

I was raised in the church, a preacher's son. I was raised on Biblical standards and taught all the right things to do as a person and for Salvation. As many children, I rebelled and when I returned, I started "studying" the Bible like everyone else - using the guides of other teachers and evangelist's.

It wasn't too long before I felt that God was telling me to study the Bible on my own. So, I grabbed my Bible and sat down for a good time of study. As I sat there, staring at that big book full of culture and language I didn't really understand, I realized the cold hard truth... I didn't know how to study the Bible.

As I've talked to people over the years, it's come to my attention that virtually no one knows how to study the Bible. In fact, most pastors don't know how to study the Bible. We all do it the same way, we look at what other people say about the Bible, let them guide us through and tell us what the passage means, and we just believe. This continues from generation to generation; and it happens for two main reasons - we don't feel the urgency to study Scripture and the church has failed in teaching HOW to study Scripture.

A newly married couple was having their first Christmas dinner and she was going to prepare the traditional ham. As her husband watched, she cut the ends of the ham off and threw them in the trash. He asked her, "Why did you do that?". She responded, "I don't know, it's just the way my mother did it.". The husband replied, "Ask your mom why she did that.". The new bride called her mom and asked why she cut off the ends of the ham and threw them away. The mother responded, "Your going to have to ask your grandmother because I learned it from her." So, the young lady called her grandmother and ask why she cut off the ends of the ham and threw them away. The grandmother replied, "Sweetie, I only cut off the ends because the ham would not fit in my pot".

In close examination of the church, and church history, I'm finding that we are doing many things that are absolutely not Biblical; and we've entered into beliefs that are no where in Scripture. The reason we have entered into these beliefs and practices is only because the generation before us did it. Yet, we don't ask why, and we don't go to Scripture.

When I read Matthew 7:13-23, I came to a frightening truth - Christ said that most of the people who think they are going to Heaven will not make it. The reason is, they have fallen for the teaching of wolves.

It is my goal for people to learn How to Study the Bible by using ONLY the Bible.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE - Part 1

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*

(Mark 4:10-12 NIV)

My goal, in teaching this course, is not to simply teach you how to study the Bible. If your goal for learning how to study the Bible is just to learn, or just to see what the Bible says, then you've set your goal way to low.

God did not raise up a church that would be content with ONLY receiving the Word of God. He raised up a church that would have the intended purpose of reproducing the Word of God through that body of people. We, as a church and individually, are to be reproducing the gift of the Gospel to others. If all we do is receive the truth and we do not act upon that truth, then our lives are nothing.

WHAT Bible We Study...

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)

In America, we let the Bible sit on the end table or coffee table and rarely pick it up. Yet, we have a treasure in our hands. The Word of God is perfect and pure. Though culture and society are trying to say otherwise, the Word of God is relevant to our lives; and it's good for our lives - if we will just listen to it. This means the Word of God is eternal. It will never pass away. The Word of God is clear and easy to understand. I know some may disagree at this point; but you will see how easy it is by the end of this study and through practice in the study of the Word. The Word of God is true and readily available in America. While it is readily available in America, there is a great need for translations in other languages. There are about 6,912 languages in the world with about 2,286 languages with no Bibles. That means there are over 2,000 people groups who are missing out on the Gospel of Christ. Over 2,000 people groups who are dying; and, when a person dies from each of these people groups, the outcome of their eternity is dyer.

We do have the Bible in America; and we are indebted to many people to be able to have this Bible today.

Around the fifth century, a man by the name of Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. Later, John Wycliffe took the Latin version and translated it into Middle English. Wycliffe suffered persecution and death do to his translation; as well as anyone who had possession of the translation. William Tyndale took the Hebrew and Greek text and wrote the first English translation. Because there were not good English words to convey the meaning of the original words, Tyndale is accredited with creating many English words used today. Tyndale completed the New Testament but was burned at the stake before completing the Old Testament. His assistant, John Rogers, completed the work and was killed also.

The Bible that we hold is a result of many men and woman who laid down their lives to get this Word to the people. Far be it from us to leave this Book on a shelf or table and not dive into it; and see what these men gave their lives for. We do have a treasure in our hands; and it's called the Bible. It's worth giving our lives to study.

One of the most common questions is the question of which translations should be used. In order to determine the translation, and for you to understand why a certain translation would be better than another, we must determine the process behind the translation. First, we have a Divine Author (YHWH).

This is why 66 books written over a period of 1,500 years by many different authors and still read like a full novel. Then we have the human authors of each book or letter. From there we have the original scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin or Greek. Then we have the organized text that were put together called the Masoretic text, which is the Hebrew text of the Bible; and the Septuagint, which is the Greek text of the Bible. There were many copies of these different text so men would gather the text and created a Critical text. What they would do is examine the copies and determine which were more valid to the context of the Bible and God as a whole. There are many different critical text but the most common are the Alexandrian Text, used for the Catholic Bible; the Received Text, used for the Geneva and King James Versions; and the Westcott and Hort Text, used for all Bibles after the year 1900. The translations of the Bible takes place with a translation team who determine the best words of the translated language to use for the critical text. The context of the contemporary reader final out the translation process (we will look at this more in future sections)

There are some people who believe that the King James is the only text someone should read. They think the other text is of satan. This is base upon the critical text to which the translations come from. What's the difference in the critical text?

No one knows when and where the Alexandrian text came from. They claim it's a 4th century text but I don't know how they could know that since the name of the text is derived from a note on the text written in the 13th century. The Alexandrian text is used by the Catholics who support Mary worship, purgatory, paying for salvation, and the likes.

The Received Text was written by Erasmus in the 16th century. During the fall of Constantinople, the university scholars fled to England with the ancient Biblical text. There, Erasmus saw such great error in the Latin Text that he decided to write an entire new text. He created a parallel text of the original text and his Latin text so that critics could compare.

This does not make the KJV or Geneva any more superior. The Bibles were written by ex-catholics and included a number of pagan god references. It was also miss-translated in several parts that would cause someone to error if they do not do a deep research of the text.

The Westcott and Hort text came from the Codex Vaticanus, found by the vatican in the vatican library, and the codex sinaiticus found by Constantine Tischendorf. There was a three year battle over the validity of the sinaiticus by a man named Constantine Simonaties.

Simonaties was the foremost expert in Greek paleography and claims to have written the text in the 19th century. There were writings included in the text that only Simonaties had; and his challenge was never met by Tischendorf.

One problem with the sinaiticus text is that it has around 15 thousand errors in text. Tischendorf, who is accredited for the text, said that it's useless; and because of the large number of errors, it's used by critics of the Bible as a type of proof of how the Bible is not real.

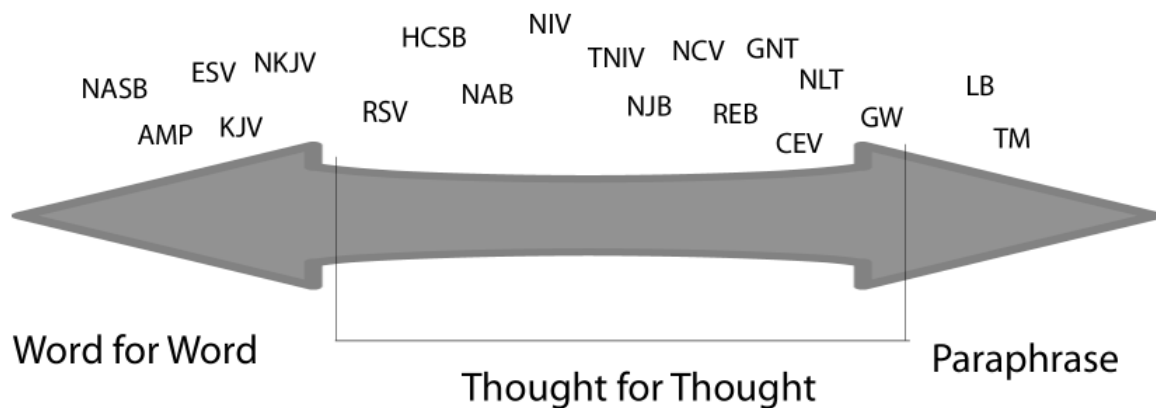
Westcott and Hort decided to make a new critical text from the vaticanus and sinaiticus. The problem is that a book released with copies of letters they wrote back and forth, and to other people assisting in the process, showed that they supported mary worship, pergatory, darwinism, and reject creationism and the deity of Christ.

There are errors all the way around. All versions of the Bible used today make use of the Latin Vulgate, which is the Catholic Bible, including the King James Version: the Geneva does not use the Vulgate. The more modern Bibles introduce large amounts of paganism and work towards a removal of the deity of Messiah Y'shua. The 1611 King James, while keeping the power and deity of the Messiah intact, also introduced paganism into Christianity. The 1611 introduced the term "easter" into text (a pagan holiday forbid by YHWH(See Easter))(Acts 12:4), and it co-mingled the god "zeus" with the prophet Elijah by naming him Elizeus (Luke 4:27 of the 1611 KJV). This is not surprising since the original Septuagint commingled the god "zeus" with the name of the Messiah "Yeshua" coming up with the name "leosus", pronounced "Yee-zeus". From this name came the original name we know today: "Jesus", which was originally pronounced the same as the Greek vernacular. Just because there are errors in the translations, that does not make the Bible any less "divine" and from God. I believe that God purposely

caused the errors. As with the reason Christ spoke parables was to confuse so that only those who sought after Him would see the truth, I believe God created the Bible in the same way.

When looking at Bibles, you will see the term “Authorized” used. While there is an “Authorized” version of the Bible, an authorized Bible means it was authorized by a government or religion. It means, they support the writings. The Vulgate, New American, and New Jerusalem Bibles are authorized by the vatican (roman catholic). The Authorized and American Standard versions are authorized by the Jehovah Witness’. The King James is authorized by England’s king, king James I; and is claimed to been authorized because of the Geneva Bible; which took authority from the king and gave it to Christ. The Geneva Bible is the only unauthorized Bible version that is accepted today.

With the Translations, you have a continuum.



- NASB - New American Standard
- AMP - Amplified
- ESV - English Standard Version
- KJV - King James Version
- NKJV - New King James Version
- RSV - Revised Standard Version
- HCSB - Holman Christian Standard
- NAB - New American Bible
- NIV - New International Version

- TNIV - Today's NIV
- NJB - New Jerusalem Bible
- NCV - New Century Version
- REB - Revised English Bible
- GNT - Good News Translation
- CEB - Contemporary English
- NLT - New Living Translation
- GW - God's Word
- LB - Living Bible
- TM - The Message

As seen in the scale above, there’s a word for word approach of translation and that flows through to a paraphrase approach. The word for word is a literal translation to which they take the word from the critical text and directly translate that word to the desired language. Examples of the word for word approach are the KJV, NKJV, Geneva, and New American Standard. On the other end of the scale is a paraphrase approach. These Bibles are not word for word and they don’t even employ the thought for thought. Example of these Bibles are the Message and Living Bible. In the middle of the scale is the thought for thought approach. This is where the translators take a sentence or paragraph and translate the thought of the text into the desired language. The thought for thought is on a continuum all it’s own. One one end of the scale you have a more of a word for word approach and as you work to the other end of the scale it goes into more of a paraphrase approach. I recommend choosing a Bible that is located more in the middle, like the NIV or NLT, and moving towards the word for word. You want to stay away from the paraphrased books.

We will be looking at word studies in this book. While I recommend the center of the thought for thought continuum for daily Bible reading, you want to have a word for word Bible for word studies; and as a parallel to the thought for thought Bible of your choice. I would also recommend a good Strongs Concordance.

WHY We Don't Study The Bible...

I have heard all kinds of excuses on why people don't study the Bible.

Even if we don't say it, we really don't see how the Bible applies to our lives. This belief is fast growing in today's culture. More and more people are starting to believe the Bible to be out of date. While reading through Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, I'm sure we've all felt this way on occasion. I'm sure we've asked, "What does this have to do with the twenty-first century?"

There are many, many people who have thought, "I need to learn the Word more." So, you sit down and try, and if you're like I was, you stared at the book lost. You tried and struggled. Things just didn't make sense and it looked like it was contradicting itself; and you get frustrated and just stop trying.

There are many people who believe it's the pastor's job; and they don't need to learn it. He's the one who understands this stuff. If I have a problem, I'll just go to him. That would be fine and dandy until your pastor with 300 emails hitting him each week. God designed this book so that every single person is able to unlock the beauty of God's Word.

In a relationship, God's word is like the picture album that the girlfriend or boyfriend's mom shows you. It's a picture of God, His character, and His past, that gives us a picture of God now. To not want to learn more about God, and receive all your knowledge of Him through a pastor, is like trying to have a relationship vicariously through someone else. It just doesn't work.

Probably one of the most valid excuses is, "I just don't have time". Sure, we have children, and work, and a bunch of other things. The question we must ask is, "Where does Bible study fit into our priority?". I mean, we say we don't have time because of all these things but we sit down for hours in front of TV, movies, Facebook, etc. This means, I don't believe the question is, "Do we have time for Bible study?". I believe the question is, "Is it our priority?"

Some think, "Is the Bible really true? I mean, Jonah and a big fish. That's kinda hard to believe." I believe the Bible is very true and completely reliable.

Ok, out of all honesty, "It's just seems boring to me." And this sets my goal. I want to uncover the rich treasure of God's Word in front of you so that you see that it is not boring. I want to show you a hunger that God has designed in us for His Word.

When I met my wife, I had a greater variety of foods I would eat than she did. After she would eat it a while, she acquired a taste for it. Not just a taste, but a craving. I believe the reason we find the Bible boring is because we have not acquired a taste for it. When we do, I'm sure we will not find it boring any longer.

WHY We Must Study the Bible...

So, why do we need to study the Bible? Maybe one of the reasons we don't study the Bible is because we have never been told what the Bible does; therefore, I want you to see some benefits. Not just benefits but essentials.

*"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."
(1 Peter 2:2)*

The Bible is essential for spiritual growth. We need this book, we want this book. We know we can't grow without this book. We need the Bible like babies need milk. A baby makes it very clear, at various points of the day, that milk is needed. We should be wanting it, craving it, like these babies. We can't grow without it. Children in third world countries suffer from brain damage because of the lack of nutrients that comes from the milk they are lacking at childhood. I'm fully convinced that most Christians are suffering from malnutritional spiritual brain damage.

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”
(Hebrews 5:11-14)

The Bible is essential for spiritual maturity. Even beyond milk, we need solid food. The solid food is what brings us into righteousness.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

We study the Bible because it’s essential for spiritual effectiveness in our lives. I love the phrase in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “All Scripture is useful”. Do you know what that means? That means that Leviticus, and Habakkuk, and Deuteronomy are all useful in our lives. Do you remember when Yeshua was fasting in the desert and He was tempted three times by the devil? Each time, what did Yeshua do? He quoted from Deuteronomy. What if, this week, your spiritual success was dependent upon your knowledge of Deuteronomy? It’s by God’s Word that we, not only get to know God, but we become useful in His hands. I’m sure that we all, in some point of our journey, have thought, “I want to be more effective for God. I would I could be more effective in my life for Jesus Christ”. The Word of God is key for that. It is essential for spiritual effectiveness.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock
(Matthew 7:13-24)

We need to study to avoid deception. This is one of two important components in our lives. It’s the light unto our path; the path that leads to Christ. It keeps us from being deceived by bad doctrine. We must first hear the words of Christ; and then we put them into practice. That’s why, if your goal is to merely learn how to study the Bible, you’ve set your sights way too low.

WHO Can Study the Bible?

