

HOW TO STUDY THE VARIOUS BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

- Message # 9 in the series “Understanding the Bible”
- Completed Survey of the Old and the New Testament in 6 messages.
- Completed an Overview of Basics of the Bible in message #7
- Completed the 1st part of How to study the Bible in message # 8 and now the final part

GOAL OF THIS SERIES:

1. Understand the flow of the Bible
2. Be transformed like Christ as one reads and applies the Bible

Romans 12:1-2

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

I. 4 Basics to remember when studying the Bible

1. Need for holiness
2. Need for effort
3. Need for prayer
4. Desire for obedience

II. Fundamental principles of Bible study

1. Reading – What does the Bible say?
2. Interpretation – What does the Bible mean?
3. Meditation – Call for prayerful reflection
4. Application – How does it apply?

III. Other issues to consider when studying the Bible

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2. Comparing Scripture with Scripture
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4. Literary Structure of the Bible

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V. Suggestions for Reading/Studying the Bible

4. LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

- A. Didactic or Expository Form (Romans to Jude)
- B. Narrative or Historical Form (Genesis to Esther, Gospels, Acts)
- C. Poetic Form (Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)
- D. Proverbial Form (Proverbs)
- E. Parabolic Form (Parables taught by the Lord Jesus)
- F. Prophetic Form (OT Prophets, Revelation, Portions of Gospels, etc.)

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

A. Didactic or Expository Form (Romans to Jude)

- **Epistles such as Paul’s letters and all other NT letters (Hebrews to Jude) fall under this category.**
 - In general, these letters contain instructions for the church.
- **Didactic or expository literature teaches truth in a relatively direct manner.**
- The explanation moves from point to point in a logical, highly organized fashion.
- That’s why it’s important to **pay attention to the logical development of the passage** that is being studied.
- Words such as “for, therefore, and, but” usually aid in the interpretation of the passage.
- It is also helpful to study the situation behind the statements.
- For example, an understanding of the Corinthian culture and what was happening in the Corinthian church at that time is vital to better understand Paul’s letters to the Corinthians.

4. LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

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LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

B. Narrative or Historical Form (Genesis to Esther, Gospels, Acts)

- **Genesis through Esther in the Old Testament, Gospels and Acts in the New Testament fall under this category.**
- **Narrative literature tells a story.**
- These are not just stories about people who lived in the Old Testament times; they are first and foremost **stories about what God did *to* and *through* those people.**
- These stories are records of what happened, **not necessarily what should happen every time.**
- The stories are **not filled with hidden meanings.**
- Narratives do not answer all questions about a given issue; they are limited in their focus.
- They give us one part of the overall picture of what God was doing in history.
- We must restrain our curiosity at many points, or we will commit the mistake of reading in-between the lines and making wrong conclusions.
- The narratives **do not teach a doctrine, but illustrates the principle** of a doctrine usually taught elsewhere in Scripture **through various stories.**

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

B. Narrative or Historical Form (Genesis to Esther, Gospels, Acts) – Con't

- In order to understand the narrative books of the Bible for our application, one must begin with a close reading of the text.
- Follow the progression of the story.
- Look at the characters and how they are presented.
- **See what happened when they obeyed God and what happened when they disobeyed God.**
- For example, when one reads the life of Joseph, we must see the sovereign hand of God in the life of Joseph, which was coupled with the obedience of Joseph.
- The hero of the story of Joseph is not Joseph – but God!
- However the obedience of Joseph can be a good reminder for us to trust in the sovereign God during difficult times.

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

B. Narrative or Historical Form (Genesis to Esther, Gospels, Acts) – Con't

- However, what people did in these narratives are not always good examples for us to follow; sometimes it is just the opposite.
- For example, **Gideon's fleece** has been repeatedly used as an example for finding God's will.
- God had already promised Gideon victory (Judges 6:12, 14, 16), yet Gideon needed more assurance.
- God graciously granted Gideon's requests and even Gideon knew God viewed his actions as a result of his weak faith (Judges 6:39 records that Gideon requested God not to be angry with him).
- God's compassion towards Gideon's lack of faith must not be interpreted as a practice for people to seek God's will by throwing their "fleeces."
- In some cases, people may have used the "fleece" principle and the result may have turned out to be good, but that does not mean that there is a biblical command behind such actions.

