

Men *of the* Word

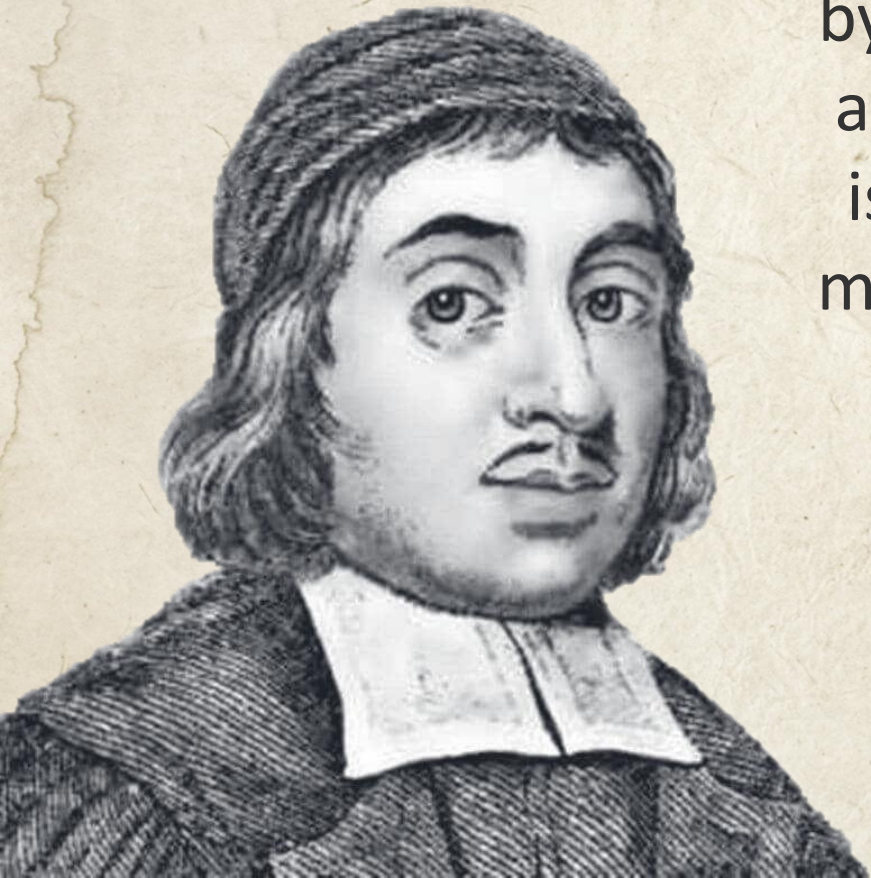
## **SESSION 14:**

# **The Practice of Bible Study, Pt 2**

# **IT IS WRITTEN**

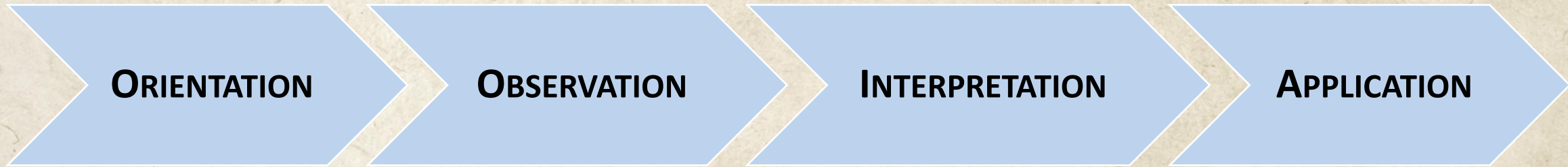
“Remember that it is not hasty reading, but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths, that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers honey, but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest and strongest Christian.”

—Thomas Brooks



# THE PRACTICE OF BIBLE STUDY

- A four-stage process of study that will take you from the text to life:



