an elder or pastor in our churches today.”

Passage #5 – Proverbs 22:4–6

[4] The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

[5] Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them. [6] Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Interpretation: “According to this passage, if someone isn’t rich and honorable, then they must not be humble. Furthermore, if parents have a wayward child it is clearly a sign that the parents failed somehow in their parenting.”

Passage #6 – John 2:13–16

[13] The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [14] In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. [15] And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. [16] And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

Interpretation: “The gospel writers couldn’t get their facts straight. The author of the gospel of John places this incident near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, while the synoptic gospels place it near the end (cf. Matt 21:12–13, Mark 11:15–18, Luke 19:45–46). This demonstrates that the gospels are unreliable as historical accounts of what Jesus said and did.”

Passage #7 – 1 Corinthians 11:4–8

[4] Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, [5] but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. [6] For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. [7] For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. [8] For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

Interpretation: “Paul lays down a clear command in this passage. Women should cover their head in church, plain and simple. If you want to discard this command as culturally irrelevant, you might as well throw out all of Paul’s commands to the church.”

Passage #8 – Luke 18:2–8

[2] He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. [3] And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ [4] For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual

coming.” [6] And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. [7] And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? [8] I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Interpretation: “Does Jesus really equate God with an unjust judge in this passage? It also seems as if this parable teaches that prayer is ‘wearing down’ or ‘bothering’ God. Because the elect are parallel to the widow in the parable, are we to understand that the elect are likewise poor and destitute? Who is the church’s adversary (v. 3)?”

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 3 – Historical Context – What Does It All Mean?

The Author’s Purpose

- Luke 1:1-4 – [1] Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, [2] just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, [3] it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, [4] that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.
- 1 John 5:13 – I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Who Is Writing To Whom?

Here is the text of Philemon from the ESV:

[1:1] Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker [2] and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:
[3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
[4] I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, [5] because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, [6] and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. [7] For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

[8] Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, [9] yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—[10] I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. [11] (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) [12] I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. [13] I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, [14] but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. [15] For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, [16] no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

[17] So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. [18] If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. [19] I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. [20] Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

[21] Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. [22] At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

[23] Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, [24] and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

[25] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Occasion and Purpose

Historical Context

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation:

1. Literary Interpretation

2. **Historical Interpretation** – The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author’s meaning.

3. Contextual Interpretation – (In a later lesson)

John Piper – “What has changed dramatically in the last fifty years is the concept of meaning and truth in our culture. Once it was the responsibility of historical scholars and judges and preachers to find the fixed meaning of a text (an essay, the Constitution, the Bible) and justify it with grammatical and historical arguments, and then explain it. Meaning in texts was not created by scholars and judges and preachers. It was found, because the authors put it there. Authors had intentions. And it was a matter of integrity to find what a writer intended—that was the meaning of the essay, the Constitution, the Bible. Everybody knew that if a person wrote ‘no’ and someone else creatively interpreted it to mean ‘yes,’ something fraudulent had happened.

But we have fallen a long way from that integrity. In historical scholarship and in constitutional law and in biblical interpretation, it is common today to say that meaning is whatever you see, not what the author said or intended.” (from a sermon titled, “Discerning the Will of God Concerning Homosexuality and Marriage”)

Socio-Historical Context (Scripture as Situated Discourse)

Mistakes to Avoid:

Values of the Ancient World:

Cosmos vs Chaos

Purity vs Impurity / Clean vs Unclean

Honor vs Shame

Kinship and Family Relations

Reciprocity and the Gift

Patron / Client Relations

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 5 – Context is King

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation:

1. Literary Interpretation
2. Historical Interpretation
3. **Contextual Interpretation** – The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.

Scripture interprets Scripture

- The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, Section 9:

IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

Contextual Interpretation

The Bible Says What!?

- **Statement #1:** “The Bible clearly teaches that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore, we should never say that God would send anyone to hell. To do that would be a contradiction of His character.”

- **Statement #2:** “Why are you confronting me about my sin? Don’t you know that the Bible says, ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ (Matthew 7:1)? In telling me that you don’t approve of what I’m doing, you’re judging me.”
- **Statement #3:** “When I step out onto that football field today, I know that I’m going to win. ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13). God will give me the success.”