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

B. Narrative or Historical Form (Genesis to Esther, Gospels, Acts) – Con't

- When interpreting the Gospels, one must do so with care.
- The teachings of our Lord must be brought into the light of their application for our day and age.
- There are certain events that cannot be repeated in our day and age [for example, the death of Christ will not occur again].
- Likewise, the book of Acts gives us a history of the early Church's experiences.
- It is a historical record of the apostolic period; **it must not be viewed as the pattern for the Church for every age.**
- However, if there were a doctrinal truth that is taught in the Epistles as well as the Book of Acts, it would be safer to consider that as applicable to the Church age [caution is still to be exercised though!]

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LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

C. Poetic Form (Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

- Poetic literature presents key principles in a poetic fashion. Job, Psalms, Proverbs [some portions], Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon primarily fall under this category.
- Hebrew poetry varies from English poetry. The three major types of Hebrew poetry are:
 - a. **Lyric poetry** – to be accompanied by music, like a song (e.g. Psalms)
 - b. **Instructional Poetry** – to teach principles of living through short statements (e.g. Proverbs)
 - c. **Dramatic Poetry** – a narrative that tells a story in poetic form (e.g. Job)
- A Hebrew poet used two kinds of literary techniques to convey his thought. They are “**Parallelism**” and “**Figures of Speech.**”

PARALLELISM

It is a technique whereby ideas are matched rather than sounds.

1. Synonymous Parallelism – *Ideas presented are similar.*

Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths. [Psalm 25:4]

2. Synthetic Parallelism – *Second thought completes the first.*

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. [Psalm 23:1]

“I shall not want” as some translations render is misleading. Why? The word “want” in today’s language refers to something like, “I want a car, I want a house” expressing desire. But, the thought of the psalmist is not that of expressing a desire – but assurance in the fact that since the Lord is my shepherd, therefore I lack nothing that is needed for my life!

3. Antithetic Parallelism – *Second thought contrasts the first.*

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. [Psalm 1:6]

PARALLELISM – Con't

4. **Emblematic Parallelism** - *First line uses a figure of speech to illustrate the idea stated in the second line.*

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God. [Psalm 42:1]

5. **Climactic Parallelism** - *Second line repeats the first with the exception of the last word or words.*

It is not for kings, Lemuel—
it is not for kings to drink wine [Proverbs 31:4]

6. **Formal Parallelism** - *Both lines of poetry must exist for a complete thought.*

“I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.” [Psalm 2:6]

FIGURES OF SPEECH

It is a technique whereby the writer desires visual pictures to pop up in the reader's mind.

- 1. Simile** – *Comparison between two unlike things with the use of words, “like, as, such-as,” etc.*
Keep me as the apple of your eye. [Psalm 17:8]
His eyes were like bronze. [Revelation 1:15]
- 2. Metaphor** – *Comparison that describes one thing in terms of something that is different.* [Note: Don't press every detail of the description]
The Lord is my shepherd. [Psalm 23:1]
All people are like grass. [Isaiah 40:6]
- 3. Allegory** – *Extended metaphor where the story and its application usually intermingle.*
I am the vine; you are the branches. [John 15:5]

FIGURES OF SPEECH – Con't

4. **Hyperbole** – *Deliberate overstatement for the sake of emphasis.*

All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears. [Psalm 6:6]

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle
than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. [Matthew
19:24]

5. **Rhetorical** – *Asking a question for the purpose of making a statement.*

Who has believed our message? [Isaiah 53:1]

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work
miracles? [1 Corinthians 12:29]

6. **Personification** – *Assigning the characteristics of a human being to lifeless objects.*

the mountains and hills will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. [Isaiah 55:12]

FIGURES OF SPEECH – Con't

7. **Metonymy** – *A figure of association, where one word or thing is substituted for another due to a close mental relationship.*

The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. [Mark 1:5].

[Metonymy is countryside which refers to people]

8. **Synecdoche** – *A figure of association where the whole can refer to the part or the part to the whole.*

God...commands all people everywhere to repent [Acts 17:30]

For...by grace you have been saved through faith [Ephesians 2:8]

[Sometimes “repentance” stands for repentance and faith, and sometimes “faith” stands for faith and repentance as seen in the verses above].

