

Bible Study Guide

What do we know about the Bible?

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

The number one rule for Bible study is to slow down!! Read to find out what is happening in that particular section of Scripture. Read, and read again. Read until you can identify the 5 W's as listed below.

Study in 3 Steps:

- Observation—What does it say?
- Interpretation—What does it mean? What does it teach me about God?
- Application—How should it change me?

Step 1: Observation

Observe what you read.

Identify the 5 W's—who, what, where, when, and why.

- Who was the author?
- Who was the intended audience?
- Why was it written?
- What is the historical setting?
- What is the geographical and cultural context? Are there people or places you need to identify?
- What literary form is used? Is it narrative, telling a historical event? Is it poetry?

What do I look for?

Look at main verbs (actions taking place)

Look at conjunctions (connecting words such as and, but, therefore, and wherefore).

Look at things that are:

- Emphasized

- Repeated
- Related
- Alike and unlike
- True to life

Rules for Reading:

- Read an entire section.
- Identify the paragraphs and label them.
- Evaluate paragraphs in light of other paragraphs.
- Evaluate how this section relates to the rest of the book.
- State the main point of the section.

Tools for Interpretation:

- Bible Dictionary / Bible Encyclopedia
 - provides information on people, places, and cultural concepts
- Bible Atlas
 - maps, topography, and historical context
- Books on manners and customs during Bible times
- Concordance
- Interlinear Bible / Lexicon / Dictionary of Bible Words
- Bible Survey Textbooks
- Bible Commentaries

Step 2: Interpretation

In light of context (historical, geographical, and cultural) and the canon of Scripture, what is going on in this passage?

***We never interpret Scripture by what we are experiencing.**

Interpretation Guidelines

- Scripture will never contradict Scripture.
- Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.
- Know that some truths may seem paradoxical.
- Never use an obscure passage to contradict the clear teaching.
- Consider the type of literature.
- Context is always king.
- Always look for the single meaning of a passage.

Hazards to Avoid

- Subjectivism
- Relativism
- Over confidence
- Misreading
- Distorting
- Contradicting

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5 Keys to Interpretation:

1. Content
2. Context
3. Comparison
4. Culture
5. Consultation

Step 3: Application

What timeless principles may be drawn from this passage?

8 Application Questions:

- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there a challenge to face?

Commitment to Application:

Decision—What do I need to change?

4 steps to your decision

- Know: Understand the text and yourself
- Relate: Personal experience should be understood through the Word, not the Word through experience.
- Meditate: Think on the passage and the lesson you're learning from it
- Practice: Put into practice what God has revealed to you.

Plan—Course of Action

Follow through—evaluation and accountability. Share with others and ask them to hold you accountable. Also, remember that you are always accountable to God to follow what He reveals to you through His Word.

Follow through

Think about how you will measure transformation.

Beware of 4 Substitutes for Application:

- Interpretation for Application
- Superficial obedience for substantive life change
- Rationalization for repentance

- Emotional experience for a volitional decision

*This guide was created by Jeanie Malone and is available through these websites:
www.cahabaheightsbaptist.net, www.tidbitsandblessings.net, and
www.chrismaloneministries.com

**Credit where credit is due: Much of the information in this guide comes from Dr. Emily Dean, a Professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.