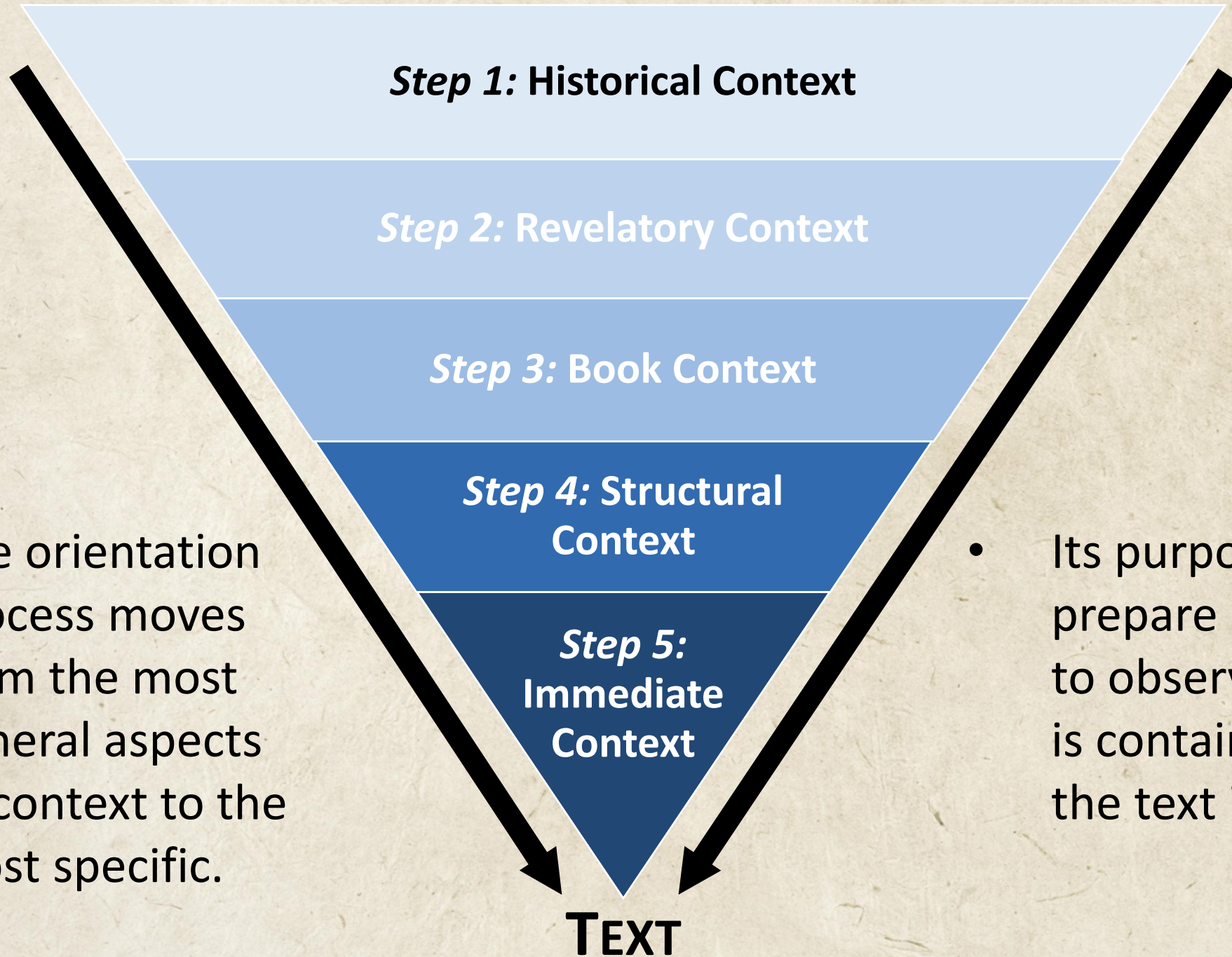
I. **ORIENTATION** – *surveying the text’s surroundings.*



II. **OBSERVATION** – *examining the text’s contents.*

III. **INTERPRETATION** – *understanding the text’s meaning.*

IV. **APPLICATION** – *obeying the text’s message.*



- The orientation process moves from the most general aspects of context to the most specific.

- Its purpose is to prepare us well to observe what is contained in the text itself.

## What is “Observation”?

- **“Observation”** can be defined as “the act of taking notice.”
- “The process of observation should generally resemble the absorbing process of the sponge when it is exposed to a liquid” (Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 48).
- The primary objective of this stage is to answer the question, **“What does the text say?”**
- The prerequisites for this stage include: (a) *the will to observe*; (b) *a passion for precision*; and (c) *a pledge to persistence*.



- The specific purposes of this stage are: (a) ***to become thoroughly acquainted with the text's details***; and (b) ***to become thoroughly convinced of their need for explanation***.
- In contrast, the great obstacle of observation is ***the illusion of mastery***—the assumption, “I already know this!”
- Observation must be joined with *prayer*: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy Law” (Psalm 119:18).
  - “Not, ‘Give me a plainer Bible,’ but ‘Open my eyes to know my Bible.’ Not, ‘Show me some new revelations beside the Law,’ but ‘Make me behold the wonders of the Law” (Charles Bridges, *Exposition of Psalm 119*, 29).