I have good news, anyone can study the Bible. The only difference is, only those who have the Spirit of God will understand the Bible. Yes, an atheist can even learn truths from Scripture; but those without the Spirit will see all kinds of confusing things and contradictions throughout the Word. If God does not change, then why did He once kill or adultery but He doesn’t now? Unless you are on a walk with Christ, you will never understand this book. Not those who say a prayer and go to church; but rather, those who desire a life free from sin, who want to seek after Christ, those willing to take the time to study so they can look like Christ, those with a desire to be the image of God to a lost and dying world. Do you remember why Christ spoke in parables?

“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
(1 Corinthians 2:12-14)

We need the Spirit to understand the Word

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him
(1 John 2:27)

This point is key, the Spirit, just like we saw in 2 Timothy 3, breathed this Word and has given it to us; just as He gave it to them a couple thousand years ago. The Spirit inspired this Word. If we understand that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we then understand that we don't need to add any other books to this book. This is enough for us. The Spirit inspired this book and God is not in Heaven thinking, “I really wish I had added some things to this book to help the people out in the twenty-first century.” God has given us all we need to grow in Christ. To understand this is huge; because, there are questions that we have and they are not answered in this book. Sometimes we want them answered, but they are not. So, we have to trust that God has given us everything we need through His Spirit.

Not only did the Spirit inspire the Word, He also illuminates the Word. When you begin to study the Word, the Spirit of God is right there helping you to understand it; He's illuminating it, opening your eyes and your heart to see what's there. It's the Spirit of God that makes all the puzzle pieces fit nicely in their proper places. Therefore, the Spirit instructs us in the Word.

So HOW Do We Study The Bible?

So then, how do we study the Bible? Let's look at an overview; and then we will get into technique.

I believe the first thing I would want to say on this subject is to study the Bible prayerfully. When we sit down to study the Bible, never study the Bible alone. It's a divine integration with the Holy Spirit of God that is going on in the room in which your studying. As a result, study the Bible prayerfully.

Second, study the Bible humbly. We want to know God, that is one reason we come to this book. We want to submit our lives to His Word. When ever we come to the Word, we need to ask the question, “Do we really want to know God? Are we humbling ourselves before the Bible?”

Third, we study the Bible carefully. This is the crux of a lot of things we are going to look at in this study. Bible study is a journey into the book, and we have to be careful where we step. We don't want to misinterpret this book. We don't want to twist this book to make it say things that it was never intended to say. We have to study the bible carefully. When we look at passages that say we are not suppose to wear anything made of two types of fabric and we must ask, “What doe that really mean? Does that mean only 100% cotton for me from here on out?” When we look at Matthew 14 and see Peter walking on the water, we have to ask, “Do we really need to do some interesting, brave, things at the pool this summer?”. We have to ask this question over and over, “What does this mean”. That means that we have to study the Bible carefully in order to understand the text rightly.

Fourth, study the Bible joyfully. The study of the Bible involves the thrill discovery. It's always a thrill, and joyful, when gold is discovered in God's Word.

Fifth, study the Bible simply. The goal of this study is for you to learn how to walk away knowing how to study the Bible with just you, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. I'm not saying that there are not other good resources, like the Strongs concordance, history, etc, but there may be a time in which we may become very limited on the number of books we can have; and what kind of books we can have. You may find yourself as a missionary in a third world country to which you only have the Bible. That's why we are

going to look at this as if this is the only book you have. If you can read, you can study; and you can get gold.

Sixth, study the Bible consistently. The goal here is to equip you with the knowledge of how to study every text of every book. Let's get freed up from skipping over text that isn't making sense to us; just shrugging our shoulders and saying, "Let me go back to John 3:16; because I have my arms around that verse." The goal is to teach us to stop isolating texts for studying the Word and really understand how to get into every single text.

Seventh, study the Bible Diligently. Some may be thinking, "I'm a Christian, and I have the Spirit of God in me, so I don't have to do anything when it comes to interpreting the Bible; it should just happen." This kind of thought, and this kind of approach to Bible study is just flat out spiritually lazy. God has given us a brain to take His Word and dive into what it means. Proper interpretation does not just happen automatically, it doesn't happen over night. This takes time, it takes some work. The Bible does not yield it's fruit to the lazy; therefore, we study the Bible diligently.

We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.
— R.C. Sproul

Eight, we study the Bible intentionally. Make sure you always have a notebook and pen ready when studying the Bible. Take notes, make remarks, and be ready when God speaks so that you can write it down.

Nine, study the Bible personally. Listen, if we do not learn to study the Bible, we will end up trying to walk this Christian walk vicariously through different preachers and evangelist. Try to live a marriage like that, to where you get to know your spouse through someone else. When we have a relationship with God vicariously through someone else, we put our eternity in their hands - and that can be down right dangerous. Bible study is another form of personal time with God; and nothing can take that place. When we get into this book, we will fall in love with the author of this book.

DANGEROUS APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY...

Let's look at a few dangerous approaches to Bible study. These are common approaches that we need to try and avoid.

First, avoid the emotional approach. This is where we look at Scripture and ask, "What feels right to me?" If you want what feels right, your going to skip over all kinds of text in the Bible. Not all Bible text gives us that nice fuzzy feeling. When we start to read about the wrath of God, when we read about the prophets of old, we are not going to walk away feeling great. Lamentations can get you down right depressed.

Avoid the spiritual approach; which is when we look for that deep, hidden, meaning. This is when we say, "I see it says this, BUT, what does it really mean?". A portion of this is not bad, but there's a dangers of over analyzing things.

Avoid the pragmatic approach. This is when we ask, "What works best for me?" This is when we look for text, or translation of text, that best fits within our lives. This is a self-centered and arrogant way to study the bible. When we study this way, we miss the whole point of God's truth for our lives. This is the point in which we say, "This is my life and I'll live it how I want; so, I'll use the Bible to justify what I want". This error of Bible study is happening all over this country today.

Avoid the superficial approach. This is when we ask, "What does this mean to me?" Now, I'm sure we have all been to a Bible study and someone reads a passage then asks, "What does this verse mean to you?". We end up going around the room with each person saying what it means to them. Everyone walks out of the Bible study saying, "I learned so much" but the truth is, they didn't learn about the Bible, they learned about each other; because, they never asked, "What does the text mean?" This isn't saying that Scripture does not apply differently to different people, but we must first determine what the Scripture

means before we look at application. So, let's not ask, "What does this verse mean to me?"; let's ask, "What does this verse mean?"

A DEPENDABLE APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY...

The way we are going to approach Bible study is like we are going on a mission trip. We looking at it as if we are going to another country. Things look much different in other countries then they do in America. People communicate different, eat different, and all kinds of things. So, we are going to break this down into four simple steps; as if we are traveling to another country.

First, observe their home. This is a point of observation. It's where we ask, "What do I see?". When we travel to other countries, we take notice of different things. We notice how people interact with each other. Do they shake hands, do they hold hands, do they kiss? We notice how they eat. Do they eat with chop sticks, with their right hand, with utensils? Do they talk at distances or are they right up in your face? So, we are watching, and seeing.

The second step it to understand their home. This is a point of interpretation. We're asking, "What does it mean?" Once we see the differences, we don't just stop there, but we typically want to know why. We want to know what the things mean. What do they eat with their right hand? This could be very important in certain countries.

The third stop happens on the plane ride back home. This is when we ask, "How does this relate to my life?" We are mediating on wha we saw, and what it meant, and we are asking the question, "What did I learn THAT culture and how will affect the way I live in MY culture?"

The last step is applying it to our home. This is when we ask, "What do I do with what I learned?" This is where we look at how our lives will be different based on what we've seen and understood in that culture.

So, these are the four steps that we typically take when traveling to another country. Now, let's take a trip into the Word of God.

The first thing we are going to do is see what the Word says. This step involves exploration. This is a discovery time, we discover what the text says. AT this point, we are asking the question of content. It's like we are detectives; and the goal is to understand what the text is saying.

After we see what the text says, we are going to ask what it means. Again, this step involves interpretation. We move from a question of content to a question of context. This is where we ask, "What did this mean in THAT day? What did it mean to THEM, during THEIR time?"

Third, we are going to ask how the text relates. This step involves implications in our lives. This is a question of connection. We don't live in the culture of the Bible; therefore, the text must travel across time and we must ask, "How does it connect to my life in the 21st century?"

Then, after we completed those steps, we ask, "What do I do with this information?" This is the step that involves application. It's a question of conduct. This is often where we start in Bible study; but, when we start with application, we miss the point of the passage; and, we end up mis-using the Bible.

Understand this, I'm not operating under the delusion that if we all study Scripture this way that everyone will come to the same belief of what I believe. That is not the point. The point is not about my meaning or your meaning. The goal is to come to the meaning of the text as best as possible.

We all know, even though we walk through this text, there will still be some area's that we may not agree on. There may be some area's that are not completely clear. We need to be ok with that. But what we need to know is how do you decipher between good interpretation and bad interpretation? Sometimes there's good interpretation that leads some people to believe this and others to believe this on certain passages of Scripture. Obviously, one is right and one is wrong; or they are both wrong, but they are not both right. I know, when I look at my own life, that there are interpretation of Scripture that is not completely right. There's probably area's of my theology that is not completely right. The problem is...

I don't know which ones they are. And so, until I know what they are I take good interpretation and walk through it as best as I can and make sure that I'm being responsible with the text of Scripture.

Again, this does not mean that if we all do this, we are all going to agree on everything. What I do believe, is it will help us agree on things that are most essential to Scripture. Then we will have good solid interpretation that may lead us in a little differences here or there; but it's not going to divide us in the Body of Christ. It's based on GOOD interpretation.

OBSERVE THEIR HOME: What Do I See?

I'm sure there are times, that we try to study the Bible, and we wonder why we can't seem to get out of it what other people get out of it. We wonder why we can't seem to see the same things. Some may even wonder if they need a seminary degree to understand the Bible. I assure you that you don't. I believe the reason that some people get more out of the Bible than others is twofold. First we never really have learned how to read the Word of God. Second we don't really know what to look for while we are reading the Word of God.

So, I want to start with two revolutionary disciplines for reading the Bible. First, we need to learn to listen. Not just hear what is being said, but listen - there is a difference. Second, we need to learn to look. I believe, if we can get our minds wrapped around, and understand, those two disciplines, it will radically change the way we read and understand the Bible.

Learn to Listen...

I am not a big fan of the "read the Bible in a year" programs. I believe the main requirement for studying the Bible is to sit down with an intent to listen to what it says. I know this sounds really simple, but all over our culture we want a fast food approach to practically everything; and that makes this difficult. It's difficult because we want to be able to run through this book and get the most out of it in the smallest amount of time. If we are approaching Bible study like this we will miss what this book has for us.

We have got to learn to really sit down and know what the Bible is saying. So, how do we lessen?

First, we **LISTEN THOUGHTFULLY**. Bible study is not a mindless activity. We may start to read a text and think, "I know what this means, Let me move onto a different one." What ends up happening is we don't really think through what the Bible is saying. Maybe for the first time, in a long time, look at, "what does this verse really mean?" Even if it's a simple verse, like John 3:16.

When we really begin to listen thoughtfully, I can almost guarantee that we will uncover the Biblical gold mine that is in every single verse, passage, discourse, segment of Scripture.

Second, we need to **LISTEN THOROUGHLY**. If we really want to understand the Bible, we have got to bombard it with questions. The Bible is not embarrassed to be asked questions, so we have to pour questions all over everything we are looking at in the Word. I want to show you some main questions that we ask. We will ask these questions to every single text; but, not every text will answer every question. Yet, we still ask the questions.

Who? We asked who wrote the book? Who were the original readers? Who are the main characters?

What? We ask what is happening in the text? What is wrong with this picture? What is the author saying?

Where? We ask where is the writer? Where are the original readers? Where is the text taking place?

When? We ask when was this book written? When do the events take place?

Why? Why does the author writing this? Why did the events happen the way they did? Why did the author say what he said? Why is this even included in scripture? Have you read a portion of scripture and wondered why it was even included in the Bible? That is an important question to ask. Don't be afraid to ask that question, "God, why in the world did You think this was that important?"

If we asked those questions we will move ourselves to the verge of a breakthrough in understanding the Bible. This is a whole lot better than just reading through the book and walking away saying, "the Bible is irrelevant." We listen thoroughly, and we bombard the passage with question after question: who, what, where, when, and why.

LISTEN REPEATEDLY. Read the text over and over and over and over; read it until you get the point. Read entire books in one sitting. You wouldn't open up a novel and start in the fifth chapter, but that is often how we go to the Bible. We go to the middle of a book and end up missing the whole point of what's going on up to the section of the text we are reading.

LISTEN PATIENTLY. Trust me, this is going to take time. Be patient with the text. Don't jump to application from the very beginning. We have got to do this observation step to see what is being said for us to apply. Be patient with yourself. This is a wonderful journey through the text. Just relax and enjoy the ride through the Bible. Don't rush through it, read it patiently.

LISTEN IMAGINATIVELY. Don't study the text like an academic lesson. Make discoveries, and take time to see the sights, smell the smells, and experience the emotions. Take a journey through the text. Put yourself IN that text. Put yourself in the shoes of the characters, of the readers, and of the listeners.

LISTEN MEDITATIVELY. Take time to reflect on what is happening in the text. Take time to meditate on the text.

“Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation.”
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”
(Joshua 1:8)

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”
(Psalm 1:1-2)

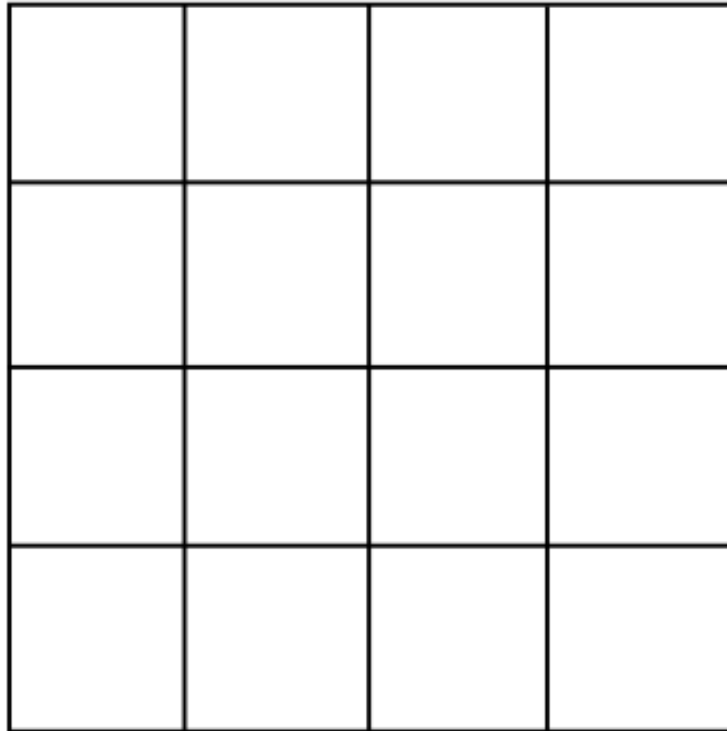
“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” (Psalm 119:97)

LISTEN PURPOSEFULLY. There is a reason that we are reading the Bible. We are not just Reading to check off a box on a check off list. We are reading this Bible because we want it to transform our lives. We are reading it because we want to grow in the image of Christ. It's not just a book of details and information, there is purpose to us reading this book.

Learn to listen in all these kinds of ways. We're asking questions, we're putting our minds into this thing.

We learn to listen and we also learn to look. The art of Bible study is seeing!!! I believe the difference and what makes one person a student of the word more than another is that the person knows what to look for. The Most critical part of being able to study the Bible is being able to see the details.