Scripture Interpreting Scripture

The EWC Statement of Faith includes these words: “We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God’s self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not to be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of **the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture.**”

J. I. Packer’s on canonical interpretation:

“Since all sixty-six books come ultimately from the mind of our self-revealing God, they should be read not just as separate items (though obviously one must start by doing that), but also as parts of a whole. They must be appreciated not only in their particular individuality of genre and style, but also as a coherent, internally connected organism of teaching. This, after all (and here I throw down the gauntlet to some of my academic peers), is what examination shows them to be. It is fashionable these days for Scripture scholars to look for substantive differences of conviction between biblical writers, but this is in my view an inquiry as shallow and stultifying as it is unfruitful. Much more significant is the truly amazing unity of viewpoint, doctrine, and vision that this heterogeneous library of occasional writings, put together by more than forty writers over more than a millennium, displays. The old way of stating the principle that the internal coherence of Scripture should be a heuristic maxim for interpreters was to require that the analogy of Scripture be observed. This is the requirement which the twentieth Anglican Article enforces when it says that the church may not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” The modern way of expressing the point is to require that interpretation be canonical, each passage being interpreted kerygmatically and normatively as part of the whole body of God’s revealed instruction. Accepting this requirement, I infer from it the way in which theology should seek to be systematic: not by trying to go behind

or beyond what the texts affirm (the common caricature of systematic theology), but by making clear the links between items in the whole compendium of biblical thought.

My constant purpose was and is to adumbrate on every subject I handle a genuinely canonical interpretation of Scripture—a view that in its coherence embraces and expresses the thrust of all the biblical passages and units of thought that bear on my theme—a total, integrated view built out of biblical material in such a way that, if the writers of the various books knew what I had made of what they taught, they would nod their heads and say that I had got them right.” (from an online article titled, “In Quest of Canonical Interpretation”)

John 3:16 in Context

- **Text:** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- **Co-text:** [John 3:16-21](#)
- **Chapter:**
- **Book:**
- **Bible:**

Quotations:

Luke 4:16-21 and Isaiah 61:1-2

[Luke 4:16-21](#) - [16] And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. [17] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, [18] “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [20] And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. [21] And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 61:1-2 - [1] The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; [2] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

John 19:31-37 and Exodus 12:43-47 / Zechariah 12:10

John 19:31-37 - [31] Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. [32] So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. [33] But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. [34] But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. [35] He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. [36] For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." [37] And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

Exodus 12:43-47 - [43] And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, [44] but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. [45] No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. [46] It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. [47] All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

Zechariah 12:10 - "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 13:1 - "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

Matthew 4:1-4 and Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Matthew 4:1-4 - [1] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these

stones to become loaves of bread.” [4] But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Deuteronomy 8:1-10 - [1] “The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. [2] And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. [3] And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. [4] Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. [5] Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. [6] So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. [7] For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, [8] a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, [9] a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. [10] And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Allusions:

The Covenant with Abraham

- Genesis 26:3-4
- Genesis 28:13-14
- Exodus 2:24
- Deuteronomy 9:27
- I Chronicles 27:23
- Galatians 3:29

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 6 – The Function of Form

Structure

1. How has the author divided his material into sections?
2. How do those sections fit together?

Two common structures in the Bible

1. Bookends and Sandwiches

Example 1 – Romans

- Romans 1:5
- Romans 16:26

Example 2 – The Sermon on the Mount

2. Chiasms

Example – Mark 11 – Temple Cleansing or Temple Cursing?

Chiastic Structure of Mark 11

- ❖ Pilgrims welcome Jesus to Jerusalem (Mk 11:1-11)
 - Fig tree is cursed (Mk 11:12-13)
 - Temple Action (Mk 11:14-19)
 - Fig tree is found withered (Mk 11:20-25)
- ❖ Jesus is challenged by the temple authorities (Mk 11:27-12:12)

Sentence Flows

Philippians 1:3-5

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
⁴ always
in every prayer of mine for you all
making my prayer
with joy,

⁵ because of your partnership
in the gospel
from the first day until now.

³ [This is the main clause, the most basic idea in the sentence]

⁴ [adverb]

[a prepositional phrase]

[a participial phrase]

[a small but significant prepositional phrase]

⁵ [a gap in the flow followed by a dependent, “grounding”
clause]

[a prepositional phrase]

[a temporal phrase]

Exercise: Create a Sentence Flow

- 1:6: And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 7 – Grasping the Flow

What is a Proposition?

John Piper – The point of seeing propositions in relationship is not merely to elucidate the meaning of each proposition, but also to help us grasp the flow of an author’s argument. It was a life-changing revelation to me when I discovered that Paul, for example, did not merely make a collection of divine pronouncements, but that he argued. This meant, for me, a whole new approach to Bible reading. (Biblical Exegesis: Discovering the Original Meaning of Scriptural Texts, 18)

“For”

2 Chronicles 20:21 – “Give thanks to the Lord, **FOR** his love endures forever”

Example 1: 1 Corinthians 7:9 – “If they do not have self control, let them marry, **FOR** it is better to marry than burn with passion”.