## FOUR STRATEGIES FOR OBSERVING THE TEXT

1. Read the Text

2. Query the Author

3. Compare the Translations

4. Examine the Particulars

## STRATEGY 1: Read the text.

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- **PRINCIPLE:** Good observation begins with a thorough acquaintance with the text, and a thorough acquaintance comes through good reading.
- One cannot interpret correctly until he knows what the text before him actually contains.
- Reading is needed both to *inform* one's awareness (what is there) and to *correct* one's awareness (what is not there).
- A direct correlation exists between how well a student *reads* and how well he *observes*.

### FIVE LAWS OF READING

Read Prayerfully

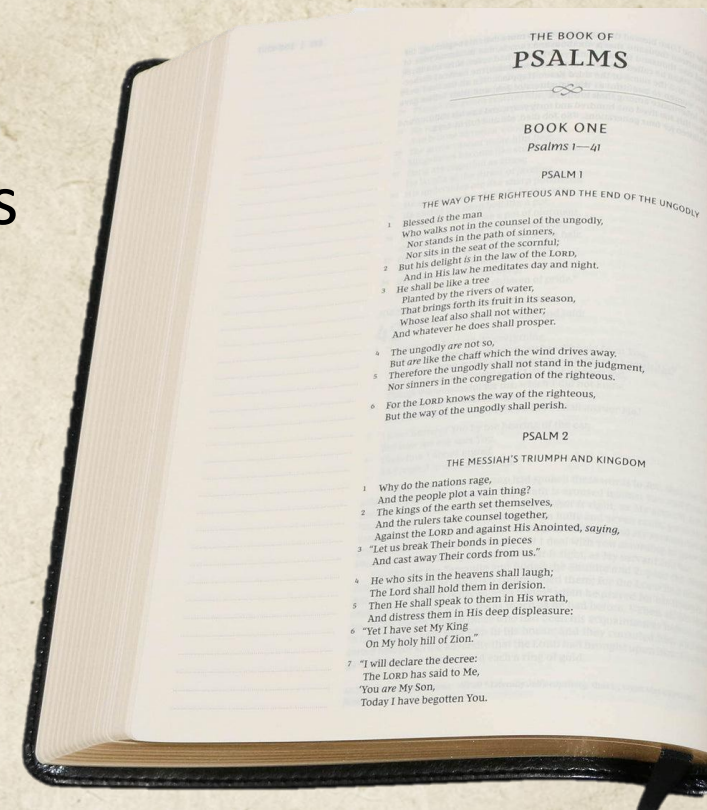
Read Inquisitively

Read Repeatedly

Read Progressively

Read Patiently

- Studying specific texts of the Bible should be done alongside the habit of general Bible reading.
  - **PLAN A (breadth):** Be reading the Bible for the big picture—for an awareness of the general storyline.
  - **PLAN B (depth):** Take opportunities to study individual texts deeply, preferably in sequence through a whole book.
- Find a Bible that is printed on good paper and that has lots of space for marking and notetaking. *Marking the text while reading increases awareness.*
- Listen to an audio version of the text, or read the text out loud. *Hearing the text while reading increases awareness.*



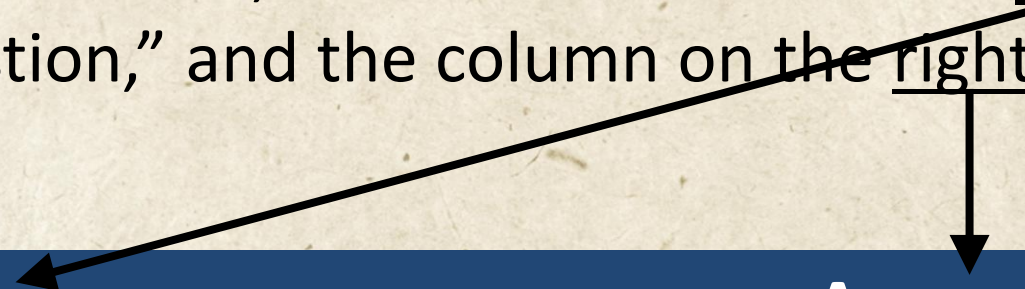
## STRATEGY 2: Query the author.

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- **PRINCIPLE:** To increase awareness, the student should generate a leading question for each sentence of the text, creating a kind of *Q & A dialogue* with the writer.
- Treat each of the text's sentences as *the answer*.
- Read this answer carefully, then craft a *question* that best introduces the writer's answer.
- This Q & A approach challenges the student to read carefully and inquisitively by requiring him to generate questions appropriate to the text's content.