9. **Irony** – *A statement that says the opposite of what is meant. It is used for the sake of emphasis of effect.*

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! [1 Corinthians 4:8]

FIGURES OF SPEECH – Con't

10. Type – *A type is a historical person or event that always points to a future person or event. The fulfillment is usually called as the “antitype.”*

Note: The antitype is always greater than and is superior to the type. In addition, the type and antitype must be designated as such in the NT.

- Melchizedek is a type of Christ [Hebrews 7 especially v. 3, 17]
- Passover lamb, a type of Christ [1 Corinthians 5:7]
- Bronze snake on the pole, a type of Christ on the cross [John 3:14-15; Numbers 21:8-9]

NOTES CONCERNING THE PSALMS

- Total of 150 psalms.
- Standard Hebrew text divides the Psalms into 5 books [perhaps to imitate the first 5 books of Moses – Pentateuch].
 - Book 1 – Psalms 1-41
 - Book 2 – Psalms 42-72
 - Book 3 – Psalms 73-89
 - Book 4 – Psalms 90-106
 - Book 5 – Psalms 107-150 Psalms are a collection of inspired prayers and hymns.
- **Psalms contain words spoken *to* God, words spoken *about* God and words spoken *by* God.**

NOTES CONCERNING THE PSALMS

- Each psalm has a controlling topic and can be categorized by their controlling topics as seen below [Note: It is hard to come to a general consensus on categorizing the psalms].

Categories of Psalms and their main focus:

- ***Thanksgiving – Praising God***
[e.g. Psalms 8, 18, 19, 30, 34, 66, 103-106, 111, 113, 116, etc.]
- ***Confidence/Trust – Confidence that God will deliver***
[e.g. Psalms 16, 23, 27, 62, 73, etc.]
- ***Lament – Expressions of emotions during times of great distress***
[e.g. Psalms 3, 5, 7, 22, 26, 59-61, 88, etc.]
- ***Kingship and Messianic – Focus mainly on the kingship of God/Christ and Sufferings of Christ***
[e.g. Psalms 2, 8, 16, 20, 22, 45, 69, 72, 89, 101, 109, 110, 132, etc.]
- ***Imprecatory – Calling God’s judgment against his enemies***
[e.g. Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 69, 109, 137, etc.]
- ***Wisdom – Living a God pleasing life***
[e.g. Psalms 1, 37, 119, etc.]
- ***Penitential – Expressing sorrow over sin***
[e.g. Psalms 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 130, 143, etc.]

NOTES CONCERNING THE PSALMS

- When studying the Messianic Psalms (i.e. those Psalms that refer to Christ), study them first in the light of their immediate historical purpose at the writer's time (for example, David's time).
- Then consider which elements, because of what they involve, must ultimately refer to the Messiah: Christ Jesus.
- An example would be Psalm 16:10 which reads “**you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.**”
- Here we must understand that David did die and his body experienced decay, but his did not go to grave (or hell).
- The second part of that verse must apply *only* to Christ because the physical body of Christ did not see any decay.
- In fact this verse was explained clearly by Peter in Acts 2:31 as referring to Christ.

THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE PSALMS

- Psalms teach us that we are not guaranteed a pleasant life.
- David who almost wrote 50% of the psalms faced a lot of troubles and sorrows in his life, yet he could praise God in some of the strongest manner.
- That encourages us to praise God even when we go through trials.
- In summary:
 - Psalms help to express ourselves to God. Thus they can be used as a guide to worship.
 - Psalms help us to consider God's ways. Thus they can be used to demonstrate the faithfulness of God in our lives. This will in turn help us to trust in Him at all times.

- **Message of Job:**
 - Not all suffering is related to sin for even the godly can go through severe suffering at times.
 - We will never have all the answers to suffering on this side of heaven.
 - We are to trust in a sovereign God who does all things according to his good will and uses suffering to bring us more closer to him.
 - Job 42:2 **“I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”**
- **Message of Ecclesiastes:**
 - Life without God is meaningless.
 - Ecclesiastes 12:13 **““Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”**
- **Message of Song of Solomon:**
 - A lengthy love song illustrating God’s intention for human marriages that they need to be marked by love and faithfulness.

