

Know How to Grow: The Keys to Personal Bible Study from Interpretation to Application

Why Study God's Word

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Psalm 19
- Hebrews 4:12
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- Psalm 119:1-16

Preparation for Study of God's Word

1. Regeneration – 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, 14–16
2. Humility – Isaiah 66:2b
3. Purity – James 1:21
4. Diligence – 2 Peter 3:14–16; 2 Timothy 2:15
5. Prayer – Psalm 119:18

Wrong approaches to Bible Study

1. Haphazard Approach
2. Surface Approach
3. Allegorical Approach
4. Personal Meaning Approach

The Steps of Bible Study

Step 1: Read and Observe

A. Reading Large Portions

As you read and write notes, also consider and jot down answers to questions such as:

- 1) Where does the book fit historically?
- 2) When was it written?
- 3) When did the events take place?
- 4) What was happening elsewhere in the world at the time?

B. Reading Shorter Sections

1. General Observations

a. Paragraphs

- i. What is the ONE MAIN POINT in each paragraph?
- ii. How does this main point relate to the theme of the entire book?
- iii. How does this paragraph relate to the paragraph before it?
- iv. How does this paragraph relate to the paragraph after it?

b. Ask Questions

- i. Who are the people in the text? Find out generally and specifically.
- ii. What is happening in the text? The events? The order? To the people? What are the meanings of all the words in the passage?
- iii. Where is it taking place? Look at a map.
- iv. When did the events in the passage take place?
- v. Why? Why is this included? Why is it placed here? Why does it follow that? Precede that? Why is the author writing this? A why question digs for meaning.

c. Look for Biblical Themes. As God's redemptive purpose and plan unfolds in Scripture, five recurring motifs are constantly emphasized:

- i. The nature of God.

- ii. The curse for sin and disobedience.
 - iii. The blessing for faith and obedience.
 - iv. The Lord Savior and the sacrifice for sin.
 - v. The coming kingdom and glory.
 - d. **Look for Theological Topics.**
 - i. Bibliology. Study of the Scriptures.
 - ii. Theology Proper. Study of God and His attributes.
 - iii. Christology. The study of Christ.
 - iv. Pneumatology. The study of the Holy Spirit.
 - v. Anthropology. The study of man.
 - vi. Soteriology. The study of salvation.
 - vii. Ecclesiology. The study of the church.
 - viii. Eschatology. The study of end times.
- 2. Specific Observations**
- a. **Notice the grammar.**
 - i. What are the verbs and their tenses?
 - ii. The subject & object?
 - iii. Which adjectives and adverbs are used?
 - b. **Notice commands, exhortations, promises, etc.** Use descriptive words to show what kind of sentence it is.
 - c. **Notice words.**
 - i. Words that repeat themselves within the paragraph, the chapter, the book.
 - ii. Words that you do not know (look them up).
 - iii. Words that appear to be crucial to the sentence and proper understanding.
 - d. **Notice comparisons.**
 - i. Look for “like” and “as.”
 - ii. Look for comparisons and illustrations.
 - iii. Examples: James 3:6-12; Matt 18:1-6; Luke 12:22-30; I Cor. 13.
 - e. **Notice contrasts.**
 - i. Look for “but.”
 - ii. Examples: James 1:5-8; 22-25; 26-27; Matt 5:21-48; Gal 5:16-24
 - f. **Notice things that are repeated.**
 - i. Both in the passage and within the book.
 - ii. Examples: James 2:14-26; Matt 5:21-48; I Cor. 13.
 - g. **Notice things that are related.** Make note of cause and effect relationships. We often back up our commands, advice, or warnings with reasons, proofs, purposes, or results. Be on the lookout for the following connectives:
 - i. “Because” or “for” - these words often introduce a reason or result.
 - ii. “In order that” - This phrase often sets forth a purpose.
 - iii. “Therefore” - This word often introduces a summary of ideas, a result, or a conclusion.
 - iv. “If” - This conjunction introduces a condition which requires action or set forth a cause which will bring forth certain results.
- 3. Write out tentative conclusions**
- a. Make an outline of the paragraph.
 - b. Write the paragraph in your own words.

C. Benefits of Both Approaches – reading large portions and studying short sections

Step 2: Interpretation

Clarity of Scripture

Gaps to Bridge

1. Language
2. Culture
3. Geography
4. History

Free Online Resources

- Blue Letter Bible – helpful tools on Greek and Hebrew
- Bible Gateway – many versions of the Bible, Bible Dictionaries, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series
- Bible Hub – dictionaries, atlases, weights and measures, commentaries (including Expositor's Bible Commentary), etc.

Principles of Interpretation

1. The Literal Principle
2. The Historical Principle
3. The Grammatical Principle
4. The Synthesis Principle

Evaluation of Interpretation

Step 3: Application

- James 1:21–25
 - Matthew 7:24–27
1. Commands to be Obeyed
 2. Truth to be Embraced
 - A. Trusting in God's promises.
 - B. Resting on the finished work of Christ.
 - C. Believing that it is true.
 3. God to be Worshipped

Addressing Genre in Interpretation and Application

1) Narrative

- i. Recognize difference between description and prescription
- ii. Seek out the timeless truth the author is communicating.
- iii. Understand God-centered focus
- iv. Look for repetition
- v. Consider the broader historical and theological context
- vi. Remember the overall purpose of the book
- It can be helpful for the interpreter to complete his analysis of the passage by asking the following questions:
 - What does this narrative reveal about the **character of God**?
 - What does this narrative teach about the **human condition**?
 - What does this narrative say about **how God relates to mankind**?
 - What does this narrative contribute to **God's plan of redemption**?
 - What does this narrative reveal about **God's eternal purposes**?
 - What does this narrative reveal about **living to the glory of God**?

2) Parables

- i. Understand the historical and cultural background of the parable.
- ii. Determine the natural meaning of the story in the parable.
- iii. Determine the specific question/problem/need/situation which precipitated the telling of the parable.
- iv. Determine the primary points of correspondence in the parable.
- v. Recognize that not every detail in the parable has special significance.
- vi. Seek to determine the one main point of the parable.