- 1) Create a two-columned chart, with the column on the left designated for the “leading question,” and the column on the right for each sentence of the text.



Leading Question	Answer
<i>What is the legal status before God of those who are “in Christ”?</i>	“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)

- 2) Paste the sentence of the text in the right column; it serves as the writer’s “answer.”
- 3) Generate a question that *leads into* the answer.
- 4) Each subsequent question must take into account the previous “answer” given, and lead into the next “answer,” so that the final “transcript” should read smoothly like an interview.

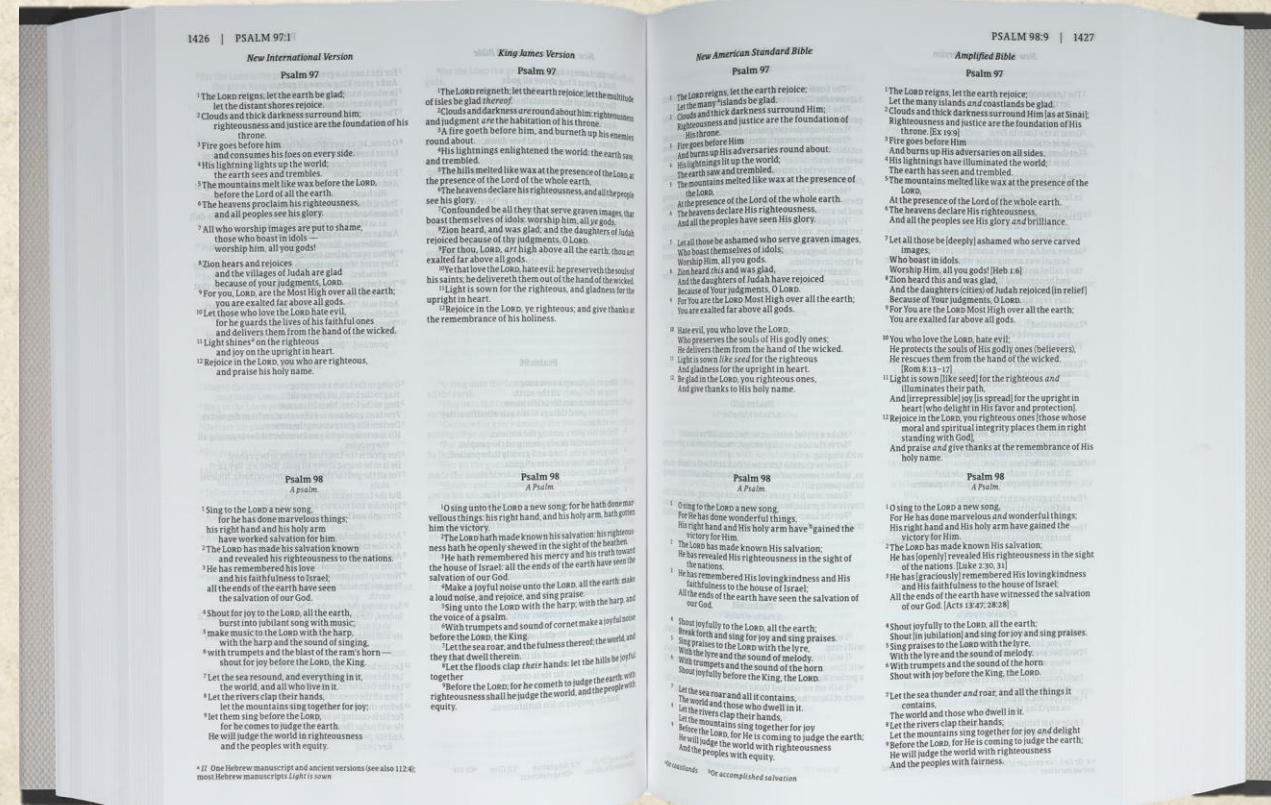
## QUERYING THE TEXT – PSALM 1

Leading Question	Answer
<i>Who is the one whom I can truly consider as “blessed”?</i>	➡ “[How blessed is the man] who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!” (v. 1).
<i>If this “blessed” man has no regard for the wicked, in what, then, does he delight?</i>	➡ “[But his delight] is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (v. 2).
<i>What will this “blessed” man be like, and what does the future hold for him?</i>	➡ “[He will be like] a tree <i>firmly</i> planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; [and] in whatever he does, [he prospers]” (v. 3).