How many squares do you see?



If you did not find a 30 squares in this puzzle this is what I'm talking about. Some reading this may have only found 16, and you were looking merely on the surface. Some a few more were found, but we need to look deeper. We do the same thing with the Word, "oh yeah, I know what this means." No, we need to look deep into the Word and see what it says.

We are going to look at six clues to what to look for in Scripture. When you see these things, I'm just about guaranteeing, you are going to uncover gold every time in Scripture.

First, look for what the word **EMPHASIZES** there are all kinds of ways that the text emphasizes something. One way it emphasizes is through **VERBS**. Verbs is the way that an action takes place.

One way we look at verbs is asking the question, "is the verb past present for future?"

"In him we were also chosen (PAST), having been predestined (PAST) according to the plan of him who works out everything (PRESENT) in conformity with the purpose of his will," (Ephesians 1:11)

Right there, in that one verse, we see how God, in the past, has chosen us for a work in His will; and He is presently working in our lives today to accomplish that well. Just by asking what the tense of the verb is, we open up this verse into a three dimensional view.

Is the verb **IMPERATIVE**? For a verb to be imperative it has to be the vital importance to the subject of the text. Can you pick out the imperative verb in the following text?

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19)

There is one imperative in this verse and many people believe it is the verb "go". Yet, what happens after we go? The only imperative in this verse is "make disciples of all nations." Understanding the imperative transforms the way we understand Matthew 28:19. That is the only imperative that Christ gives in the great commission, but it's the one that we tend to ignore the most.

Is the verb **ACTIVE** or **PASSIVE**? An active verb is something the subject is doing. A passive verb is something the subject is having done to them. Take a look at the verbs in the following text and see them in a sense of active and passive.

*“The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation (PASSIVE) and I will bless you (PASSIVE); I will make your name great (PASSIVE), and you will be a blessing (ACTIVE). I will bless those who bless you (PASSIVE), and whoever curses you I will curse (PASSIVE); and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (ACTIVE)”
(Genesis 12:1-3)*

By taking a look at the verbs in this text, we see God saying "I will pour out all these blessings on you, and the result is, all the peoples of the earth will be blessed by you." God has poured out His blessings upon us, so that, other people will be affected by us. That is why if we sit back and just soak up the blessings of God, and we don't take the blessings given us to the nations, we miss out on the very point that God intended for the blessings of His people to affect those around us.

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled (PASSIVE) with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)

“ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ (PASSIVE), set your hearts on things above (ACTIVE), where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” (Colossians 3:1)

In looking at what the word emphasizes, we are not going to just look at verbs, we are going to look at **SPACE**. Space is what the author is devoting, or concentrating, his attention to. What theme, character, event, etc. is the author spending a lot of time on? For example, you have 50 chapters in the book of Genesis; the author spends 11 chapters on creation of the world, the fall of man, the flood, and the scattering of the nations. That is not a whole lot of time to spend on and all that. But, from Genesis chapter 12 all the way through chapter 50 he devotes his time to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. He spends very little time on the 2000 years of information in the beginning of the world and almost 40 chapters on only four generations of a family. In the very way that Genesis is written, we understand that what's more important to God is the way that He was establishing a people to bring a reversal to sin and a re-conciliation between us and Him.

In the book of Matthew there are 1062 verses, and at least 342 of them (one third of the book) gives us teachings from Jesus. Obviously, that tells us something about the purpose of this book.

In the book of Ephesians, chapters 1 through 3 give an explanation of salvation, but chapters 4 through 6 focus on the application of salvation. Ephesians is a great picture of how Jesus saves us and then how that affects our lives.

Next we look at the way the word emphasizes through a **PURPOSE STATEMENT**. Does the author describe why he is saying something or why something happens? Keywords to look for in purpose statements are: that, in order that, so that, to, for.

Look at the following text. We know God gave His people His commands but why did He do it?

*“See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, SO THAT (HERE'S THE PURPOSE) you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, FOR (THIS IS THE REASON) this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”
(Deuteronomy 4:5-6)*

Why did God give His people the law? So that the nations will know the wisdom of God. That is why we study this book, and follow this book, so that the nations will know that God is good. That is the ultimate purpose here.

Look for the purpose statement in the following text's.

"I have hidden your word in my heart THAT I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)

"For God so loved the world THAT he gave his one and only Son, THAT whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you SO THAT you might go and bear fruit —fruit that will last
(John 15:16)*

The purpose is huge.

When you look at John 20:30, we see the purpose statement of this entire book. Why did John write his book?

*"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written THAT you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and THAT by believing you may have life in his name. "
(John 20:30-31)*

*He comforts us in all our troubles SO THAT we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.
(2 Corinthians 1:4)*

So, why does He comfort us? SO THAT we can comfort others. What a great pass through of God's love from Him to us to others. It should be such a blessing for us to share in the work of His love.

Look for what the word emphasizes through **ORDER**. Is the author giving strategic importance to something by putting it in a specific order?

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self- control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth
(2 Timothy 3:1-7 NKJV)*

Paul gives a list of issues in the condition of the church in these last days. He starts the list with "lovers of themselves". Why? All the following list falls upon the foundation of loving one's self more than others, and more than God. And, Paul finalizes the conditions with just that, "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God". The love of God, I mean true love, transcends in our love for others. If we love others, we don't love our money more and will use the blessings God has given to bless others; we don't boast about that which we done but brag about what God has done in us, and so forth.

The word emphasizes through an **EXAGGERATION**. Does the author exaggerate something for intentional effects or emphasis? Look for an exaggeration in the following text.

*"My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times."
(Psalm 119:20)*

*"I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you."
(2 Corinthians 11:8)*

I hope that's an exaggeration or that just blows the image of the Apostle Paul

CHIASM gives us a clue to what the author is emphasizing. If you've had any difficulties up to this point you are really going to have to hang with me on this. Does the author highlight a main idea through parallel structure in the text? Chiasm's are literary structures that were prevalent during the times of the penning of the Bible. It was a way for someone to say something, or write something, that would allow the listener to be able to memorize it better. There are passages that are chiasm's, chapters, full books, and even the entire Bible. You will see that Christ even spoke in chiasm's. Below are a few examples of chiasm's. Notice the paralleling structure.

Psalm 76:1

In Judah

God is known.

His name is great

In Israel

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters.

Either you will hate the one

and love the other, or

you will be devoted to the one

and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money.

Genesis 3

Introduction of Sin (3:1-7).

Confrontation of Man (3:8-12).

Confrontation of Woman (3:13).

Confrontation and Promise to Serpent (3:14-15).

Promise to Woman (3:16).

Promise to Man (3:17-19).

Consequence of Sin (3:20-24).

Authors would also write in chiasm's in order to point out a main emphasis, or two direct to our main point in the theme; which is in the middle of the chiasm.

Genesis 11

The whole world (1)

Had one language (1)

Shinar, and settled there (2)

Come, let's make bricks (3)

Come, let us build (4)

A city with a tower (4)

But the Lord came down (5)

To see the city and the tower (5)

That the men were building (5)

Come, let us go down and confuse their language (7)

Babel – because there (9)

The Lord confused the language (9)

The whole earth (9)

1 and 2 Kings

Two Chapters: Introduction and Rise (1 Kings 1-2).

Nine Chapters: Single Kingdom – Solomon (1 Kings 3-11).

Twenty-Nine Chapters: The Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17)

Six Chapters: Single Kingdom – Josiah (2 Kings 18-23).

Two Chapters: Conclusion and Fall (2 Kings 24-25).

We looked for what the word emphasizes and now we're going to look for what the word **REPEATS**. Does the author and intentionally repeat anything in the text? Whenever you're studying the Bible and you notice something is repeated over and over again it does not mean that the author forgot that they already said it - he's doing this for reason. The author is trying to point something out that is really, really, important.

So, what kind of things are repeated? Sometimes terms are repeated, phrases, and clauses. If you read Psalms 136 you will see "his love endures forever" repeated over and over. If you look at the sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5 through chapter 6, you'll see that Jesus refers to God as the Father many different times.

Look at second Corinthians 1: 3-7 and see you if this text is repeating anything.

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort."
(2 Corinthians 1:3-7)*

What you see in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 is this picture of suffering and comfort and how they go together. Those two words don't go together do they? In Christ they do. Comfort and Suffering repeated over and over again - setting the stage for the book of 2 Corinthians.

*"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."
(1 John 2:15-17)*

You see "the world" over and over again. Not just here but in much of 1 John; and you see love. When you see these clues circle them to draw attention to the fact that the words are being repeated for a reason.

Look for **CHARACTERS** that the author is repeating. When you're reading acts take note every time that you see Barnabas mentioned. Every time you see him coming on the scene he brings encouragement (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22; 15:36-39)

You will see certain patterns of repetition. In Exodus you see over and over again the phrase "Pharaoh hard in his heart", and "God hardened Pharaohs heart" (Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13, 14, 22; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 13:5; 14:4, 8, 17).

When you look at the writings of Luke, many different times he mentioned someone being filled with the Spirit of God; and every time someone was filled with the Spirit we see "and they began to speak". We see that this is not an utterance of tongues but rather prophesying; which is teaching Biblical truths. The Spirit is in you to speak the word of Christ and we see that by what the word repeats.

You'll see the New Testament passages use Old Testament passages. When you go to Matthew 5:21-47, you will see several times the phrase "you have heard that it was said..." Jesus is trying to show something by repeating Old Testament teachings. So look for what the word repeats in passages and even across books.

Remember, we're learning to look; look for what the word emphasizes, look for what the word repeats, and third look for what the word **CONNECTS**. There're certain relationships that are established between items, ideas, or individuals that are connected together.

There's all kinds of ways that an author will connect things. One way which an author will connect things is by **CONJUNCTIONS**. Conjunctions are words like and, for, but, therefore, since, because. If you can imagine text being like a brick house and the mortar that holds those bricks together are the conjunctions. Conjunctions hold together, they tie together, different thoughts.

If you look at Romans 12:1 you will see that first word is "therefore". That is a major connector. Paul has just spent 11 chapters talking about the beauty of the gospel and he gets to this point and says, "therefore, in light of the great love of Jesus Christ, I urge you brothers to offer yourselves to God as a living sacrifice."

We have the same thing in Hebrews 21:1 when he says, "therefore" at the beginning of the verse, continuing "since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses." It's a reference to the entire chapter of Hebrews 11 where he has given a list of many people who did things based upon faith; And he says, "therefore, in light of them, and their actions of faith, I urge you to press on towards Christ."

Take a look at the following text and on line or circle the different connectors.

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,"
(2 Timothy 1:7-8)

There are about six or seven conjunctions that are connecting things in that passage. By looking at the conjunctions we see that God did not give us a spirit of timidity **BUT** a spirit of power. So we have a spirit, but it is not a spirit of fear, It's a powerful spirit. So in light of that don't be ashamed. Paul was in prison when he is writing this and he is saying, "in light of all this don't be ashamed, Instead, Join with me in the suffering for the gospel". Look at different connectors and see how they relate to each other.

There are connections through **PREPOSITIONS**. Prepositions are words like: by, with, from, in, on, upon, through, to.

Look at the prepositions in the text below.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

This is one of my favorites: "I have been crucified **WITH** Christ. Do you realize what that means? Your crucified **WITH** Christ - Identified **WITH** Christ in His death. His death for sins in our lives; our death for sins - it's been paid for. "I no longer live but Christ lives **IN** me" - isn't that a great picture? Christ is **IN** you. "The life I live **IN** the body" The life I have in **THIS** body "I live **BY** faith **IN** the Son of God" it's faith **IN** Him that makes this thing possible. "who loved me and gave Himself **FOR** me" Praise be to God, He gave Himself **FOR** us, on our behalf.

Now, you just go through there and you got a good quiet time in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20 just by looking at prepositions.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."
(Romans 5:1-2)

You will see connections made between **GENERAL** things and **SPECIFIC** things. You'll look for times when the author introduces a general idea and then provides an explanation through specific supporting ideas. For example, look at Galatians 5:16-23 and you'll see Paul giving a very general idea in being led by the flesh versus led by the Spirit. Then he gets more specific of what each one of these general ideas are, by listing numerous examples.

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:16-23)

How do you know if your living by the sinful flesh or by the Spirit of God, you look at these specifics - are they evident in your life?

Look for connections between **QUESTIONS** and **ANSWERS**. Take notice of questions, those answered and also rhetorical. When you look at a key turning point in the book of Job, chapter 38, we see God coming to Job and asking:

“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.” (Job 38:2-3)

Things are real quiet at this point, in the book of Job, as we here question after question after question: Where were you when I did this and where were you when I did that? It’s a powerful picture of questions and not a lot of answers being heard from Job.

*“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty. “It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name. But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’”
(Malachi 1:6)*

Questions give us a powerful picture of a point to which God, or the author, is trying to bring across to us.

Paul writes to the Romans:

“ What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?” (Romans 3:1)

Then Paul answers it. Then you get to chapter 4:

*“ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?”
(Romans 4:1)*

And he answers it. Then in Romans chapter 6:

“ What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” (Romans 6:1)

And he answers it. Then Romans 7:

*“ Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?”
(Romans 7:1)*

You see this dialog going on and Paul’s asking questions and he’s giving the answers. So, we don’t just read portions of text but we read all, so we can see what the point was in the author making the statement.

Look for **CAUSE and EFFECT**. Cause and effect is when a particular cause is stated by the author which result in a particular effect or multiple effects.

*“A gentle answer (is the cause) turns away wrath (is the effect), but a harsh word (is the cause) stirs up anger. (is the effect)”
(Proverbs 15:1)*

“For the wages of sin (is the cause) is death (is the effect), but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. “ (Romans 6:23)

Cause and effect can also span across entire chapters or books. 2 Samuel shows us the effect of sin on David's life. Acts shows us an effect of persecution to church.

*“And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”
(Acts 8:1)*

They were told to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth but it was stuck in Jerusalem in Acts chapters 1-7. What CAUSES it to go to the ends of the earth? Persecution. It's a picture we see of Satan's strategy to try and hinder the spread of the Gospel and instead it serves to advance the Gospel.

Look for **MEANS**. When something happens in the text, look for the means that brought about that particular action or result. Ask questions like “How did it happen?” or “What was the way in which it happened?” Look for words like “by” or “through”.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” (Psalm 119:9)

How do you remain pure? BY living according to God's Word. If you want to experience purity in your life, it's by knowledge of the Word of God. That's the reason we're here isn't it?

*“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”
(Romans 8:13-14)*

The way to live is BY doing away with the sinful deeds though the Spirit: that is the means by which we have life.

We have means and we also have **CONDITIONS**. Look for specific clauses that demonstrate certain conditions which bring about a desired response. When doing this, look for the condition by the word “IF” and then look for the **CONSEQUENCE**. The consequence can be established by the word “THEN” but many times “then” is implied. See if you can spot the conditions in the following passages.

“ If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.” (Deuteronomy 28:1)

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

That's the consequence, IF we are in Christ, THEN (implied consequence) we are a new creation: we are a new person living a new life.

*“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.”
(1 John 1:6)*

Look for **LISTS**. Look for any instances of two or more itemized things and observe. When we see a list, we want to ask “How are these listed?” and “Why are they ordered in this way?”

“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

Those three things are a list, they go together. So when your studying text you want to ask how they are listed and why they go together.

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover
(Mark 16:15-18)*

This is a list stated by Christ. In error, we tend to take a few of the items literally and a few figuratively. While there are churches who handle snakes, Christ was not stating that we need to bring some rattlers to our next gathering. There is meaning in the list that is established by the subject of the conversation. The subject is "preaching the Gospel". Therefore, we see Christ giving a list of how this will not be stopped. It will not be stopped by a division of languages, by the gates of hells, by evils of the world, by attempts to kill it off, or by natural evils of this world. This Gospel will go to the nations. We then see an example of each, except the poison.