Example 2: Philippians 1:18-19 – “Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, **FOR** I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance”.

Example 3: Hebrews 4:14-15 – “Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **FOR** we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin”.

“Therefore”

“Jesus is God, **THEREFORE**, I worship Him.”

Example: Philippians 2:5-11 – [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] **THEREFORE** God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is

above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“If” Statements:

1. As Conditional Statements

Example: Deuteronomy 28:13, 15 - [13] And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, **IF** you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them...[15] “But **IF** you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

2. They can also be used in a way similar to “because” statements

Example: 2 Peter 2:4-9 - [4] For **IF** God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; [5] **IF** he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; [6] **IF** by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; [7] and **IF** he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked [8] (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); [9] **then** the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment

“That” and “So that” Statements:

1. They can be placed in the text to tell us the purpose behind something

Example: Ephesians 3:16-17 - [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] **SO THAT** Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

2. They can introduce the result of something

Example: Luke 12:1 - In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together **THAT** they were trampling one another, he began to say...

Logical Paraphrasing

Philemon 1:13-14 - [13] I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, [14] but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.

Logical Paraphrase:

Summary Statement of the Logic:

Philemon 1:15-17 - [15] For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, [16] no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. [17] So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

Logical Paraphrase:

Summary Statement of the Logic:

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 8 – Every Word of God Proves True

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

Common Word Study Errors

D.A. Carson – Exegetical Fallacies:

The Root Fallacy

“One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually has a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word.” (28) “A modern, English example of this fallacy is the attempt to derive “the meaning of ‘butterfly’ from ‘butter’ and ‘fly,’ or the meaning of ‘pineapple’ from ‘pine’ and ‘apple.’ Even those of us who have never been to Hawaii recognize that pineapples are not a special kind of apple that grows on pines.” (30)

False Assumptions about Technical Meaning

“In this fallacy, an interpreter falsely assumes that a word always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning—a meaning usually derived either from a subset of the evidence or from the interpreter’s personal systematic theology. An easy example is the word sanctification. In most conservative theological discussion, sanctification is the progressive purifying of the believer, the process by which he becomes increasingly holy after an instantaneous ‘positional’ or ‘forensic’ justification. But it is a commonplace among Pauline scholars that although the term sanctification can have that force, it commonly refers to the initial setting aside of an individual for God at his conversion.” (45)

Illegitimate Totality Transfer

“The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word’s entire semantic range.” (60)

Internet Concordance:

- biblegateway.com
- biblos.com

Exercise: Concordance Work on “Antichrist”

Exercise: Concordance Work on “Last Days”

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 9 – Reading Between the Lines

Tone and Feel

Psalm 42

[1] As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? [3] My

tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" [4] These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. [5] Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation [6] and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. [7] Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. [8] By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. [9] I say to God, my rock: "Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" [10] As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" [11] Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Mark 4:35–5:43 (4 Stories)

Read looking for:

1. Effects of the Curse
2. CHRIST'S WORDS AND ACTIONS IN RESPONSE
3. The people's helplessness
4. Emotional responses of people to effects of curse and to Christ's power
5. Abrupt actions of people

Ephesians 1:3–14

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 10 – Repetition: Making the Point Again and Again and Again

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4)

John 6:47–59

[47] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” [52] The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” [53] So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. [54] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. [55] For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. [56] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” [59] Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Daniel 3:1–7

[1] King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. [2] Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. [3] Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. [4] And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, [5] that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. [6] And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” [7] Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

2 Timothy 2:3–6

[3] Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. [5] An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. [6] It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

Revelation 18:9–11; 15–20

[9] And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning.

[10] They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,

“Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come.”

[11] And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore ... [15] The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

[16] “Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!
[17] For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.”

And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off [18] and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?” [19] And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, for the great city
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in a single hour she has been laid waste.
[20] Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets,
for God has given judgment for you against her!”