Leading Question	Answer
<p><i>What will this “blessed” man be like, and what does the future hold for him?</i></p>	<p>“He will be like a tree <i>firmly</i> planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (v. 3).</p>
<p><i>But do not the wicked also prosper, and if not, what happens to them?</i></p>	<p>“<u>The wicked are not so</u>, <u>but they are like chaff</u> which the wind drives away” (v. 4).</p>
<p><i>What future, then, lies ahead for the wicked?</i></p>	<p>“<u>Therefore the wicked will not</u> stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” (v. 5).</p>
<p><i>Why are the futures of both groups so different?</i></p>	<p>“<u>For the LORD knows</u> the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (v. 6).</p>

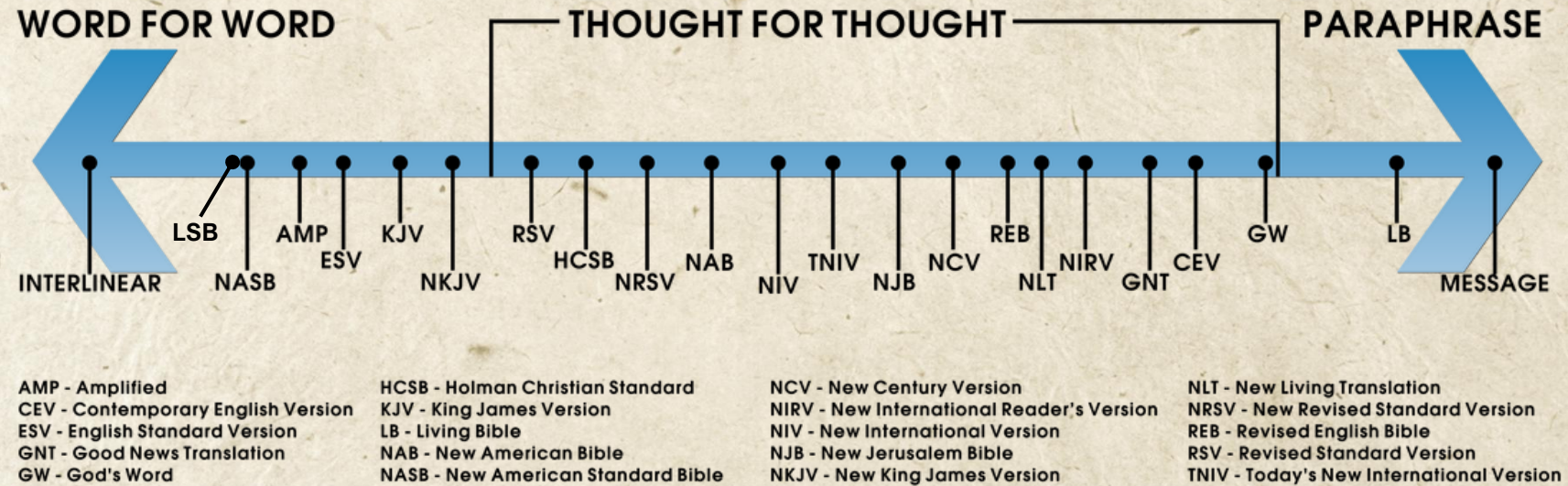
# STRATEGY 3: Compare the translations.

- **PRINCIPLE:** To recognize both the simple and complex details in the text, the student should compare the text in several respected translations.
- No other language in history has as many translations of the Bible as English—both good and bad.
- Comparing the text in several reputable translations is especially helpful for those who cannot read the text in its original language.



**A Parallel Bible showing the NIV, KJV, NASB, and Amplified Bible translations in parallel columns.**

- The translation used as the standard should be a *word-for-word* translation like the NASB or the LSB.



- Two or more other translations should be chosen for comparison.
- Commonalities in the translations show details in the text which translators find easy to translate and less susceptible to interpretive disagreement.
- Differences among the translations show details which translators find challenging to translate; these are the details which you will want to study in the commentaries in the next stage of *interpretation*.

- 1) Create a chart, with the standard translation (NASB or LSB) in the left column and the other selected translations listed to the right.

NASB	ESV	CSB	NIV
Therefore there is now	There is therefore now	Therefore, there is now	Therefore, there is now
no condemnation	no condemnation	no condemnation	no condemnation
for those who are	for those who are	for those	for those who are
in Christ Jesus.	in Christ Jesus.	in Christ Jesus,	in Christ Jesus,

- 2) Insert a single verse of text in each row, under the appropriate translation.
- 3) Arrange the display in such a way that each line of text corresponds in each of the translations.