Look for **PRONOUNS**. Remember, we are looking at how things connect. Pronouns help us see connections in the text. Remember that a pronoun is instead of saying "Wayne" I say "I" and instead of saying your name I say "you", "he", "she", etc. I want you to look at my favorite portion of passage in Scripture when it comes to pronouns. Look at Ephesians 1:3-14:

*"Praise be to the God and Father of **our** Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **us** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he (He is a pronoun but we're just going to assume, that's God) chose **us** in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined **us** to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given **us** in the One he loves. In him **we** have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on **us** with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to **us** the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him **we** were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that **we**, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And (Uh Oh, do you see anything different there? Everything is we / us and then he says and) **you** also were included in Christ when **you** heard the word of truth, the gospel of **your** salvation. Having believed, **you** were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing (There he goes back) **our** inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."
(Ephesians 1:3-14)*

Paul was writing a letter to a church that was experiencing a lot of division between the Jew's and gentiles. Because the gentiles were not part of the original plan of God, they were tempted to look at themselves like they were a type of second class Christians. Paul, a Jew, starts off the letter saying, "In Him WE have these things and this is done for US" - and YOU also (speaking to the gentiles) - YOU also were included with Christ, YOU heard the word of truth, YOU have salvation, YOU were marked with a seal. Then he returns to the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing OUR inheritance. Isn't that a great picture? There are no second class Christians in the Kingdom of God. It's us together - Our inheritance. This picture of a community in Christ comes together in Ephesians through the pronouns.

Remember, we are looking for clues in the text. Notice when there are **MAJOR SHIFTS** in the text. As you read larger units of text, look for critical places where the text seems to take a new turn. This could be on a small scale, verse by verse, or this could be on a large scale.

If you look at 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12, there is a major shift that is happening at this point. If you were to read 2 Samuel 1-10, you read about how everything is good for David and everything is good in the kingdom of Israel. But, what happens in chapter 11-12? Bathsheba - adultery, murder, betrayal.

Then you read 2 Samuel 13-22 and it's a whole other picture of David. You can't walk away from 2 Samuel and say this sin did not affect David's life - it affected his life radically.

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'"
(Acts 8:26)

When you look at Acts 8:26, you find Philip being told to go down to Gaza. Now this is a major shift in text because they've gone to Judea and Samaria, and people are coming to faith in Christ all over the place. Then God comes to Philip and says, "Now you go south to the desert road". It's a picture like a Billy Graham crusade where multitudes are coming to Christ then God says to Billy Graham, now I want you to go to the middle of the Sahara. Philips like, "This is where the action is". It's a major shift and what it shows is that yes, God is concerned about the multitudes, but God is also concerned about the Eunuch that needs to hear the Gospel.

See if you can pick out the major shift in this short text.

"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify." (Romans 3:20-21)

Ok, continuing in the sex things to look for: Look for what the word emphasizes, look for what the word repeats, look for what the word connects, and fourth, look for what the word **COMPARES**.

Does the author compare certain items, ideas, or individuals to others? There are different ways that the author can compare things. One such way is through a **SIMILE**. Similies are expressed comparisons of two things that are different. For example: While in high school, I remember a fellow student writing a simile between a woman and a radio. I don't remember everything but the comparison that seemed to had stuck more was that "once you turn them on, they keep on talking; whether your listening or not." Don't hate me, this is not my words - just an example of a modern simile I remember.

There are two common words used in similies. Look for "as" and "like". Let's look at a few similies in text.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." (Psalm 42:1)

It's a comparison of our soul which should desire God just as the deer desires water.

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,"
(John 3:14)

A simile in the prophecy of Christ.

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"
(1 Peter 2:2)

In comparisons, also look for **METAPHORS**. Metaphors are also comparisons between two different things but the comparison is implied rather than direct; therefore, we don't see words like "as" or "like".

"When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." (James 3:3-6)

Metaphors give us these powerful pictures that help us understand the power of our words.

ALLEGORY is another means to compare. This is when an author uses a certain image or comparison to communicate a deeper meaning. Galatians chapter 4 is a perfect example of an allegory.

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: “Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Then he goes on to say... Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.” (Galatians 4:21-31)

Paul uses a comparison between a slave woman and the free woman. This is an allegory that basically gives us a picture and explains the covenant we are under.

Ok, almost finished. Looking at number five of the six things we look for in Scripture. Let’s recap again: Look for what the word emphasizes, look for what the word repeats, look for what the word connects, look for what the word compares; and number five, look for what the Word **CONTRASTS**.

Authors use comparisons but they also use contrasts. Does the author contrast certain items, ideas, or individuals with one another? With contrast, there is always one main word... “but”. “But” is one of the most important words you will find in Scripture; therefore, we all know that “buts” are very important. Look at the following contrasts.

“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.” (Proverbs 14:31)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

We are looking at the six things to look for in text while studying Scripture. So far we have covered five points: Look for what the word emphasizes, look for what the word repeats, look for what the word connects, look for what the word compares, look for what the Word contrasts; and the final thing we look for is how the Word **COMMUNICATES**.

Does the author use certain words, images, phrases, or other literary tools to communicate certain emotions, moods, or tones in the text? This is that part of reading the Bible imaginatively. We naturally do this with novels. You know, women crying over the lost love in a novel and men and women cheering on the good guy who is getting vengeance. We get into the emotions of a novel but we tend to skip this point in the Bible. We tend to come to Scripture as this reverent act. We are going to miss out on so much gold if we don’t look at the way the text is communicated.

Look for **EMOTIONS** in the text by paying attention to words that convey a particular feeling. We’ve been looking at all these different academic things to look for; but we’ve got to be careful not to study the Bible like an academic lesson we must learn. That leads to boring Bible Study - let it come alive. Listen to this text in Jeremiah 3:

“I myself said, ‘How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.’ I thought you would call me ‘Father’ and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.”
(Jeremiah 3:19-20)

Can you read that and not get affected emotionally? You get in the heart of God through this picture that uses adultery that describes unfaithfulness among His people. Think about how you would feel if you had a spouse cheating on you and apply that feeling here; then we can know how God feels when we choose the things of this world over Him.

“I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?”
(Galatians 4:12-16)

At this point, there was conflict between Paul and the churches of Galatia. Paul is talking about this love, and this tension, that is there; and that is so real in his words conveyed here.

When you read Genesis 22, don't just read about Abraham going up a mountain to sacrifice Isaac. Imagine the emotions of a father who is being obedient to God in that he's about to take the life of his only son. Think about Isaac who is looking up at his dad, who is about to slay him, and think of the emotion he must be feeling at that moment - the confusion he must be experiencing.

Imagine Moses standing on Mt Nebo and not being able to go into the land that the children of Israel are about to go to. Imagine the hurt involved in that.

Image the emotions and pain. Don't just read 2 Samuel 13-22, and think about the effects of sin but feel the pain and the weight of sin.

Look for **MOOD** in the text. Is there evidence of the author's demeanor as he writes?

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

Ok, we've heard that before and we sing songs about that; but where did Paul write that? He was in prison and he's writing rejoice in the Lord always. The text looks a lot different when you feel the weight of Paul behind bars.

Look for the **TONE** of the text. Does the subject or author have a tone that is angry, pleasing, or scolding?

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” 17 Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” 20 So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
(Matthew 17:14-21 NKJV)

After all the time that Christ is spending with His disciples, a man comes to Yeshua after His disciples could not cast out a demon and we see a tone of scolding in Christ (vs 17). Why is this important? Many believe that the “this kind” talked about in verse 21 is talking about the “kind” of demon. Our God is a just God, Christ is a just judge. If Christ would have scolded the disciples for not being able to cast out a demon, yet the demon can only be removed by fasting and prayer, then He would not have been just. We then focus the “this kind” to the subject of the conversation - faith. It's this kind of faith, faith as a mustard seed, faith that can move mountains, that comes out of us through prayer and fasting. So, looking at tone,

along with context, which we will discuss in a moment, allows us from being deceived in some popular teachings.

Look at the tone in the following passages:

“I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead.”
(Lamentations 3:1-6)

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”
(Matthew 23:33-35)

Yeshua is probably not saying this with a smile on His face.

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?”
(Galatians 3:1-4)

Paul is speaking very sternly to the the Galatians. He has a scolding tone. Feel the weight of the passage.

So, this is step one - observe - investigate - play Sherlock Holmes. You can do this with individual verses and you could spend an hour in one verse - if your really looking at it. You can do it with paragraphs. You can do it with entire discourses or segments of Scripture. It's important for us to see what is being said.

Remember to be patient. This first section, this first step, can seem overwhelming. You're thinking, “How am I going to see all this stuff?”. Your not. And, especially at first, this is going to take time. As anyone who has trained to achieve anything knows, with practice this thing will become easier and faster. You'll be reading text and these things will just start jumping out as your read. Not all of the clues. You will still have to take time and look; but many will just start jumping out. If we learn to listen, and learn to look, we will discover things that we never saw before. We can not jump past this step.

Observation in action...

Take Acts 1:8 and practice what we've learned here. See the clues, look for evidence. Use the blank on this page to write down what you see.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

UNDERSTAND THEIR HOME: What Does It Mean?

Remember that we are treating the study of Scripture in the same manner that we are treating a mission trip to another country. Bible study is much like that. It's a look at a different culture and a different time. As things are different in other countries, compared to ours, things are different during the penning of Scripture also. We've observed their home. We listened and looked for clues around their home and now we are going to ask, what does it mean?

At this point in study, we are moving from exploration to **INTERPRETATION**. This is a move from what the text says to what the text means. The move to interpretation is key because you can take a Scripture, find passages, and you can make them justify anything you want to justify.

I am an expository preacher and I'm teaching you the expository way of Bible study. The expository method is going to the text with the explicit intent to see what the text is actually saying. If we are going to magnify God, we need to magnify His voice. If we are going to maximize what God IS saying, we must minimize what God is NOT saying.

The trend in preaching today is a reverse. We minimize what God is saying and maximize what man is saying; and what God is saying falls into the shadows. For example, you can go to the Christian book store and find, at least, a few books on leadership through the book of Nehemiah. There are a few problems in this. First, Nehemiah is a book about what God is doing in the people of Israel. It's how God takes His people who are burdened, and going through difficult times, and how God takes them and builds them up.

There are the books and there are all kinds of sermons on how Nehemiah is God's textbook on leadership. So, what we've done is taken the book of Nehemiah and said, "If you want to be successful, do these things. Nehemiah did these things and if you follow him you will be successful also." We've taken a very God centered book and made it man centered; and bypassed the whole point of the book.

When we do that and say that Nehemiah is a good platform for leadership, we encounter a few problems in Nehemiah.

In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

*25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves
(Nehemiah 13:23-25)*

That doesn't sell a lot of leadership books. When the leaders mess up, get right up in their face and yell at them. If that doesn't work, take their hair and rip it right out of their head.

You might say, "Obviously, we are not going to use that as a leadership principle". Be careful, it's at this point that we pick and choose what to follow; we decide what leadership principle we aren't going to use and which leadership principles we are going to use; and your maximizing what you wanna say and minimizing what God wants to say.

The reason we have occults is because people have taken Scripture; they have taken this verse and that verse to deny the deity of Christ. And because of that we have Jehovah Witnesses. Mormons have places in Scripture that they can go and look and find support for baptizing for the dead. You got a prosperity message that takes this verse and that verse; and twist's them to part people from their money for the sole purpose of trying to become rich. You got churches who handle snakes, in rural area's of the states, and they justify their worship by the Word. I think it's important for us to know if the Word is actually telling us to do that or not.

So, how do you make sure that you understand what the Word means? From what the Word says to what the Word means. From a question of content to a question of **CONTEXT**.

In the real estate world, the motto for the best place to buy is “location, location, location”. In the Bible world, the motto should be “context, context, context”.

What is context? Context is that which goes with the text. Do you understand what context is now? The definition is not too clear but you will have a great understanding by the end of this chapter.

There is a dilemma created by context. The Bible communicates eternal content. What that means is, what is within the pages of this book has eternal affect. The Bible is relevant to our country, our time, our culture. Yet, the Bible also communicates through a specific context that is not the same as the context of our country, time, and culture. There is a 1st century context that the New Testament communicates and that is different from the context of the Old Testament; and it's different from the context of today. So, the question becomes, “How can we take from the ‘there and then’ and bring it to the ‘here and now’?” In order to make that jump, we need to have a grasp on context and its importance.

We need to work to step into the author's shoes and determine his **ORIGINAL INTENT** of the writing. That's key. We want to go to the Word and discover what did this Word **ORIGINALLY** mean. Because a biblical text can **NEVER** mean what it never meant. Follow with me here. It can't mean today, what it didn't mean then. Biblical text can never mean what it never meant. We need to step into the authors shoes and recreate his ideas and his experience; put ourselves in his shoes and try to think through how this was being communicated, how it was being read, what does this mean. That's what we're looking at when it comes to interpretation.

The reason this is so important is because context **SHAPES** meaning. This involves everything that surrounds the text. The surrounding text itself, the culture of the text, the historical background, the original meaning behind the word; context shapes meaning. Let me give you a couple examples.

Imagine a stop sign. It depends on where you see a stop sign that will affect what you do. Your driving down the road and you come up to a stop sign. What do you do? You stop, look both ways, and continue on. Let's say your walking through an antique store and you walk up to a stop sign. What do you do? Do you stop, look both ways, and continue on? No. Your walking down the sidewalk looking at a magazine and you turn the page to the word “stop”. Are you going to stop and look both ways? Your saying things to your spouse that are bothering them, annoying them even, and they say “stop”. Your probably not going to look both ways. Let say your saying all kinds of lovely things to your spouse, beautiful things, and they say “stop”. What are you going to do? Your going to keep going.

This is what I mean by “context shapes meaning”. Saying “stop” in different situations means different things. We have to look at the context to understand the meaning.

Let me give you another practical cross cultural example; one like we find in Scriptural context to ours.

My wife and I have a friend in Kenya, who was born and raised there, and he has an orphanage with about 20 children. We help them from time to time and we saw a video where the children were kicking around a make-shift ball. So, we decided to buy some toys and send them over. We bought a ball, some jump ropes, and a couple frisbee's.

A couple months later, Edwin receives the package and post video of play time after their church service. He posted some pictures of the children eating, videos of them playing with the ball, and videos of them jumping rope. I immediately noticed that I did not see any video of the children playing with the frisbee. I thought about the contents of the package and the pictures posted - eating, ball, jump rope. I then realized, frisbee's are an American past time. Now, I had this picture in my head of Edwin opening the package and saying, “Look children, a ball, some jump ropes, and a couple plates.” Context shapes the meaning, even cultural context.

So, what's the rules of context? Context **RULES!** If we ignore the context of this book, we can twist Scripture to mean all kinds of different things. We've got to know the context. And there's really only two context that we have to know - there's **OUR** context and **THEIR** context.

Let's take a look at the two context's; starting with our context. In this, we are going to look at what WE bring to Scripture.

When we come to the Bible, we bring our context to the Scriptures. There are two different types of context we bring - pre-understandings and presuppositions. Let's look at these two.

Our pre-understandings are **PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS** that we unconsciously or consciously bring to the text. There are many different reason we bring preconceived notions to the text.

The first reason we bring preconceived notions is because of our **PRIDE**. Especially when we are studying a familiar text, we tend to start the text with the idea that we know what it means before we even start reading the words. Pride is a pre-conceived notion that we know what the text means before we ever start listening to the text. We have to avoid pride, and come to the text humbly.

