

How to study your Bible

A method of personal study with minimal use of external resources

PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES

1. **Have a consistent time** – People make time for the things which are important to them
2. **Remove distractions** – Don't allow other things to interfere with your set time
3. **Have a plan** – be systematic in your Bible study; study through books of the Bible
4. **Keep it simple** – Don't study in a way that you cannot consistently perform

THE METHOD

- **Begin with prayer: Psalm 119:18** – *open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* **1 John 2:27** – *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*
- **Carefully read the passage (3-7 verses)** – Suggestion: write it down to help you read every word
- **Answer the simple questions:**
 - Who is writing? ○ Why was the passage written?
 - Who is being addressed? ○ What does the passage say about man?
 - What is the context of the passage?
- What does the passage say about God? **Write down an explanation of the passage**
 - Don't try to apply everything to you personally, allow God's word to speak for itself.
 - Try not to use helps right away, if you don't understand something, meditate upon it and pray about it.
 - After you have come to your own conclusions, see what other's (commentaries, etc.) have to say.

OTHER HELPFUL CONCEPTS

- **Use good interpretation principles**
 - Take God's word literally ○ Take God's word grammatically
 - Take God's word historically ○ Take God's word contextually
- **Context is king** – NEVER divorce a passage from the context in which it is found. Do not try to apply the concept beyond the context in which it is given. Use all of Scripture to help you understand and interpret.

AXIOM 1: THE BIBLE IS A BOOK WRITTEN BY PEOPLE TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE.

Corollaries

1. Each Biblical writing was written by someone to specific hearers or readers in a specific historical-geographical situation for a specific purpose.
2. Each Biblical writing was couched in the cultural setting of the times in which it was written.
3. Each Biblical writing was recorded in a written language and followed normal grammatical meanings including figurative language.
4. Each Biblical writing was accepted or understood in the light of its context.
5. Each Biblical writing took on the nature of a specific literary form (genre = category of literature characterized by a particular style, form, or content - History, Poetry, Narrative, Wisdom, Gospels, Prophecy, Letters/Epistles).
6. Each Biblical writing was understood in account with the basic principles of logic and communication.

AXIOM 2: THE BIBLE IS A DIVINE BOOK

Corollaries

1. The Bible contains **MYSTERY**
Only supernatural can answer: Prophecy, Parables, Miracles, Doctrine
2. The Bible contains **UNITY**
It will not contradict itself (all fits together).
It often interprets itself (study all of it).
Its obscure and secondary passages are to be interpreted in light of clear and primary passages.
3. The Bible contains **PROGRESSION**
Progressive revelation (from partial to complete).

(Some elements taken from: Clinton Lockhart, *Principles of Interpretation*, 2nd ed. Fort Worth: S. H. Taylor, 1915)