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LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

D. Proverbial Form (Proverbs)

- **A proverb is a brief, specific expression of a truth.**
- Proverbs do not state everything about a truth, but they point toward it.
- Proverbs tend to use figurative language in many cases and they express things suggestively rather than in detail.
- **Proverbs are not guarantees or promises from God, but guidelines for good behavior.**
- We must interpret the general principle a proverb teaches in the light of what the rest of Scripture teaches in order to avoid wrong conclusions!
- Some examples:
- Proverbs 16:7: **When the LORD takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them.**
- While Scripture does refer to God helping his children to find favor from the world as they live in obedience to his word [Acts 2:47], the Bible also tells us that believers will experience rejection from the world [John 15:18-20].
- Even the perfect Lord Jesus ultimately faced rejection and death from the world!

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

D. Proverbial Form (Proverbs)

- Proverbs 16:3: **Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.**
- This must be understood as God teaching us that if our lives are committed to God and lived according to his will, one will plan and succeed according to **God's definition of success.**
- **God's definition of success many times will be in stark contrast to world's [or our own] definition of success.**
- This proverb cannot be misinterpreted as if one dedicates his or her plans to God, with a godly thought behind it, those plans must succeed in the way they would like to define success.
 - It is equivalent to saying a prayer and closing it with "In Jesus' Name" and expecting that the prayer, no matter the content *will* be answered. That is incorrect thinking.
 - When we pray in Jesus' name or commit our plans to God, it must identify with the overall character, plan and purpose of God. And we must be willing to abide by the answers God in his wisdom wills to provide.

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

D. Proverbial Form (Proverbs)

- Proverbs 22:6: **Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.**
- Cannot be treated as a blanket promise as if parents do all they can to raise children biblically, they will for sure turn out to be believers.
- History reveals such is not the case.
- In fact, history also reveals the opposite. Many ungodly parents have had children who turned out to be fine Christians.
- The proverb should be interpreted as parents being held responsible for their efforts – which ought to be in trying to raise their kids biblically and leave the rest in God's hands!
- Some Christian parents can save themselves of much unhealthy guilt when their kids don't turn out to be godly by interpreting this proverb rightly!
- Some Christian parents also should be careful from becoming proud and pat themselves on the back when their children become believers as if they were the main reason for their conversion!

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LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

E. Parabolic Form (Parables taught by the Lord Jesus)

- **A parable is a saying or a story based upon a common life situation that is designed to usually make one central point.**
 - It is also important to remember that while parables teach one main point, they also teach other secondary ideas [or principles].
- The key is **to understand the main point** the parable makes and see how it would apply to our current age.
- Christ used parables to teach truth to believers, and to hide truth from those who had rejected and had hardened their hearts against it. Matthew 13:10-12:

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!” [Isaiah 6:9-10]
- Resistance to known spiritual truth hardens the heart and makes one less and less able to understand and respond in faith.

3 Principles to Apply When Interpreting a Parable:

1. Determine the occasion of the parable.

- Each parable addresses a particular situation, problem or question. Ask questions such as: Why was it told? What prompted it?

2. Look for the main point by examining the entire parable.

- Learn to differentiate between the main point and details that help to determine the main point.

3. Do not derive doctrines based on Parables alone.

- Parables should never be the primary or only source of establishing any doctrine.
- Parables should be interpreted in the light of the overall teaching of the other parts of the Scripture – the New Testament letters in particular!

A few examples to help apply these principles.

A. The Parable of the Sower [Matthew 13:1-23]

1. Occasion of the parable

- Jewish leaders despite seeing his many of Jesus's miracles attributed his power to have come from Satan and not God.
Matthew 12:24 **““It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”**
- So, Jesus starts talking in parables to the crowd and explaining them later to his disciples in private.

2. Main point of the parable

- **We will always receive different responses to the gospel. Problem is not with the word, but with the hearts of the people.**
- Secondary truths - Satan hindering the Word, lack of perseverance, etc.