Another reason we bring preconceived notions is because of an **AGENDA**. Sometimes, we come to the text with a theological agenda; a theological slant. When we come to the text in this manner, we will pull text from the context to make it say what ever we want it to say to support our theological slant.

We've got two options. We can either stand over the meaning of the text or we can kneel under the meaning of the text. True Bible study is when we kneel under the meaning of the text. We don't want to find Scripture that fits our agenda. We want to let Scripture determine our agenda.

Sometimes we skip over text because of **FAMILIARITY**. Don't skip over a text because it's a familiar text. Sometimes it takes several readings in order for the Spirit to uncover the gold He want's you to have. Look at this familiar passage:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
(Isaiah 53:5)*

We often use this passage as a promise of physical healing. When we do, we make two very large errors. First, we use this yet many Christians are sick and die and it makes the non-believer think that this is all fake. Or, when they are not healed, there are accusations that arise about their faith; either by others or about themselves. Second, and this is important, we make God a liar. It's evidently clear, Paul had a eye sight problem. This is why he had people write his letters. Epaphroditus was sick to the point of death.

We have to look at the context of the passage. What is the context of the space around this passage? Before this statement, Isaiah is talking about transgression and Iniquities; which is sin. After this statement, Isaiah is talking about those gone astray, going our own way, and iniquity; which is sin. He's not mentioning a physical sickness.

What is the context of the author? Look at the author and how he writes

*Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints.
6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment
(Isaiah 1:5-6)*

It's evident by the context of the manner in which Isaiah perceived sin that it was a sickness. He referred to sin as a sickness. It's obvious by the context of the passage and the context of the author that this passage is talking about being healed from the sickness of sin.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm NOT saying that God does not heal - the Bible shows this all over. Yet, if we just skip over this text, because it seem familiar, we miss a key point about sin... it's a great sickness in which we need to be healed from.

Another thing that causes us to bring pre-conceived notions to the text is our **CULTURE**. In fact, our culture has a HUGE affect on how we Study Scripture.

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:39-42)

We come to Matthew 5:39-42 and say, "Ok, I hear what He's saying; BUT, if someone strikes you on the cheek and you keep turning your cheek they are going to run over you. If someone sue's you for your shirt and you give you coat, they'll take everything you got. So, obviously that's not what it means". At that point, we just imposed a very self-centered, American, materialistic culture that says, "I need to do what protects myself rather than anything else": on a Scripture passage that is intended to say exactly what it says.

We bring our own context. Sometimes we don't mean to but we do it either consciously or un consciously.

What is it about our culture that causes us to bring pre-conceived notions to the text.?

We bring our **LANGUAGE**. Our culture involves OUR meaning of words. When some of the words were used in the 1st century, they had a far different meaning then they do today. We need to know what the word meant THERE; in the 1st century.

We also have different **CUSTOMS**. We have different **STORIES** and jokes based upon our culture. Even today, we can tell a story or joke in a different country and they wouldn't understand. We could possibly even offend people in other cultures, if we don't understand that culture.

Our **FAMILY** context is different. We can see this even within our own country. If you go to the north east portion of the US, among the Italian decedents, family bonds are much closer than other areas of the country. Family bonds in middle eastern countries are almost tribe like. Not so in the US.

There are many facets of our culture that we bring to the table. We bring our **VALUES**, **ECONOMICS**, **POLITICS**, **ETHNICITY**, **GENDER**, **RELIGION**, **ARTS**, and **IMAGES**. If you think about politics, we have a hard time relating to the rituals surrounding a king; especially a king in the 1st century. When we don't look at this context, we miss out on the importance of Christ being our King.

We bring many things to the table and we need to be careful of it. We don't mean to - in most cases - but we need to be careful. Yet, we can't be completely objective. We all bring subjectivities to a certain extent; but we need to minimize that as much as possible.

There are some subjectivities that are good. These are **PRESUPPOSITIONS**. Some good subjectivities are the fact that we have faith in God. We have faith in His power and His existence. We believe the Bible is inspired, reliable, and unified. We believe the Bible does not contradict itself. We believe the Bible is diverse and supernatural. This means that God is bigger than us; so, there are some things in the Bible that we don't completely understand. The Bible has tension and mystery to it. We believe the Bible is purposeful; and that purpose is to bring us into the image of Christ.

The question is, "How can we best understand their context? The way that we study the Bible must honor the way, and time, God chose to communicate the Bible. Never forget that Scripture was God's Word to other people before it became God's Word to us. This book was NOT written to us. It was God's Word to

THEM and it was preserved throughout history for us; and all the men and women through history. This means two things. God cared deeply about them and God cares deeply about us.

When we are looking at their context, we need to understand that there are several different types of context.

There is the **LITERARY** context. This is different types of text. There is **GENRES**; which are different types of literary structures. When you read through the Bible, you will find all kinds of different genres of text. You'll find stories, poems, speeches, prophetic oracles, and many other different types of literature. We need to be able to understand the different rules involved with different genres.

I used the term "rules" in a way that if you tried to play basketball with football rules or football with basketball rules, it just does not work. Different genres are kinda like different games. Each genre has a different rule on how it's read. We have practical examples of this.

In one day this past week, you may have read a newspaper, looked up a number in a phone book, ordered from a menu, read a poem, read a letter, read instructions, or meditated on a devotional book.

Those are all different genres of text and your not going to read a poem the way you read a phone book. And, your not going to read a menu the same way you read a newspaper.

This is the possible danger of topical preaching, and topical study of the Bible. Where we jump around from this text to this text. It's like bringing something from a phone book, something from a newspaper, and something from a love letter and trying to relate them all together. Your not going to read Galatians and Song of Solomon the same. Your not going to read the letters like you read Proverbs.

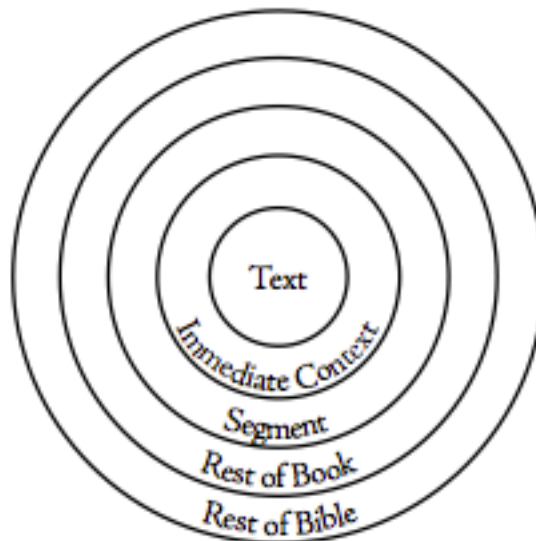
What are the different genres in Scripture? In the Old Testament you have NARRATIVES, LAW, POETRY, PROPHETS, and WISDOM writings. In the New Testament you have LETTERS, GOSPELS; which includes parable (a genre all its own), HISTORY, and PROPHECY.

In the literary context you also have **GRAMMAR**. There are individual words, phrases, and clauses that all find meaning in the context that surrounds them. So, we have to look at the surroundings of the text. We must realize that the Bible is not a bunch of different parts, separate from each other. The Bible is a bunch of parts that comes together in a whole.

Remember that the Bible contains an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What this means is, there are two forms of context that an interpretation can not contradict. An interpretation can not contradict the message of the Bible in whole or in part. And, an interpretation can not contradict the character of God in whole or in part. For example, there is a believe that there's demon activity that directly causes moral issues in man. This belief contradicts the whole of the message of the Bible that man is responsible for his moral problems and the response is repentance. It ignores the fact that the Bible never speaks of moral issues as a result of demonic activity in our lives. And, It also contradicts the character of God who is a good Judge and will judge the world on the moral sin they chose to do. If there are some moral issues that can not be helped because of demonic activities, then God would be unjust in judging that person. So, proper interpretation **MUST** stay within the context of the Bible and character of God as a whole.

On the next page, you have come concentric circles. When you're looking at context, what you got is the text your studying. It may be a verse, it may be a paragraph, it may be a chapter. You have the immediate context of where that portion of Scripture is found. Then you have the whole segment of context in which its found. Then you have the rest of the Bible book that it's contained in. Then you have the rest of the Bible.

This is why I study so much and so diligently is because it takes time of study to gather the context of these larger rings as a whole.



All these contexts are important. Look at Matt 18:20

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)

How many times have you heard it said in a meeting, “where ever two or three come together there I am; so praise God, He is with us”? That’s good, God is with us; but the problem is this poor guy over here was thinking, “I was in my prayer closet, by myself, this morning; does that mean God was not with me?”

The problem is that we’ve taken the Scripture from context where Y’shua was talking about conflict in the church and with brothers. He address going to your brother and confronting him in his sin in what is a picture of church discipline. Then, what Y’shua is saying is, “When the church goes through tough times - I want to remind you that I am with you in the middle of the conflict.” It’s an incredible verse, but when we rip it from context we miss the point.

Look at this other often misapplied passage of Scripture.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”
(Revelation 3:20-21)

We often us this for a salvation message but it’s actually Y’shua talking to the church saying, “I’m outside this picture. I’m knocking. Open the door and lets explore the unity designed for the church”

We also have a **HISTORICAL-CULTURAL** context. We talked about our culture, and how we bring it to the table, but they have THEIR culture; which IS the table. If our interpretation of the Bible is going to be valid, it MUST take into consideration the history and culture of THAT day. We need to look at the culture of the author and his readers; including, social, geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the authors settings. We’ve GOT to look at the book of Galatians and see the relationship between them and Paul. What was the relationship between Jonah and the Ninevites? We MUST look at the books of Corinthians and take into consideration the multiple languages in that church and the pride problem they were having and how Paul is addressing these different issues.

There are avenues that can be used to gain cultural context of the book. If you are going to use a resource, I would recommend a resource that is NOT religious based and written by a pastor. Use a resource that is of a historical context and biased in it’s authorship. Use history books or Wikipedia, and the likes to gain cultural context. There is context that can be gained from Scripture. Most times, this is the best, and most reliable, context because it shows us what the author was leaning towards with the

reasoning of giving the words he gave. Let's use the book of John and let's look at the context based on this book. Let's look at the story of the woman at the well in John 4 and we will use different clues, through the book of John, to gain a context of what is going on.

First, let's get to know the author.

*"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true."
(John 21:24)*

Ok, so we know the author of this book is John, who was a disciple of Christ. Who is the audience that John wrote to?

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

Every biblical book is written to specific people for a specific purpose. When you read the Gospel of Mark, Mark is writing to a bunch of believers who are facing persecution. So, that affects the way that we interpret the book of Mark. You get to John 20:31. Why did he write this book? He wants us to "...believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and...have life in his name." So, we have the author and the audience. What are the geographical conditions.

*" When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria."
(John 4:3-4)*

When you read John 4:3-4, and it says, "When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria." At that point, we see this geographic information coming on the scene. We have to go and look at a map at this point and we would see a path leaving Judea and going back to Galilee. The most common path for people to take in that day, because of the deep hatred for Samaritans, was to go around Samaria, but John 4:4 says Jesus "had to go through Samaria." It is a picture of Jesus going outside of the norm because He was pursuing the people that no one else cared about, that everyone else ignored. That is the picture we have been geographically given. What are the social conditions?

*"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?'"
(John 4:7)*

When we see Yeshua come and talk to the Samaritan woman, we need to know that this is way outside the social boundaries for Jews. We don't get that feel in the text unless we understand this context. We don't get to imagine the tension of the moment in the feelings of the disciples having to go through an area they despised or the feelings of a Samaritan woman who had a Jewish man talking to her unless we get that context. The context isn't specifically found in verse 7, we find it in verse 9.

*"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)"
(John 4:9)*

Through this, we also find out next context - religious conditions. Jew's did not associate with Samaritans. When we see this religious divide, we then can associate that divide with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Get to know the economic conditions.

*“‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?’”
(John 4:11-12)*

There is no running water of that day. So, we need to know that this woman would have to come out repeatedly to this well to get water. Most of the time you would come out with others, but she is coming out alone which says something about her. There are economic conditions at work here. Is there a clue of political conditions?

“The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’” (John 4:25-26)

They were looking for a political Messiah. That was the picture, and it helps to understand the expectations of Messiah for how Jesus is being revealed in the Gospels.

So, we have all those different facets of context; some obvious and some not so obvious. But, you see how, in just one passage, you see geography, history, politics, economics contexts. This is where a Bible handbook is really helpful, but if we don't have that, then we need to really look for clues that help us understand the different divides there are, the different issues that are being raised.

We have literary context, historical-cultural context and then there's their **THEOLOGICAL** context. Every passage we study in Scripture fits into the overall picture of Scripture. Any time we are studying a passage, we are looking at an interpretation, we need to ask, “Where does this passage fit into the unfolding revelation of God in Scripture?”. Does the interpretation fit into an overall picture of the Bible, the Gospel, the Character of God?

*“The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini, each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively, to play his notes just as the great conductor desired, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole... The point of each part only becomes fully clear when seen in relation to all the rest.”
- J. I. Packer*

We don't read different texts that are in isolation from one another. We read them in their theological context, how they fit in to the overall message of the Bible. We need to be aware of the different context that we bring to the table and we need to understand the context they bring to the text.

Let's summarize this section by reviewing the basic principles of Bible interpretation.

1. Remember that context **RULES**.

NEVER take Scripture out of its context to make it say something that is contrary to the text. And, never take a Scripture out of context to make it say something you THINK would be good for it to say. That's abuse of the Bible. Sometimes we do it because we want it to speak to a certain situation or a certain someone to encourage them, but we don't help people by misinterpreting Scripture. So, remember that context rules. The ultimate author is God, and we don't need to add to His meaning. It's like using the passage we talked about earlier. We tell a cancer patient, “it's ok, by His stripes we were healed. so God is going to heal you”. We don't have the power, or wisdom, to make that call. And by pulling that out of context, if they die, the family is now down on God because He didn't do what people told them He promised. So, it's not good to misuse Scripture.

2. Always seek the **FULL COUNSEL** of the Word of God.

This takes time. The more you study, the more you will be able to discern what Scripture means; and, we will more easily understand how different passages fit in to the whole picture. When we face difficult texts, texts that are difficult to interpret, difficult to understand, it is going to help us to have an overall

picture so that we don't start twisting this and twisting that; and, all of a sudden, this whole picture gets jumbled. Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

3. Remember that Scripture will **NEVER CONTRADICT** Scripture.

Compare Scripture with Scripture. This is a big part of Bible study. If your Bible does have little notes, little letters, cross-references, use those cross-references. When you are studying verses and you see a word that sticks out, it will often have a little letter with a verse of where else the Bible has used that word, and it will help you. Cross-references are big so compare Scripture with Scripture.

The best interpreter of Scripture is **SCRIPTURE**. So, when you are struggling, let other parts of Scripture help you understand that. "Now Wayne, you said Scripture will never contradict Scripture. When I look at Scripture I see that Paul said we are not justified by our works (Romans 4:2) and James said it's by our works we are justified (James 2:24)". This is the importance of context. Paul is talking about the ceremonial rituals given on Mt Sinai and James is talking about helping people in need.

Use examples to give evidence to and explain the statement. When Yeshua says we will pick up serpents, we see an example of this with Paul; and Paul was not doing it on purpose. When we see that we will speak in new tongues, we see an example of this in Acts; what it consisted of, how others responded, and that it was done solely by God. So, look for examples of the statement.