## COMPARING THE TRANSLATIONS – ROMANS 8:26

NASB	ESV	CSB	NIV
In the same way the Spirit <b>also</b> helps our weakness; for we do not know <b>how</b> to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for <i>us</i> with groanings too deep for words;	Likewise the Spirit helps us <b>in</b> our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.	In the same way the Spirit <b>also joins to help</b> <b>in</b> our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with <b>unspoken</b> groanings	In the same way, the Spirit helps us <b>in</b> our weakness. <b>□</b> We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through <b>wordless</b> groans.

## STRATEGY 4: Examine the particulars.

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- **PRINCIPLE:** To observe the text well requires consideration of every detail. No detail of the biblical text can be ignored as inconsequential.
- **Matthew 5:18** – “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”
- There are no disposable “jots and tittles.”
- The curiosity of a meticulous investigator is crucial.
- Aim for the most “hands-on” approach to the text as possible.

**WHO?  
WHAT?  
WHERE?  
WHEN?  
WHY?  
HOW?**

1) Write/print the text out on paper to allow greater freedom to underline, draw arrows, circle key words, and add notes.



2) Use different colored pens or highlighters to mark certain patterns.

3) Devise a personal system for marking consistently the same kinds of details (main verbs, prepositional phrases, pronouns, etc.).

4) Keep an additional notepad to record your key observations and questions for further study.

## EXAMINING THE PARTICULARS – ROMANS 8:1

Conjunction  
expressing logical  
consequence  
(see preceding context)

Therefore there is now no condemnation

Present tense verb – an on-going reality/status

A new reality; opposed to “then” (when?)

Key word! Define!!

for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Introduces the  
scope of this new  
reality/status

The scope is  
limited to a  
particular  
group

Denotes  
sphere

Key person! Note  
order of title and  
name. Paul's key  
focus—“in Christ”

# Pulling It All Together

## FOUR STRATEGIES FOR OBSERVING THE TEXT

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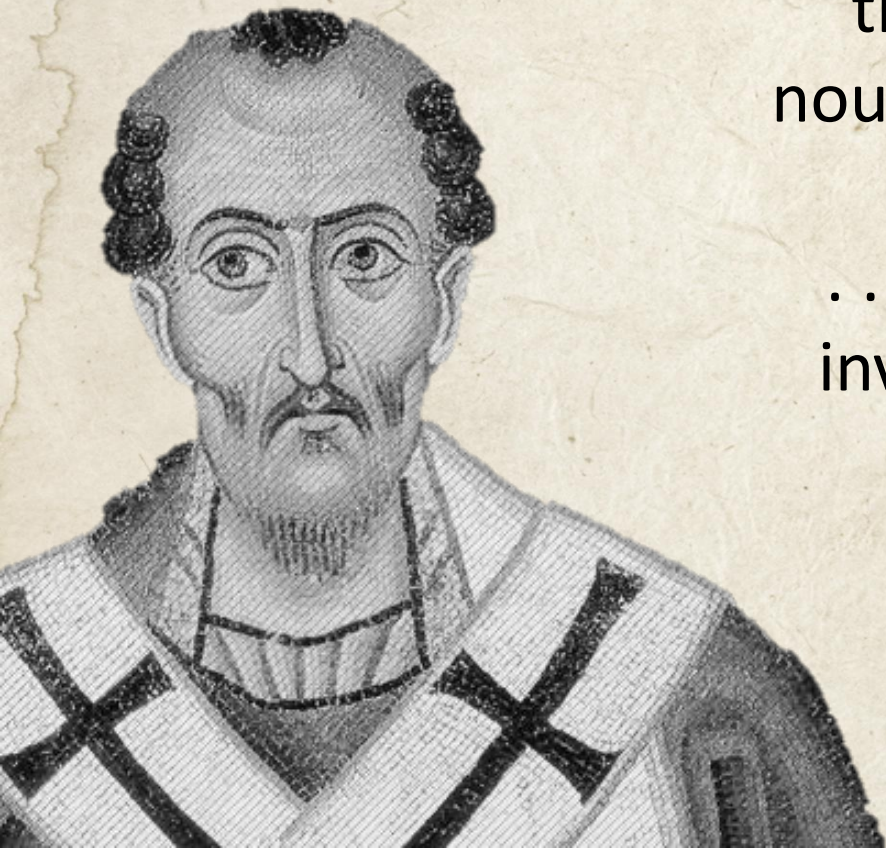
4. Examine the Particulars