3. Do not derive doctrines based on parables alone

- Based on the seed that fell among the rocky places and thorns [vv. 5-7, 2—22] people can wrongly conclude that salvation can be lost.
- That would then contradict other teachings about the security of salvation [John 10:28-29; Romans 8:31-39].

B. Parable of the Rich Fool – Luke 12:13-21

1. Occasion of the parable

- Jesus was in the process of speaking serious truths about heaven and hell [Luke 12:1-11] when suddenly one person totally deaf to Jesus's teachings says, [12:13]. **“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me”**

2. Main point of the parable

- Luke 12:15 **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”**
- Beware of money replacing God as the center of your life!

3. Do not derive doctrines based on parables alone

- Dangerous to read hard work and acquiring money through rightful means is wrong and that one cannot be rich and be a Christian at the same time!
- Many rich people are given in the Scripture as good examples to follow!

C. Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost [Prodigal] Son – Luke 15

1. Occasion of the parable

Luke 15:1-2: ¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

- In response to this, Jesus gives the 3 parables.

2. Main point of the parable

- **God loves even the worst of sinners and seeks to save them.**
- Luke 15:10: I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.
- Words like “lost,” “found,” “sin,” “rejoice,” “repents,” etc., that appear in these parables reveal this main point.

3. Do not derive doctrines based on parables alone

- Dangerous to read that the prodigal son “lost” his salvation or backslide when he left home and then got his faith back.
- Scripture teaches clearly true believers never leave the faith [1 John 2:19].

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LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

F. Prophetic Form (OT Prophets, Revelation, Portions of Gospels, etc.)

- **Prophetic literature is designed to predict events yet to happen at the time of their writing.**
- Many times the prophets in the Old Testament announced the future.
 - Sometimes it pertained to the immediate future of Israel, Judah and other nations surrounding them.
 - Other times, it prophesied events that will occur at the end time.
- Safe way to interpret prophetic books is to see if their prophecies have already been fulfilled [future for them, but past for us in some instances] and those that are yet to be fulfilled.
- Same principles even when it comes to some prophetic material in the Gospels.

A few examples to help apply these principles.

Matthew 24:1-3: ¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

- Jesus responds to these questions throughout the rest of the chapter.
- On closer reading, we can safely conclude that many of the signs including wars and the time of the Antichrist including his image being put in the temple [abomination of desolation – v. 15] has not happened yet.
- However, the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and no stone was left on another as he predicted. That part of Jesus’s prediction has been completed. Rest is to be fulfilled!

Isaiah 61:1-2: The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God.

Luke 4:16-21: ¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” ²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

- Notice, Jesus as he quoted Isaiah 61:1-2, omitted the last part of verse 2, **“and the day of vengeance of our God...”** Why?
- Because his 1st coming was as Savior to die for sins – only in his 2nd coming he will come as Judge!
- **Prophets often telescoped near and far events in close proximity!**

THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- Primarily points to events to occur in the future [chapters 4-21].
- Events described in chapters 2-3 [letters to the 7 churches] applicable to the present church age.
- Though this book uses a lot of complex language, one should not shy away from it. Why?
 - Revelation 1:3: **Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.**
- Since this book uses a lot of symbolic language, one must approach this book with much humility and not pretend to resolve all the difficulties.
- When this book is read in conjunction with other books such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, parts of Isaiah as well as some portions of the NT (namely the Olivet Discourse by our Lord as described in Matthew 24 and Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2), one can get a good understanding of this book.

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IV. Tools to apply

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IV. Tools to Apply

Tools to Consider:

- Study Bibles
- Commentaries (One volume commentary for beginners)
- Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia
- Bible Atlas
- Bible Concordance
- Bible Handbook
- Gifted Bible Teachers
- Church Bible Study groups

Benefits/Cautions Concerning Study Bibles/Commentaries

- Study Bibles/Commentaries are very helpful to effective Bible study, but they must be used properly.
- Spend time studying the Bible for yourself prior to consulting with any study Bible or commentaries.
- In other words, beware of spending more time reading “Books about the Bible” than the Bible itself.
- First, read and interpret the Bible for yourself.
- Then compare your interpretation with study Bibles or commentaries.
 - Sometimes, they will agree with your interpretations and even give you greater insight.
 - Other times, they will force you to rethink your interpretation.
 - In such cases, restudy the Scriptures carefully and if convinced, be willing to change your opinion.
 - Key is to seek the Spirit’s help, remain humble and be willing to change change.
 - ***Do not let spiritual pride or tradition drive you to be stubborn and not change your interpretation even when you know you are wrong!***