4. Avoid basing your doctrine on an **OBSCURE** passage of Scripture.

There are some texts that we come to that just don't seem to add up. They don't seem to make sense, and we can't figure it out. We can get tied up in knots. I love this verse from 2 Peter 3:16. This is what Peter said about Paul's writings. Listen to what Peter himself, Peter the apostle, said about Paul's writings.

*"He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."
(2 Peter 3:16)*

I find encouragement that Peter had a hard time with some of the things that Paul wrote. So, find encouragement in that. It is okay not to understand. Don't twist them, but know some writings are hard to understand. Find confidence, though, in the fact that the things God wants us to understand most, He has made more than clear.

5. Interpret Scripture **PLAINLY**.

Avoiding that spiritual meaning; which is, trying to find that deep meaning that is even further than what it looks like on the front, on the face of it. Interpret Scripture plainly.

There are some times when the Bible does use figurative language, or the Bible is showing us a meaning that is a lot deeper than the text may show. Here are some guidelines you can use when you start to think, "Is there a deeper meaning here?" Use these guidelines.

- Use the literal (plain) sense unless there is some good reason not to.
- Use the figurative sense when the passage tells you to do so. (Galatians 4)
- Use the figurative sense if the expression is an obvious figure of speech. (Psalm 42)
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the context of the passage, the context of the book, or the purpose of the author.
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation involves a contradiction of other Scripture.
- Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning is impossible, absurd, or immoral.

6. Conclude the process of interpretation by describing the author's intended meaning in the

passage.

Summarize the text. What I want to encourage you to do is ask the major question: “What’s the **point**?” When you have done all this observation, taking into account literary, historical, culture and theological context which we just talked about; identify, in one or two sentences, what the author is saying to the original readers and why he is saying it. When Paul tells Timothy that pastors need to have only had one wife is he being narrow minded or is there a purpose to this foundational command? Based on the Gospel, would this command include divorces before Salvation or just those after? Would it include all divorces or are some divorces not considered under this command? What does the whole of Scripture say on this subject?

Be responsible. Remember, this is not what does the text mean for me, it is what does the text mean, what did it mean to its original readers? Remember - A text cannot mean what it never meant.

Be concise. Don’t complicate things. Keep it simple and but be specific. As your coming to a conclusion on a passage don’t write down “God is good.” Write down why the author said the things he did to show that God is good. You want to be specific in how you write that down.

In the “Interpretation in Action” of the first step, you took Acts 1:8 and wrote down everything that you were seeing. You should have some kind of list of what you seen in the text. Now, on the following page, we will take the same text and we will look at the context and ask, “What does it mean?”

Interpretation in action...

Acts 1:8 – What's the point?

BRING IT BACK HOME:

How Does It Relate?

Remember that we are looking at the Bible as if we are travelers to another country. So far, we've observed their home and we've asked the question, "what does it mean?" We've got two more steps to look at: Bring it back home and apply it in your home. Then, the last session of the book will be looking at the different genre's of text; and their unique qualities.

In this third step, we are bringing the information we have learned back to our home - "Bring it Back Home". This is a question of "How does it relate?" This is the shortest step, but in some ways, it is the most challenging step. Remember, this is when we are on the plane headed back home and we are wondering how the information we've learned is going to affect our lives. This is how the text travels. We are asking, "How does this information travel to the twenty-first century?"

The goal is to identify the **TIMELESS TRUTH**. Not just "truth" but maybe "truths"; because, there may be a couple truths. We are looking for principles, in the passage, that are timeless and travel across cultures.

A "timeless truth" is a theological principle that applies to ALL people in all times and all cultures. Let's look at the guidelines for a timeless truth.

1. The timeless truth is **BIBLICAL**.

Hopefully that goes without saying, but it should be reflected in the text, and not just in that text, but, also with all of Scripture. That brings us to the second guideline.

2. The timeless truth is **COMPATIBLE**.

It is Biblical and compatible. In other words, a timeless truth in Acts 1:8 should not contradict a truth in Nehemiah 1. They wouldn't contradict each other. If they did, then one of them would not be a timeless truth. A timeless truth is Biblical and compatible with the rest of Scripture.

3. The timeless truth is **ETERNAL**.

That is why it is called timeless. It is not tied to a specific situation. This is not just what was going on in Acts, this is what happens to all people of all times - Eternal.

4. The timeless truth is **CROSS-CULTURAL**.

This is where we separate what is going on in this specific cultural context to what the truth is behind how that affects all cultures. This is text traveling across the ocean, cross-cultural.

5. The timeless truth is **APPLICABLE**.

The timeless truth is applicable in Acts 1:8, and it is applicable in the twenty-first century. It is applicable in the middle east and it's applicable in America.

That is a timeless truth: biblical, compatible, eternal, cross-cultural, and applicable.

Use the following page to write out the timeless truths you find in Acts 1:8.

Implication in action...

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth
(Acts 1:8)*

APPLY IT IN YOUR HOME:

What Do I Do?

We are now in the last step of Bible interpretation. It's at this point that we apply what we've learned to our home. It's now that we are to application. We didn't start here, we are ending here. This is the difference between interpretation and application. What are the differences here?

Interpretation focuses on meaning - What does the text mean.

Application focuses on action - What am I going to do as a result of what the text means?

Interpretation involves a singular meaning. Remember, we are looking for what the Holy Spirit means in a text. When I say, "Don't say what does the passage mean to me," some may have thought, "Doesn't it mean different things to each one of us?" No. It means one thing. There is only one correct interpretation; but it applies in different ways to many us. So, interpretation focuses on a singular meaning.

Application involves multiple actions. - There's different specific scenarios where this text applies.

Interpretation is the same for all Christians.

Application is different for specific life situations.

Interpretation involves getting into the Word.

Application involves the Word getting into us. - That is how the Word is going to play out in us.

Interpretation asks, "What does this text mean?"

Application asks, "How does this meaning apply to my life?"

So, what we have done is we have observed, understood, and related the text. Now, we are thinking, "Okay. What does this mean for my life?"

I believe there are three steps in responsible, Biblical, application. Stick with me as we go through these steps. I am going to give you an example even beyond Acts 1:8 to think this through.

1. **MEDITATE** on the timeless truth(s).

By meditate, I mean just let it soak in. You look at those timeless truths you listed in the last chapter, and you let them soak in.

2. **RELATE** the timeless truth(s) to today.

While your studying, when you go through these steps and you find these timeless truths, think about a modern, American, context that the truth will relate to. In order to do that, what we have to do is a couple of different things.

First, we have to see the timeless truth in its **ORIGINAL** situation. We are asking, "How does the timeless truth apply in that day?" This is kinda like the point of their context. We Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) that were affected in the original situation by this timeless truth. How did this timeless truth apply to those people in that time in that place?

Second, Identify a contemporary situation (21st century situation) that **PARALLELS** the original situation and Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) that parallel the original situation.

Now, let me give you an example. Let's take a perfect example from a misapplied verse of Scripture, *Philippians 4:13*. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

First, how did this statement apply to them? If we back up a little further, we see that Paul was in prison when he was writing this letter. He has gone through very difficult times. He's writing the letter to a group of people; challenging them to stay firm in the faith. The Philippians have been an encouragement to Paul, and, at times, they have given to him; and so, he has a close relationship with them. In Philippians 4:10-13, he is talking about the support and relationships he's had with them, and Paul is talking about contentment in all things while serving God. He says, "I have learned the secret of being content in any

and every situation.” He has talked about how he has known what it is like to be in want and need and knows what it is like to have plenty. He knows what it is like to have enough and to not to have enough, and that is what leads into this verse, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* So, maybe the timeless truth would be something like, “Followers of Christ can be content in a variety of circumstances because Christ gives strength no matter what those circumstances are.”

When we think about the timeless truths of a passage, we think about how to apply that in our lives, or a situation in our culture. So, we are going to meditate on that timeless truth, and we have to relate it to today, a contemporary situation. Look at the key factors that are involved in Philippians 4. You have a Christian - Paul. You have a period of difficulty, suffering, they are going through because of their relationship with Christ, and you have Christ who gives strength in the middle of that.

Then, we look at a contemporary situation, in the twenty-first century, and we think of a situation that has all those characteristics. What we need to find is a contemporary situation that matches the original situation. If it doesn't match the original situation of those key elements, we are going to misapply the Bible. Let me give you an example.

Imagine two football teams are going on to the field tomorrow. You have a Christian on one side saying, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. We can win this game.” Only problem is there is probably a Christian on the other side who has the same verse written on his wristband. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Both of them have the same pep talk. “We can do it. I can do it. We can. This team can win this game.” Now, either they have a problem, or God has got a problem when it comes to this game tomorrow; because, obviously, you have two teams that are using Scripture to say that they are going to have the strength to win this game.

When we look at the timeless truths, you have a Christian on each team here, and you have Christ who gives strength, but the missing element is someone who is in a period of suffering because of their relationship with Christ. Therefore, to take this passage and apply it to mean that we are going to win this game, obviously, rips this passage out of its context. So, maybe you don't want to write that on your wristband.

Let's look at a different situation. Maybe there is a single mom who, when she came to faith in Christ, her husband completely deserted her. He has left her there with three kids, hardly any finances to meet their needs, struggling through the battles of being a single mom and finding herself in financial straits and sometimes alone.

Now, here you have a Christian, you have a Christ who gives strength, and you have somebody who is going through a time where they are in want or in need. You have a parallel situation here. So, you say to a single mom, or you say as a single mom, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Now the Bible is being applied rightly.

You look for the parallel, and when there are differences, you have to note those because they are going to affect the way the Bible is applied. That is what I mean by identifying the timeless truth in its original situation. Identify a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. We misapply the Bible when there are not parallels there. Then, relate the timeless truths, specifically, to that contemporary situation like we just did.

So you meditate on it, you relate this thing, then you practice the timeless truth. You practice it, you obey the timeless truth. You put it into practice.

I believe when we read Scripture there are five primary questions we need to ask. Every text doesn't necessarily answer every single one of these questions, but if the only question that we ask, when we come to a text of Scripture, is, “Okay. What am I supposed to do based on this?” then we may miss some of the applications. So, five questions we must ask:

1. Who should I **BE**?

Christianity is not primarily a religion about doing; it is a religion about being. It is about Christ in us. How does my character need to change based on this text of Scripture? Any application of the text is dependent on Christ in you.

2. How should I **THINK**?

We need to learn from the Word how to think Christianly. This is correcting in righteousness. It's a picture of being able to discern truth from error based on what we study here. Christ affects the way we think. How do I think "Christianly?" How does this text affect the way I think and the way I perceive things?

3. What should I **DO**?

It's at this point that we might go through a list like this:

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a verse to memorize?

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 challenge to face?

What do I do? Don't be hearers of the Word, be doers of the Word.

4. Where should I **GO**?

The reason that I say ask this is because this is the question that I don't think we ask when we study Scripture. Well, one of the two questions that we don't ask very much. I believe that all of Scripture is intended to be understood in the context of mission.

When you read the New Testament, this is the people that are going to the nations with the Gospel. If the text does not propel us to go, if the text propels us to sit back in our Christian lives and not do anything to affect the cause of Christ in the world, then we may be missing the point of the text. Where should I go? Where does this text cause me to go make disciples, and that leads to this last question.

5. Who will I **teach**?

The Word was not intended just for you. Is the Word going to stop with you or spread through you? The best way to learn the Bible is to teach the Bible. When you are teaching this Word, you will have to know it. Now, I am not just saying teaching it to a group of 2,000 people or teaching it to a group of 200 or 20 people. It could be teaching it to one person, but I think we need to ask this question whenever we study the text and realize that whatever God is teaching us is not just intended for us alone. It is the whole picture of 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Whatever Christ does in me is intended to flow through me. His comfort in me is intended to comfort others. That is the picture. When Christ teaches us, then we have to say, "How can I teach this to somebody else?" It doesn't mean that you have to sit down and have a 45 minute Bible study with them. That would be great in some circumstances, but the truth of how it applies to your life is to look for opportunities to reproduce that, to teach it to others.

I want you to imagine with me a church that walks out every Sunday asking, based on what we saw in the Word, "Who am I going to be? How am I going to think? What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Who am I going to teach this to?" Maybe even deeper though, imagine a whole congregation of people asking those questions by studying the Bible every single day, and asking, "Who am I going to be based on this text? How I am I going to think? What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Who am I going to teach?" That is multiplication of the Word of Christ to the nations right there. If we will do it, if we will apply the Word.

Let's continue in Acts 1:8 and use the blank page to identify how this is applied to our life according to what we've seen, the context we've seen it in, and the timeless truths that stand before us. Answer the questions associated with this step.

Application in action...

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth
(Acts 1:8 NKJV)*

> Identify the key elements involved in the timeless truth(s) in Acts 1:8:

> Identify any situations, i.e., real-world scenarios that contain those key elements:

> Now write out how the timeless truth(s) in Acts 1:8 affects this particular real- world scenario:

> Who should I be?

> How should I think?

> What should I do?

> Where should I go?

> Who will I teach?

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE - Part 2

Looking At The Different Genre's

In part two of this study, we are going to look at the different genre's of text. Earlier in the study, I mentioned that each genre reads differently. We don't read a poem the same we read a menu; and the likes. If we continue with the picture of a mission trip, this portion is like we are going to different countries. Things look different in China then they do in Africa which look different then they do in America. So, in this, we are going to different countries; and, we are going to spend different amounts of time there because some areas are easier to interpret than others. We are going to journey through different genre's and look for four things.

In looking at these different genres, we're going to talk about some of the difficulties in certain genres. We'll look at some general guidelines, and, then we'll walk through a practical process for reading certain genres. This section of the study is on top of what we already learned. In other words, what we've learned applies to each genre of text but there are some differences in other areas that we are going to look at. The questions, or what we look at, in the application step of the different genres is the same; therefore, we are going to fly through that step.

THE LETTERS

Difficulties involved in reading the letters...

We are going to start with the letters because they are probably the easiest. Yet, we have some difficulties that we need to remember. There are some things in the letters that we walk away saying, "What in the world does that mean?" Paul says...

Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?"
(1 Corinthians 15:29)

Apparently, people were getting baptized for the dead, and we really don't know a lot about why or what. So, we're wondering, "What in the world is going on there?"

There are times that we wonder what we are suppose to do. Let me give you an example from just one letter, to the Romans. It says in Romans 12:10:

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.
(Romans 12:10)

OK, easy enough - Now, the second one:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God
(Romans 13:1)

What does that mean when your living in a persecuting country; and the authorities say, "Don't gather together for worship"? All right, maybe that is a little harder. Then, you get to Romans 16:16:

Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ send greetings
(Romans 16:16)

Now is that what we are going to do in America? We go from one extreme to another. We see in Romans 12:10 "be devoted to one another in brotherly love." Of course we can do that. Then we get to Romans 13 and we wonder how that looks. By the time we get to Romans 16, and it is talking about kissing each other, we are thinking, "What in the world has happened in the book of Romans? How do you know which one to do and which one not to do?"

So, those are difficulties, and we need to know on how to interpret the Bible; and how to apply the Bible - for so many reasons.

General Guidelines for reading the letters...

1. We need to remember that the New Testament letters are occasional documents. What I mean by that is that the letters are written to a specific audience, at a specific time, to address a specific situation. There were some circumstances that caused these letters to be written in all these instances. Maybe there were behaviors that needed to be corrected. We need to realize that, oftentimes, when we see Paul talking about husbands and wives, wives submit to your husbands, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church, it is not just this isolated teaching that is out there. He is addressing something that is going on there in Ephesians, and he is addressing something that is going on there in Colossians. So, we need to know there was a specific occasion that was bringing this about, behaviors that need to be corrected, doctrines that need to be straightened out. Paul is not just writing a systematic theology here, he is straightening out some false teaching and misunderstandings that needed to be clarified.