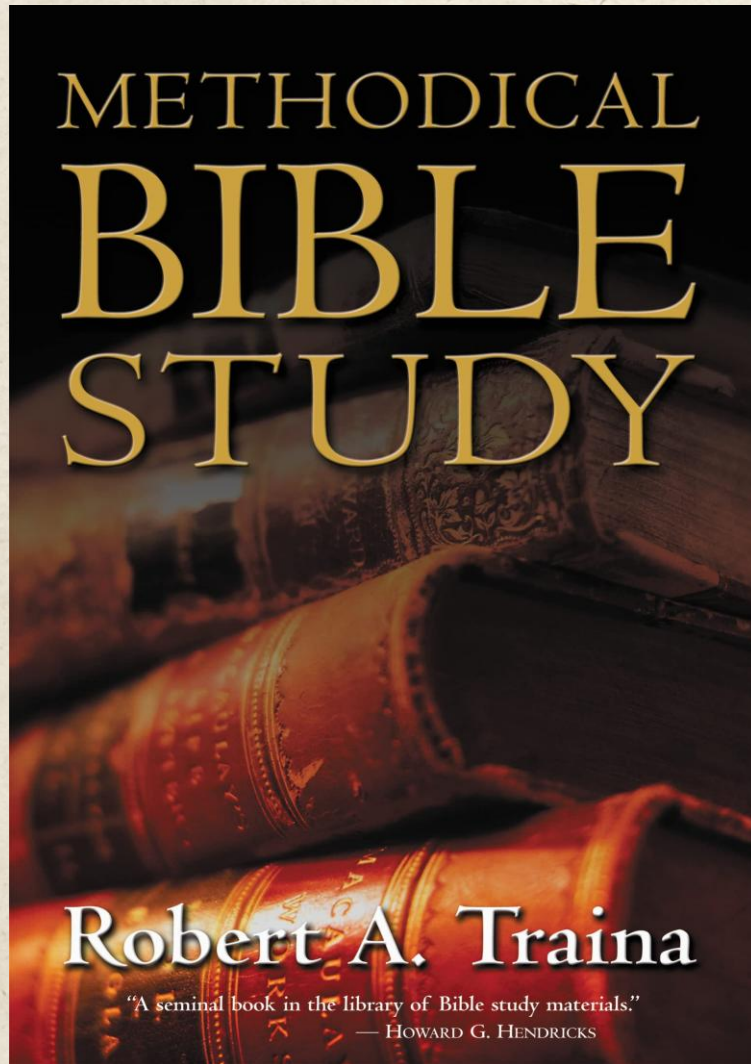
- Implementing these four strategies will acquaint you with the text's contents and prepare you well for the next stage of the process: *interpretation*.

“While relaxing at home, both before eating and after eating . . . take the Scriptures in your hands and gain benefit from them and provide spiritual nourishment for your soul. You see, as the body has need of material nourishment, likewise, too, the soul needs daily reminders and spiritual nourishment so that it may be strengthened . . . .

. . . A divine book in our hands, let each of us invite our neighbors to join us and refresh our minds and theirs with the divine words.”

