

# How to Study the Bible

EWC School of Ministry – February 21–25, 2012

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the methodology of inductive study of the Bible. Inductive study consists of careful observation of the text leading to sound interpretation and appropriate application. Students will learn study strategies, principles of interpretation, and principles of application throughout the course and then apply them to the book of Philippians. The course also aims at fostering sensitivity to literary genre and at cultivating inductive Bible study as a lifelong habit.

## OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. The hope for a person who successfully completes this course would be that they would:

- Love Jesus more.
  - What this means is that they would magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring Him in their heart above all else. (We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit)
- Have a basic understanding of what the Bible is, where it came from, why we can trust it, and how to differentiate (and appreciate) our many English translations.
- Be able to articulate the three principles of sound interpretation presented in this course relating to literary interpretation, historical interpretation, and contextual interpretation. By learning these three principles and practicing their application, we should be able to more accurately interpret the Scriptures.
- Be able to employ strategies of inductive study in further Biblical study. These strategies include examining form and sentence flow, making observations, discerning the main point, asking questions, checking cross-references, paraphrasing the logic, doing word studies, comparing translations, noting the tone and feel of a passage, and using secondary resources.
- Understand how to make personal application of the Bible by following ten principles of appropriate application.
- Make immediate plans for continuing personal, inductive Bible study.

## BOOKS

- A solid, literal translation (not a paraphrase) of the Bible.
  - A couple of suggestions:
    - English Standard Version (ESV)
    - New American Standard (NASB)
    - Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
      - New International Version (NIV) would be acceptable, but not ideal
- Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007)
  - NOTE: Do not accidentally buy the workbook

## REQUIREMENTS

### Pre-Class Work

- Read chapters 1–48 in *Living by the Book* by the first day of class.
  - Class lectures will not be based directly out of the book, but this excellent resource will be a great aid to you.
  - This seems like a lot, but it is VERY easy reading. Also, about half the pages have giant graphics or text-blocks, so the reading goes really fast.
- One paper, 2–3 pages double-spaced, describing the “interpretive forces” and “pre-understandings” which presently shape your understanding of the Scriptures. These include things such as: gender, family background and experience, your church and its doctrine, pastors and/or teachers that have influenced you, race and/or ethnicity, socio-economics, and age.
  - Discuss how each one (and any others you can think of) has an impact on how you “see” and “understand” the Scriptures. In other words, everyone has presuppositions, presumptions, and pre-understandings when they read the Bible; no one interprets Scripture in a vacuum. Identifying the baggage we bring with us to the task of interpretation can be invaluable as we seek to assess (and re-shape) our understandings in the light of Scripture.
    - **Papers are due on the first day of class (Tuesday, February 21).**

### Post-Class Work

- Each Student will do a Close Reading assignment on one passage of the Student’s choice from the book of Philippians, which allows the Student to explore the passage with a variety of skills and abilities discussed throughout the course. A Close Reading is NOT a sermon, but it is also NOT a research

paper. It is more like an initial exploration that would set the stage for a research paper. These papers should be 8–10 pages, typed, double–spaced, 12–point font. Further instructions will be handed out in class.