This causes problems because We have the answers but we don't have the **QUESTIONS**. It's like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. There's some assumptions shared between the writer and the audience that we're kinda left out of. That creates a lot of difficulties.

We have to Be careful not to conclude too much from only one letter. We have to put these letters together to see the overall picture. In order to understand the conversation better, we have to get into all these different letters. You look at 1 Corinthians 15:29, which I mentioned just a second ago, talking about being baptized for the dead. When you look at that Scripture, you have to realize there are like 40 different guesses, that good Bible scholars have, about what in the world is going on in 1 Corinthians 15:29. So, let's not get too hung up on this. Let's put it together with some of the other letters, and I think some of those things will be minimized a little bit. We need to be confident that God has clearly communicated to us what is most important.

2. New Testament letters are **NOT** theological treatises. (treatises - a written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject:)

These are not books of theology. Even when we look at a picture of justification, Paul talked about that a lot; but actually, when you look at it, he uses that word 15 times in Romans, and I think six or eight times in Galatians, but he uses it only two times in all of his other letters. He is not trying to give us a theological treatise on justification. That was something important to be addressed in that particular situation.

Any time we see theology, it is theology addressed to a particular situation. When we think about our theological ideas, and maybe even some of the theological questions we have, we have to realize, the theological answers that are being given in the New Testament letters, are answers to their questions not ours. This is key for us to remember. We sometimes go to the New Testament letters trying to get answers for our theological questions when those were not questions back then that were being addressed there.

So, when we go to New Testament letters looking for an answer on abortion or an answer on remarriage or an answer on infant baptism, some of these things were not a problem at that point; which means, they were not addressing some of those things. So, we may be asking questions that the text is not intending to answer in the first place.

3. New Testament letters have a **COMMON** form.

When you are on your computer and you pull up the word processor for a new document, you have a choice of a common form document. If you want a letter, or a will, or a resume, etc. there is a common form. The letters of the Bible are no different. Noting that not all letters have all these things, the common form of the letters are as follows:

Introduction of author (Hebrews is missing)

- Greeting
- Identification of the author
- Identification of the audience
- Prayer / Thanksgiving

Body of the letter (no real format)

Conclusion

- Sometimes a Final farewell

You'll find different other elements in the letters. It's important to take note of these different elements for the study of the other letters. A number of different elements including:

- a. Travel plans (Titus 3:12; Philemon 22).
- b. Commendation of workers (Rom. 16:1-2).
- c. Prayer (2 Thess. 3:16; Hebrews 13:20-21).
- d. Prayer requests (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18-19).
- e. Greetings (Rom. 16:3-16, 21-23; Heb. 13:24; 2 John 13).
- f. Final instructions and exhortations (Col. 4:16-17; 1 Tim. 6:20-21a).
- g. Holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14).
- h. Autograph (Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17).
- i. Benediction (1 Cor. 16:23-24; Eph. 6:23-24).
- j. Doxology (2 Peter 3:18; Jude 24-25).

There will be differences to the form of the letter. Take note of these differences because they may provide clues to the meaning. For example, there is no strong thanksgiving in the letter to the Galatians. Paul heads straight into a rebuke. So, we know there is something important that is going on in the church of Galatia that is needing to be addressed.

A practical process in reading the letters...

1. Observe their home - What do I see? One of the most important first steps you can take in reading the letters is - READ. Ok, that sounds simple enough. We need to remember that these letters were delivered and then someone would read the letter from beginning to the end. At some point, they would read it to the congregation. We have an error in reading the letters by little parts here and there; quietly alone. If I get a five page letter from my wife, I don't read one paragraph out of page three then a couple sentences from page two the next day and a couple from page five the next day. I read it from cover to cover and then maybe go back and look at some points that stood out. So, spend time with your family, or with friends, and reconstruct the reading of the letter. Read it out loud to the group. Read it from cover to cover.

Again, **RECONSTRUCT** as you read. Reconstruct the original situation behind the letter by asking the questions that we've learned in this series.

2. Understanding their home - What does it mean? When reading the letters think in paragraphs. Then, for every one or two paragraphs write down the overall question, "What is the point?"

3. Bring it back home - How does it relate? Look for the Biblical and compatible. Look for the timeless truths. Do they align with the context of the text and all of Scripture? Focus on the truths that are central to the message of the text and all of the Bible. When you see text about the sinfulness of man, Christ's life, death and resurrection, we find central truths. Head coverings and holy kisses are not central to the whole meaning of the Bible; therefore, we put less emphasis there.

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural by focusing on the truths that are constantly taught in Scripture. Don't focus on things that appear to be different from one letter to another.

Look for the applicable by focusing on truths that are inherently true in all situations; and write down the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading the letters...

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart
(Hebrews 12:1-3)*

Observe their home: what do i see?

Write down significant notes concerning who, what, where, when, why, and how. What does the Word emphasize, repeat, connect, compare, or contrast, and how does the Word communicate?

Understand their home: what does it mean?

Taking into account literary, historical-cultural, and theological contexts, identify in one or two sentences the primary meaning of the text for its original readers.

Bring it back home: how does it relate?

Identify the timeless truth(s) in this passage that relates to both the original readers and us. (If studying an Old Testament passage, filter theological principles through the New Testament.)

Apply it in your home: what do i do?

Identify parallel situations between the biblical context and ours. Make specific application of the timeless truth to our life today by asking five questions:

Who should I be?

How should I think?

What should I do?

Where should I go?

Who will I teach?

THE GOSPELS

Difficulties in reading the Gospels...

“But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ‘Yes, it is as you say,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”

(Matthew 26:63-64)

“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Mark 14:61-62)

“‘If you are the Christ,’ they said, ‘tell us.’ Jesus answered, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.’ They all asked, ‘Are you then the Son of God?’ He replied, ‘You are right in saying I am.’”

(Luke 22:67-70)

If you ever read through the Gospels, you’ve probably noticed unexplained differences between the Gospel accounts. There’s different words used, different order of events, and different accounts of the story. Why are they different if its the same story?

Sometimes you will find apparent discrepancies; as we see in the accounts of Yeshua and the fig tree in Mark 11 and Matt 21

“The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.... In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!” “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mark 11:12-14, 20-25)

“Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’ Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. ‘How did the fig tree wither so quickly?’ they asked. Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.’” (Matthew 21:18-22)

General Guidelines for reading the Gospels...

1. The Gospels are all written about the **SAME** person. Remember that each account is the story of Yeshua (Jesus). Understand though, the writers did not say they were going to write a biography of Yeshua. They are kinda like a biography, but they are a purposeful biography. Each one recorded the story for a particular reason. All three give a picture of the life of Christ; but each one was written to a specific audience for a specific purpose.

There are two components at work in the Gospels. One, we have the **TEACHINGS** of Christ. Two, we have the **STORIES** of Christ.

2. The Gospels are written about the same person but by **DIFFERENT** authors. God inspired four men to write four books about Yeshua but to four different communities.

It appears that Mark may have been written first, then re-written (in some sense) by Matthew and Luke. There are lots of parallels between these three accounts. John is it's own little "bird". So, you have four gospels written by four people for four purposes

Understanding this truth, we then understand that there are two settings at work in the Gospels. First, there's a historical setting of **CHRIST**. Second, we have the historical setting of the **AUTHORS** that needs to be taken into account. We need to know why Mark is writing in one way and Matthew in another. What's John's purpose of his account.

3. The Gospels are written for different audiences. This is important to understand. For example, why is John the only one who included any kind of account of the pool of Bethesda? When we understand why he wrote his book and to whom he was writing it, we understand this question. When we understand this question we discover the mystery in that account.

There are three main principles at work in the Gospels: First, we have **SELECTIVITY**. Each author did not write all they knew about Yeshua. John said it best: "If I wrote all I knew the whole world could not contain the information I'm writing". Second, there's the **ARRANGEMENT** of the events. Such as that with the fig tree, looked at earlier, part of one Gospel may be chronological while part of another Gospel, of the same story, may not be chronological. This brings us to the third principle of **ADAPTATION**. The author adapted the writing to better enlighten a point they were trying to bring across to the particular audience they were writing to. Understand, they did not adapt the truthfulness of the story. They left out or included certain points and parts, they may have rearranged the events slightly to relate to the picture they were trying to bring across. So, remember these principles when studying the Gospels.

A practical process for reading the Gospels...

1. Observe their home: What do I see? In the letters we think paragraphs but in the Gospels we think in terms of stories and discourses. It's not paragraph by paragraph but more story by story or discourse by discourse.

Not just individual stories and discourses but take a look at a collective set of stories and discourses. When your reading the three parables of Matthew 25, realize that the red letters did not stop from chapter 24 and then understand that Christ is not merely giving three parables of principles of our lives; but He's giving three parables about three exact character traits we will be judged on in the end. So, bring stories together and look for connections. Again, in Matthew 7 you have the wide road and narrow road, the false prophets, and those who cry Lord, Lord. There's a reason He told those back to back.

Look for special literary forms in the Gospels.

Look for **EXAGGERATION**. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out - that's exaggeration - let me encourage you there. If someone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother. It's harder to get a camel through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into Heaven. Understand that these are exaggerations but don't reduce the purpose of the statements. Yeshua is trying to show how dangerous sin is in our lives. He's trying to give a grand picture of how **NOTHING** is to come between us and our following Him. It's to show how impossible it is for someone who trusts in riches to enter Heaven.

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

(Matthew 5:29-30)

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14:26)

“The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”
(Mark 10:24-25)

Look for **IRONY**. Irony is a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects. It’s when something that is expected to happen is contrasted with what actually happens

“And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”
But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”
(Luke 12:16-21)

When you think about it, what’s the extreme example of the New Testament? Gospels - A picture of a sinless one taking the penalty for the sins of the world.

Look for **RHETORICAL** questions. Rhetorical questions are questions asked more to achieve a point rather than retrieve an answer.

“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?” (Matthew 5:46)

“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matthew 6:27)

“He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”
(Mark 4:40)

“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.” (Luke 12:51)

Look for **PARALLELISM**. Parallelism’s are statements when certain lines are structured to be read together. They are synonymous; which is to say, the lines say basically the same thing in a similar way.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7)

“For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.” (Mark 4:22)

Sometimes they’re Contrastive; where the second line contrast with the first line.

“Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”
(Mark 4:25)

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”
(Matthew 12:35)

Sometimes they are Developmental; where the second line repeats part of the first line, then advances the thought of the first line to a climax.

“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.”
(Matthew 10:40)

*“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”
(John 6:37)*

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? There are two challenges when trying to understand the Gospels. First, think **VERTICALLY**. How does the Gospel represent Yeshua on a historical setting. Second, think **HORIZONTALLY**. Since there are differences in the Gospel accounts, for a particular reason, I want to encourage you to compare how different Gospels tell different stories. We don't do this for the sake of finding errors. We do this to find out what the differences was and why they communicated the way they did. This helps us see a three dimensional view of the event. It's like having four witnesses at a crime scene rather than just one.

For each story / discourse, or series of stories / discourses, write down one or two sentences asking the overall question: “What is the point?”

3. Bring it Home: How does it relate? Look for the Biblical and compatible across the story's or discourses of each Gospel account. Look for the eternal and cross cultural across the story's or discourses. See how Yeshua teaches and demonstrates the Kingdom of God. Look for the applicable by looking at the larger context of these stories in order to identify timeless truths. Then, write down the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading the Gospels...

*On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “ Let us cross over to the other side.” 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “ Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, “ Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him
(Mark 4:35-41)*

Let me give you an example of that: Mark 4, Y'shua and the disciples are crossing the see in a boat and the wind and waves kick up. The disciples are afraid and Y'shua is sleeping. So, they wake Him up; and he yawns and stretches and calms the wind and waves and He ask's why are they afraid and they wonder who this man is who can control the winds and the waves.

If we take this out of context we miss the whole point. Look at the collective of the stories. We look at this story, then the one that follows is Yeshua delivering someone from demon possession. Then we look at the next story and see Yeshua showing is power over disease. Then we look at the next story and see Yeshua's power over death. What we have is a picture of Christ's power demonstrated over four ways: Over Disaster, over Demons, over Disease, and over Death. We can even illiterate it by showing that He did it over the “D”'s. Mark is trying to show Yeshua's authority over all things.

What we often do is take that story and say, "No matter how bad it gets Jesus will calm the storm. If your going through this thing in your life Jesus will calm the storm." The problem is, you can't guarantee this storm is going to be calmed any time soon. And, you can't tell Christian brothers and sisters in persecuted countries that this storm is going to end very soon; or at all for that matter.

So, what's the point of the story? When you look at it, as it was written, and do this observation and understanding, then you get into what was the problem in that story. The problem was not that there was a big storm. Many of these men were fisherman; they have been on the water before. It's not like they have not seen a big storm before either. So, what's the problem? Y'shua is asleep in the middle of the storm. It looks like He don't care so they wake Him up and say, "Don't you care?"

Think about how that relates. Think about how difficult it is to be in difficult times and be overwhelmed; and the confusion of if Christ even cares about what we are going through. So, Yeshua stands up and calms the wind and the waves and the men were astonished that he could calm wind and waves. Only God can control the elements of the earth. So, they realize that Y'shua can do what only God can do. It's at that point that they come to the realization that the man in the boat is God in the flesh. Think about that, in their fear and despair, when they were in the middle of the storm it was not that He did not care. The point is, in the midst of that despair they had the God of the Universe with them.

You take that truth to the suffering brothers and sisters around the world. You can't tell them the storm is going to end any time soon but you can tell them that in the middle of your suffering the God of the Universe is right there with you - and He cares deeply about you.

That is an incredible truth that we don't get to if we don't walk through this process

PARABLES

Difficulties in reading the Parables...

Parables are their own different breed of genre. There is a difficulty in parables because of the distance between the original audience and us. There is a depth of meaning that is intended by Yeshua in the parable He tells. Many times a parable is only understood through an understanding of the context of the day. Therefore, while there is a deep meaning to the parable, the meaning is understood by the context of the culture. We don't want to take apart every little thing and try to find a meaning for it. Augustan Augustine was notorious for doing such things. He took the parable of the Good Samaritan and said, "Jericho means the moon, oil means comfort and good hope, wine means exhortation and work with a fervent spirit, the donkey means Christ's flesh, etc." That's taking it a little too far and we should avoid taking it that far. The question is, how far do we take it?

General Guidelines for reading Parables...

1. The main point of the parable is **CRUCIAL**. Most Bible Scholars say there is only ONE main point. I'm not sure about that. I'm thinking there can be two; or three at very most.

2. The main purpose of the parable is to lead hearers to **RESPOND** in a certain way. The message IS the parable and it's intended to invoke a certain response.

3. There's three types of parables with three different purposes. Many have heard that parables were meant to help us understand. The problem with that though is that it contradicts Christ's words in Matthew 13:13-15. Take a look at the audience to get a clue of the purpose of the parable. If the audience is to the disciples, the parable is likely meant to help in understanding. If the parable was to the pharisees, the parable is likely to cause an emotional response. If the parable is to the crowds the parable is likely to cause confusion. It's the parables to the crowds that typically will have a deep meaning that is beyond the context of the culture.

A practical process for reading the Parables...