Isaiah 53:4–6

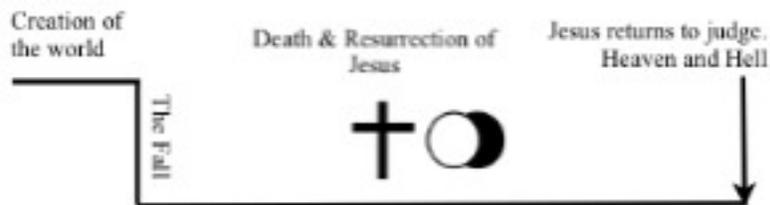
[4] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 11 – Salvation History Timeline

Three Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Sacrifice for Sin (Leviticus 4:27–31)

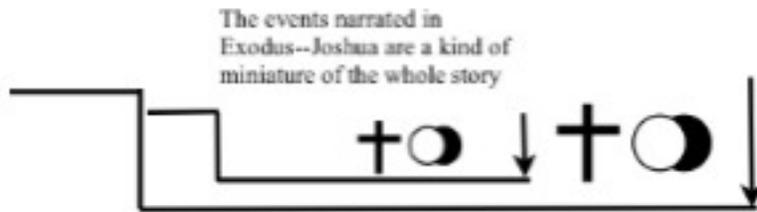
[27] If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, [28] or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. [29] And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. [30] And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. [31] And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

What is the Gospel? (Mark 1:14–15)

[14] Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Timeline Within A Timeline

Miniature Timeline:



Exodus 6:1-8

Exodus 5:22-23 - "O Lord, why have **you** brought trouble upon this people? Is this why **you** sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in **your** name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and **you** have not rescued **your** people at all."

[6:1] But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."

[2] God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. [3] I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. [4] I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. [5] Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. [6] Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. [7] I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. [8] I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

Psalm 95:7-11

[7] For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, [8] do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, [9] when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. [10] For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." [11] Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 12 – Of Making Many Books There Is No End

Marks of a Good Commentary

- Is the commentary exegetical, homiletical, or both?
- Is the commentary based on the original language?
- When the text has more than one possible meaning, does the author discuss all possible meanings and then give clear reasons for his interpretive choice?
- Does the author discuss a textual critical problem?
- Does the author offer important historical background of the text in important places?
- Does the author give you bibliographic information?

The Right Way To Use Commentaries

- Have an agenda
 - Look for answers to your questions
- Note observations that you missed
 - Reassess the passage using the insight you have gained from the commentary
- Commentaries should be an afterthought or addition to your study

The Wrong Way To Use Commentaries

- Use them as material for your research for the sake of interpretation
 - Go to them too soon
- Take their word for it
- Using too few commentaries
 - Relying on one too heavily
- Using too many commentaries

Other Resources

Bible Encyclopedias:

Bible Dictionaries:

Recommended Resources

- New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1994)
 - A single-volume Bible commentary representing the evangelical perspective. This commentary has articles written by excellent scholars in their field of expertise.
- Essential IVP Reference Collection, Version 2 (CD-ROM from Intervarsity Press)
 - An incredible resource that boasts over a dozen of IVP's reference works (including Bible dictionaries, background commentaries, Bible commentaries, and more). Having all of these reference works on a single CD is a bargain!
- Ferguson, Everett, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).
 - The third edition is an updated and expanded version of a standard work on the historical backgrounds to early Christianity.
- Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) and D. A. Carson et al., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1992).
 - Introductions to the historical setting and meaning of the Old and New Testament. These volumes deal with critical methodology and survey past scholarship.
- *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).
 - A valuable reference with entries on topics within systematic, historical, and philosophical theology.

- Carson, D. A., *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
 - This book alerts its readers to common exegetical fallacies. Reading this book will make you more aware of the mistakes you unwittingly commit.
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).
 - A clear, readable, and worshipful presentation of systematic theology. This is the textbook utilized in two of SOM's courses: Theological Foundations 1 & 2.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 13 – Applying the Word

C. J. Mahaney:

However, we can often forget that a knowledge of Scripture alone is not sufficient. Of course, James won't let us forget that we must "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). This verse tells us that apart from obedience, knowledge can be deceptive.

...The problem occurs when we assume that merely attending a conference, or listening to a sermon, or reading a book [or, we could add, studying the Bible!] signifies actual change. We can even be deeply moved by profound Scriptural truth but never actually grow in Godliness. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Peter Davids elaborates, "No matter how extensive one's scriptural knowledge, how amazing one's memory, it is self-deception if that is all there is. True knowledge is the prelude to action, and it is obedience to the Word that counts in the end." ("The Pastor's Priorities," in *Preaching the Cross*, 120)

Application – An Essential Step In Inductive Study

The original meaning is fixed, the application might vary in its details:

“The terminology adopted for the stages of application varies. Some speak of application as part of interpretation, while others think of it as a separate step. Some talk of what the text meant versus what it means. One of the most popular distinctions that evangelicals have utilized follows E. D. Hirsch’s discussion of meaning vs. significance. ‘Meaning’ refers to the ideas the biblical text originally intended to communicate to its readers; ‘significance’ refers to the implications of that meaning in different, later situations. From this vantage point, therefore, the meaning of any given passage of Scripture remains consistent no matter who is reading the text, while its significance may vary from reader to reader.” (Klein et. al., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 401)

Inappropriate Application

1. We should avoid
2. We should beware of
3. We shouldn’t

Appropriate Application

Ten Principles for Appropriate Application:

1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.
2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.
3. Receive God’s Word directly in comparable situations.
4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.
5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.
6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.
7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.
8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.
9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.
10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

- 1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.**

“I have argued that the Bible is much more than a book of information, more even than divinely revealed information. It is a collection of divine communicative actions that continue to work their effects in those who read in Spirit and truth.