—John Chrysostom (AD 347–407),  
*Homilies on Genesis 1–17*



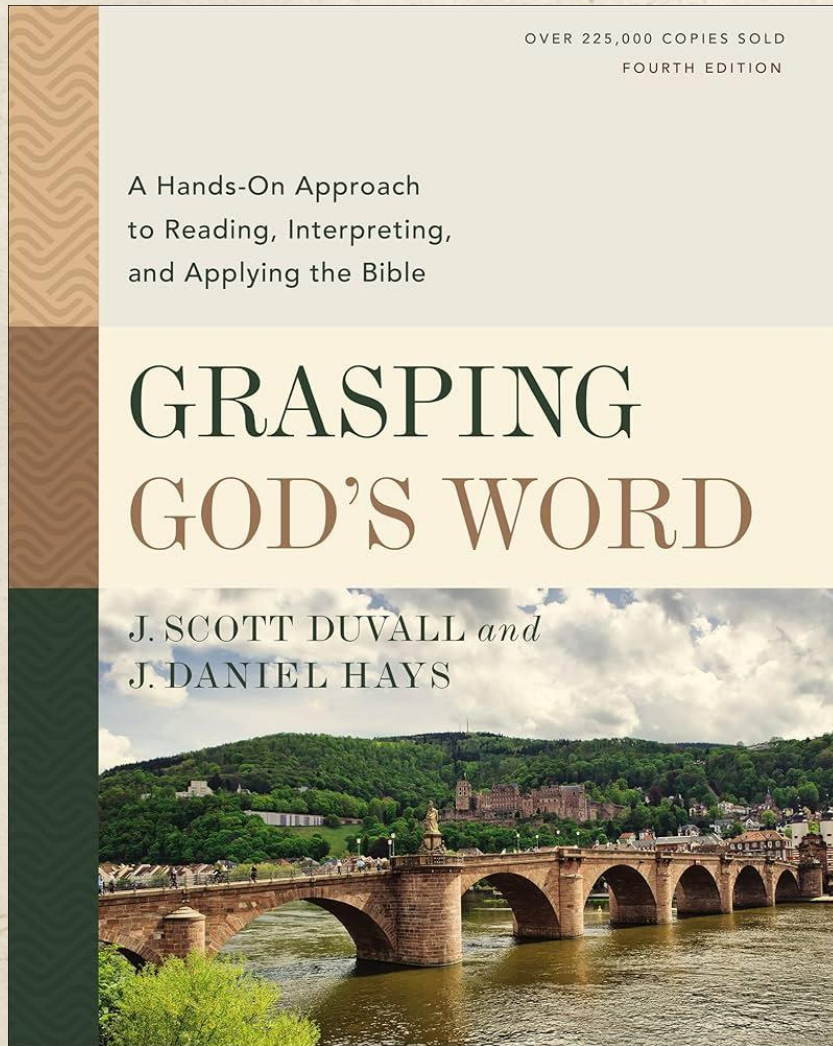


## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

Robert A. Traina

*Methodical Bible Study.*

*Men of the Word*

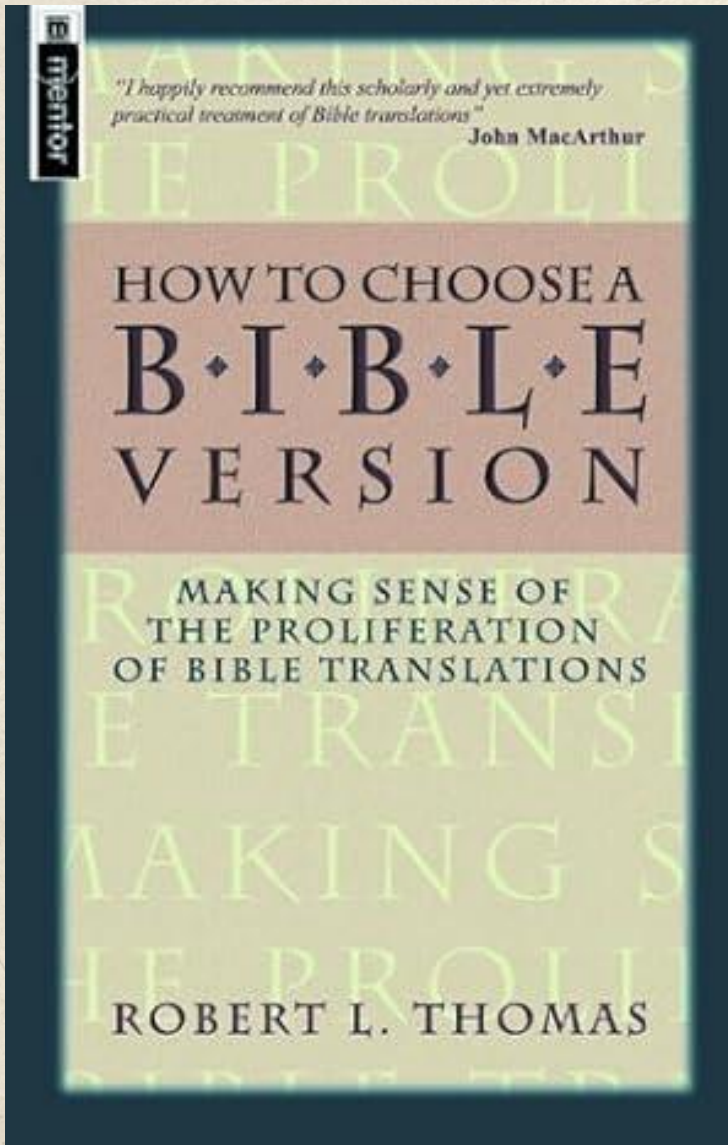


## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

**J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays**

***Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible.***

***Men of the Word***



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

Robert L. Thomas

*How to Choose a Bible Version: Making Sense of the Proliferation of Bible Translations.*