V. Suggestions for Reading/Studying the Bible

If you are a new Christian:

- Start with the New Testament.
- The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) record the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Read these four books first and then proceed to the other books of the New Testament.
- If you read 1 chapter of the gospels a day, you can complete the 4 gospels within 90 days!
- If needed, read the first four books **repeatedly** and then move on to the **other books of the New Testament**.
- Then proceed to the Old Testament.
- The Old Testament will be more easier to understand if one gets a basic understanding of the New Testament.
- Initially some areas of the Bible may seem a little hard to understand, do not get discouraged.
- The Lord will make things clear to you as you persist.
- Where needed, ask other Christians or use the tools described earlier to help you in the understanding of Scriptures.
- Be sure to attend a good bible-preaching church and church bible studies if you are serious about growing in your understanding of the Bible!

If you have been a Christian for a while and are familiar with the life of Christ, then the following suggestions may be of assistance to you:

A. Reading:

- Read both the Old Testament and New Testament on a daily basis – even if it is 1 chapter a day in a systematic fashion [starting from Genesis-OT and Matthew-NT]!
- If possible, add 1 Psalm and 1 Proverb a day.
- Just 15 minutes a day will help you accomplish the above-mentioned reading.
- There are many bible reading plans available for free on the internet if one needs them!
- **In addition to reading**, one can gain deeper knowledge by studying more in-depth. This needs to be done book by book.
- Even 15 minutes a day of studying in addition to the 15 minutes of reading will get your bible knowledge to a higher level!

B. Studying:

- Take a small book for starters – like Philemon or Philippians or 1 Peter.
- Use a study bible to read the introductory material for that particular book. This will help you gain background details of that book.
- Read the entire book in one sitting. It should take you about 10-15 minutes. Don't try to understand everything at this point. Just read to get a feel for the book.
- Repeat the above step every day for 3 days.
- On the 4th day, divide the 1st chapter into smaller sections.
- Many bibles come with sections broken down; one can just follow those section outlines [usually sections have sub-titles that gives the main thought of the passage].
- Read/Study the individual section for 2-3 days. Try to find the main thought that the author is trying to convey.
- Follow the principles discussed in section II of this material when studying individual sections [Fundamental Principles of Bible Study]
- Take notes [in your own bible or in a separate notebook] as you are studying.
- Look up other tools as needed to get more insight.
- Repeat same steps as you move from section to section.

- Once you finish one book, move on to other books.
- Alternate between OT and NT books.
- This way, you will have studied the entire Bible in a few years.
- By going through the general reading of the Bible in parallel with the studying of a particular book, you will find that many times as you are studying one particular section the answers become more clearer because of your overall grasp of the Bible.
- In other words, in general the Bible is structured in such a way that truths taught in one part of the scripture are further explained in other passages. Also, questions that may arise in one passage are usually answered elsewhere.
- **The key for effective bible study is discipline and a desire to grow in the knowledge of God.**
- Remember, spiritual growth does not occur overnight. It does take effort.
- But it will be worth it!

I. 4 Basics to remember when studying the Bible

1. Need for holiness
2. Need for effort
3. Need for prayer
4. Desire for obedience

II. Fundamental principles of Bible study

1. Reading – What does the Bible say?
2. Interpretation – What does the Bible mean?
3. Meditation – Call for prayerful reflection
4. Application – How does it apply?

III. Other issues to consider when studying the Bible

1. Law of Context
2. Comparing Scripture with Scripture
3. Gaps to Address
 - A. Historical/Cultural Gap
 - B. Geographical Gap
 - C. Language Gap
4. Literary Structure of the Bible

IV. Tools to apply

V. Suggestions for Reading/Studying the Bible

GOAL OF THIS SERIES:

1. Understand the flow of the Bible
2. Be transformed like Christ as one reads and applies the Bible

Psalm 119:97

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

May this desire be present in all our lives!