How should we respond to Scripture as God’s communicative action? For every communicative action there is an equal and opposite communicative reaction. Well, not quite. Readers do not always behave according to Newton’s third law of motion. Yet responsive readers should respond to the biblical text in a fitting manner, a manner that is appropriate to what the text itself is doing. Because God does many things with words, our responses too will be varied: we must affirm the doctrine, obey the law, hold fast in hope to the promises, rejoice in the gospel.” (Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 39)

2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.

Luke 24:25–27, 44–48 – [25] And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself... [44] Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” [45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, [46] and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things.

John 5:39–40 – [39] You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

3. Receive God’s Word directly in comparable situations.

4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.

John Piper on Romans 16:16:

First, then, consider the holy kiss in verse 16. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” After saying Greet thirteen times, he now gives them one urging for how to do it. Kiss my precious friends for me. If I were there, I would kiss them. What should we think about the “holy kiss” (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)? Five observations may be helpful:

1. It Was a Common Custom

It was a widespread custom outside the church to kiss friends and guests. When Jesus was invited to dinner by Simon the Pharisee, Simon didn't kiss him, but a woman anointed his feet and kissed him. Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet" (Luke 7:45). It was a gracious custom. That's why it wasn't strange when Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:48). It was a common greeting.

2. It Was Holy

Paul said that the kiss Christians should use is holy. He called it a holy kiss. There are many ways for a kiss to be unholy. Judas' kiss of betrayal certainly was unholy. The kiss of adultery is unholy. The kiss of fornication is unholy. The kiss of homosexuality is unholy. The kiss of seduction is unholy. I'm sure Paul would say, "If that's the only way you can kiss, don't kiss." But there is another way to kiss. Pure, holy, deep, blood-bought affection.

3. It Was Family Affection

This affection is a family affection, not a romantic one. It's the affection I felt when I kissed my father goodbye five hundred times as a boy sending him off to preach the gospel, and then welcoming him home again

4. It Was a Physical Demonstration

The holy kiss is physically demonstrative, not just words. Healthy families are not afraid to touch each other. It's the mark of unselfconscious security and love and warmth. A visiting woman came up to me at the all-campus outdoor service last August and said, "I love to watch the men of your church. They seem natural and manly in the way they embrace each other." I felt very happy about that.

5. It Was Culturally Conditioned

I doubt that we should say that this "kiss of love" (1 Peter 5:14) is a universally binding requirement for all believers in all times and all places. Paul didn't describe it as an obligation rooted in creation or in the gospel. He took what was there in the culture and said, "Make it holy." There may be cultures and situations where a kiss would not communicate what Paul desires. Hugging might. Handshaking might. But it may be that Paul would say, "The cultural basis that gives rise to the holy kiss is a better cultural basis than one that leaves us with no meaningful physical expressions of family affection among Christians." In other words, if we don't have better cultural expressions of family affection, we probably should go back to this one.

So that's our first consideration. Paul wants the believers in Rome—and us—not just to greet each other with words but with more demonstrative expressions that say: You, as fellow believer in Christ, are precious to me." (from a sermon titled, "Carry My Love to My Beloved")

5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.

6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.

7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.

8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.

In his book *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, Jonathan Edwards offers some positive signs that indicate that the Spirit of God is genuinely at work. Here is Sam Storms' discussion:

“Therefore, if people are led to deeper conviction that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, if they are led to deeper devotion and esteem for Christ, if they are led to more honorable thoughts of him, ‘it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit’ (110). Satan would never do this.

...Edwards’ point is that there are certain things that Satan either cannot do or would not do: he would not awaken the conscience of the sinner or make them sensible of sin and guilt; he would not confirm their belief in or their love for the Son of God; he would not increase their love for and belief in the truth and authority of the Scriptures; he would not increase our love or humility.” (from an article titled, “Jonathan Edwards and the Theology of Revival”)

9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.

Psalm 139:23–24 – [23] Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! [24] And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.