1. Observe their home: What do I see? Read the over and over. You **MUST** get into the hearers perspective. Identify the key points of reference that are familiar to Jesus and His hearers. Parables are kinda like an inside joke between two people to which they laugh but we just don't see what's funny. There's something going on that we're missing. So, look for Scripture references that help define what's being said. When Y'shua said that the dogs licked the poor man's wounds, it did not mean that there is special healing in a dogs tongue and we need to let dogs lick our wounds. In other passages, we see that the Jews called the Gentile dog's and Christ was actually saying that the sinners will lick the wounds of the one who is rejected by the church. (There's more to this parable than on the surface)

We've got to get into the original perspective and determine how the original hearers would have responded to that parable. When you read the parable of the Good Samaritan, you got to get into the listeners perspective. Think about how the pharisees would hear of a man fallen on the road and how these two priestly types come by. When teachers of the Law are sitting there listening to Yeshua, it's almost like a parable being told today to a good ol' time solid Baptist Christian. And He says, a man fell sick on the road and along comes a local Bishop from the town and he's got to get to a meeting so he hurries right on by. Then along comes someone from the local rotary club and he's gotta get to a meeting also so he hurries on by. The Baptist Christian is there thinking, of course they would go by, they are not good Christians. That's what the teacher of the Law is thinking. He's not surprised the priest and Levite has gone by, we are the ones who care for the poor.

Then another person is coming along and the teacher of the Law is thinking, "Ok, now we're getting to the right person" and instead of saying a teacher of the Law comes by, Y'shua says a Samaritan comes by. It's at that moment that tension erupts on the scene. He's expecting to hear a teacher of the Law. It would be like that Baptist Christian hearing, "And along came an outspoken atheist. He stopped, and though he has never been inside a church in his life, he helps the man up and dresses his wounds. He then takes him and takes care of him". Then Yeshua asks "who is your neighbor" and the teacher of the Law can't even say Samaritan out loud; he says, "the one who helped him". Then we realize that this parable was not a lesson to teach us to do good to others, but the parable was actually intended to reverse the question completely and put it back on the teacher of the Law for him to realize that who he hated was

the Samaritan - and who he did not love was the Samaritan. He hated them and he needed to learn that it was not just about helping the poor, it was about reaching out to the people you despise.

It comes alive when you put yourself into his shoes

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? When parables were originally spoken they really didn't need much interpretation because they had these understandings because the stories are culturally founded.

Look for one main point for each main character or group of characters in the story. With the prodigal son you have a point with the rebellious son, a point with the father, and even a point with the resentful son.

In one or two sentences, write down the main point(s) intended by Jesus during the time that He shared this parable with his original hearers.

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate? Look for the biblical and compatible. In our efforts to tie the parable into overall truths in Scripture, avoid looking too deeply into the parable. Remember that not all parables are meant to have a deep meaning. The parable of the pearl of great price has a meaning that is very easy to understand. But when you look at the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man it sounds like that all poor will go to Heaven. We know that is not true, and un-Biblical so look for a deeper meaning.

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural. As I was saying, if the supposed meaning of the parable is in contradiction to Scripture, the Gospel, or the Character of God, then look for the deeper meaning by defining the words and terms being said. Define the meaning by use of Scripture.

Look for the applicable. and write out the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading parables...

> Luke 10:25-37

BOOK OF ACTS

Difficulties in reading Acts...

> The difficulty with Acts is, is the teaching or story precedence or principle?

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4)

*“When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 8:15-17)*

*“Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.”
(Acts 20:9-12)*

When we see the church go forward in Acts, is the events mandating a specific precedence ? Is this the way the church is suppose to do for all times? We need to understand that the events in the book of Acts is giving us a set of principles that apply to all times. But not necessarily exactly the same way. If they receive the spirit at a different time then when they come to faith in Christ; is that principle for all time or because they had to wait for the Spirit to come to begin with? If many of them started speaking in tongues when they got the Spirit of God, does that mean everyone must speak in tongues? Is the events in Acts a principle or is it precedence? I believe the answer is... “Yes”. We need to consider the “both-and” approach.

Guidelines when reading Acts...

1. The book of Acts is a **SEQUEL** to the book of Luke.

2. The book of Acts is a sequel story with a **SPECIFIC** purpose. Luke is telling the story about how the Gospel advanced from a group of 120 followers to a world wide following. Understand that Luke is not trying to answer every question about Paul or the church.

3. The book of Acts is organized both thematically and geographically. Acts has these central themes

- ° The Gospel
- ° The Holy Spirit
- ° The church
- ° The world

The overall theme is that The Holy Spirit empowers the church to take the Gospel of Christ to the world. We see a central geographic structure through the book.

- ° The Witness of the Church in Jerusalem (1-7)
- ° The Witness of the Church in Judea and Samaria (8-9)
- ° The Witness of the Church to the Ends of the Earth (10-28)

4. The book of Acts is a **MODEL** for how God intends the church to take the Gospel to the ends of the world under the power of the Holy Spirit. What that means is, it’s not intended for everything in the book to be a precedent for the church. The precedent is the whole of the message; the unity of the church and the church is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

A practical process for reading Acts...

1. Observe their home: What do I see?

Ask questions about characters (both negative and positive examples). There’s negative characters and there’s positive characters.

Ask questions about speeches. Speeches make up about 1/4 to 1/3 of Acts. Some speeches only last about 60 seconds; which is strange because we know a preacher can't preach for only 60 seconds. Understand that these are not verbatim accounts of the speeches. Luke was not present for every speech and he did not have a tape recorder. He did not write it down as they said it.

Ask questions of commentary from Luke. Make note when Luke says, "this is intended to show this".

2. Understand their home: What do I see?

Look for what Luke intended in each episode in the book of Acts. This is not just what he's saying but WHY is he saying it.

Look for repeated patterns and themes throughout Acts. Eight times he talks about being filled with the Spirit and each time it was for spreading the Gospel.

Look at every episode and every story and ask "What's the main point?" If you go to Acts 6:1-7 we see a division in the church. People weren't getting food and they were not happy. They bring in Stephen to help out so that the apostles can continue in prayer. The story does not give us a pattern on how the church should be organized. The picture was to set the stage for how the Gospel was going to break out of Jerusalem and how it was going to be spread to the ends of the earth.

We've got to ask what Luke is trying to tell us. Is he trying to give us a theology on how the church is organized or how the church spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Write down the point of the episode in one or two sentences, making sure that your interpretation falls in line with the larger narrative of the book of Acts.

3. Bring it back home and relate it to our lives. When you look for the eternal and cross cultural filter all implications of Acts through the lens of Luke's intent. For example, when you get to Acts 8, you got all kinds of questions happening. Philip baptizes the Eunuch in the river and people are asking if he dunked him or sprinkled him. Some people are receiving the Spirit that already believed in Christ. Luke's purpose is not to give us theology on how much water you need for baptism or when this or that happens. His intent is to show us, very clearly, that the Gospel is going to Samaritans and Eunuch's, two groups that were despised and unclean by Jews. The point of Acts 8 is to show that the Gospel is for the gentile as well as the Jew. It's also to show us that we are to take the Gospel to people who are not like us, a people hard to reach that nobody else is reaching.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Acts...

> Acts 6-7

Now we are headed into the Old Testament. Up to this point, it's like we traveled to South America, but travel into the Old Testament is like going to Asia or somewhere like that. We're going to a whole new realm.

NARRATIVES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Difficulties in reading Old Testament narratives...

The Old Testament consist of a variety of **STORIES**. In fact, about 40% of the Old Testament is narratives: Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jonah, and Haggai.

There's a variety of stories and a variety of **CHARACTERS**. And, we have a variety of challenges. We have Abraham arguing with God on how many righteous people it's going to take to spare a city. We have Balams talking donkey; and if that wasn't enough, Balam talking BACK to his donkey. We have stories that are just plain bazar.

We see challenging things in the picture of God. We have to be careful in the narratives because it will challenge our idea of God. We have to remember that we can't keep God in a nice neat little theological box. We need to make sure we open ourselves up and see a God that is shown throughout Scripture.

General Guidelines for reading Old Testament narratives...

1. On a whole, Old Testament narratives are NOT, I repeat, they are NOT allegories filled with hidden meanings. Abraham getting a wife for Isaac is not picture of Christ getting the church. As a rule of thumb, don't read Old Testament narratives looking for allegories UNLESS the NT says to.

2. Old Testament narratives are NOT Intended to teach moral lessons; unless a Biblical author says we need to learn from it.

3. Old Testament narratives are NOT Intended to teach doctrine. Old Testament narratives may illustrate doctrine, but they are not meant as a teaching of doctrine. The story of Bathsheba is not intended to teach doctrine of sexual purity. No doubt its and illustration of the dangers of sexual immorality.

4. Old Testament narratives are NOT man-centered. We have to remember that God is the hero of the Bible. When you look at Genesis 39 and see Joseph fleeing from Potifers wife; this is not a story of fleeing from sin, though it's a good illustration. When you look at that chapter, you see a phrase repeated four different times - "The Lord was with Joseph". God is the hero in Genesis 39 and the story is showing what happens when God is with us. When we see this, we understand how Paul states that when we live by the Spirit we don't practice the things of the flesh. When God is present with us, it affects everything in our lives.

5. On a whole, Old Testament narratives ARE stories written to a specific people with a specific purpose.

The narratives are accounts of what happened, not what should have happened, or what will happen every time. Not every narrative is a good example for us. Many times it's the opposite.

Just like the Gospels, narratives are Selective and incomplete. Not all the details are given in these accounts.

A practical process for reading Old Testament narratives...

1. Observe their home: What do I see? Read the passage carefully and look for five basic points:

° **PLOT** - Virtually every story in the Old Testament will have a conflict. There's a development (or build up), the conflict, and the resolution.

° **SCENE** - Take notice of the time and place the story is taking place. When and where is the events happening?

° **CHARACTERS** - The characters of the Old Testament narratives are central to the story. Look for comparisons and contrast's in the characters. For example, look at the contrast between David and Saul.

- **DIALOG** - The author of the story will be telling the story and introduce dialog which is intended to help us understand what is happening.
- **NARRATOR** - Look for the implicit meaning that the narrator conveys. The narrator is omniscient in the whole thing - He's everywhere and knows all the details. Sometimes the narrator gives judgement or summery statements (sometimes obvious and sometimes not). Make note of these statements by the narrator. Look for irony that the narrator may be giving. Just because an event looks good, the narrator might be communicating something opposite.

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? Interpret each Old Testament narrative on three levels:
- a. **INDIVIDUAL** history - This is exactly what's going on in that story, at that time, with those individuals.
 - b. **NATIONAL** History - This is how story fits in with what God is doing to the people of Israel.
 - c. **REDEMPTIVE** History - This is the whole picture of what God is doing

As an example of these three levels, let's look at Abraham and Isaac. We have INDIVIDUAL history in that it's a man taking his son up the mountain for sacrifice and God interacting with him; providing a ram. We have NATIONAL history as this is the promised heir and beginning of God's people. Then we have REDEMPTIVE history in a picture of God providing a ram of sacrifice for the salvation of His people.

Pay close attention to literary context. If your studying Abraham, and something happened to him, you need to study all of Gen 12 - 25 as a whole at some point to see how it all fits in. At a minimum, read three chapters. Read the preceding chapter, the entire current chapter, and the following chapter.

Avoid these errors when interpreting OT narratives:

- **ALLEGORIZING** - Don't Try to find a hidden meaning beyond the text
- **DECONTEXTUALIZING** - Don't ignore the full historical and literary context
- **SELECTIVITY** - Picking and choosing only the parts of the story you like
- **MORALIZING** - Asking, "What is the moral of the story?" at the end of every individual narrative.

Teaching us moral lessons is not their primary intent.

- **PERSONALIZING** - By that I mean, Thinking these narratives are all about you. That's a self-centered way of reading the Bible. The narratives are not all about you. Don't walk away saying that the story of Balam talking to the donkey is saying I talk too much. Or The story of building the temple is a message to us to build a church. That is abuse of Old Testament literature and misses the point.

Also - don't play hocus pocus games with the Bible. This is the act of setting a book down and allowing it to fall open to answer questions and such. This is going awfully close to pagan witchcraft practices that we should be avoiding. God will speak to you when you diligently seek after Him.

- **FALSE APPROPRIATION** - This is misapplying the narrative to contemporary culture.
- **FALSE COMBINATION** - Taking different points of the story and combining the elements in the narrative that are not directly connected by the narrator.

Some books are meant to be a type of sequel. We look at Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus - these are meant to work off each other; but not all books will do this. So, unless we are told to do so, keep each book within it's narrative context.

- **REDEFINITION** - This is redefining the story to accommodate what you wish it had said. Also redefining a story to show or prove a point for other portions of Scripture.
- **IMITATION** - Looking at a narrations permission or obligation to act a certain way. We do not want to approach Old Testament narratives with a monkey see monkey do approach.

For each story, write down one or two sentences that answer "What does the story mean?"

3. Bring it Back Home: How does it relate? - This is key, this is very very important - Look for the Biblical and Compatible. We've got to interpret Old Testament narratives to the grade of New Testament teaching. Here's how we do that... Identify the theological principle in it's Old Testament context and then filter that theological principle through the New Testament. We don't want to continue to read the Old Testament in the same way as the Old Testament Hebrews. We want to read the Old Testament through the New

Testament lens of Christ. Get the Old Testament perspective then ask the question of if there is anything in the NT that changes this thing in the Old? We have to be careful when doing this. Roughly, about 1/3 of the letters are the use of Old Testament narratives to explain New Testament doctrine.

Ask two primary questions:

- a. Does the New Testament add to the principle
- b. Or does the New Testament modify that principle

We see Yeshua saying over and over, “You heard it was said but I say to you”. He’s changing how we understand some of these principles. So look at it through the lens of the New Testament. Be careful. There are letters which seem to modify yet they are talking about a different subject all together. Look for cross references to text. When Paul says not to judge on meat, drink, new moons, sabbaths, he’s not talking about pork vs beef or the seventh day verses the first. He is actually quoting a command from God on the ceremonial rituals surrounding the feast’s and festivals. And when we put that in context, we see that the Colossians were having the same problem as many of Paul’s churches in that “Christian” Jewish teachers were telling them they must keep many of these ceremonial rituals to be saved.

We must be careful that we take these steps carefully and don’t end up in error or end up putting someone else in error.

Now you know how to study 40% of the Old Testament.

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural, look for the applicable, and write out the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it’s original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Old Testament narrative...

> Joshua 2

OLD TESTAMENT LAW

Difficulties in reading Old Testament Law...

When reading Old Testament Laws, there are some we wonder about:

*“Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”
(Exodus 34:26)*

*“Keep my decrees. ‘Do not mate different kinds of animals.’ ‘Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.’ ‘Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.’”
(Leviticus 19:19)*

“When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean.” (Leviticus 13:40)

Bald men unite

“A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this.” (Deuteronomy 22:5)

Ok, well some make sense but we wonder about others. We violate some laws:

“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:32)

“Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:28)

“The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.” (Deuteronomy 14:8)

We obey some laws:

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18)

“You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13)

“You shall not commit adultery.” (Deuteronomy 5:18)

The question becomes, how do you know when you are suppose to wonder in confusion, when your suppose to violate the law, and when you are suppose to keep the law? That creates difficulty

General guidelines for reading Old Testament Law...

1. Many people relate the term law, in the Bible, to the Ten Commandments or to the Mosaic Laws. When you see Law mentioned, it could mean one of several things.

- Over 600 specific commands
- Talmud Law
- Ten Commandments
- Statutes
- Ceremonial Law
- Torah (first five books of the Bible)
- Sometimes its the Rabbi’s interpretation of the old Law

2. Old Testament law is a **GIFT** from God to His people. The Law was not set up to give stipulations and boundaries to make their life hard. This is a picture of God’s love for them.

3. Old Testament Law is a **COVENANT**. We keep Laws for freedom, peace, to show nationality, and devotion.

4. Not all Laws are the Old Covenant as we refer to Old Covenant. There are many Old Testament laws that were given before Mt Sinai.

- Ten Commandments and some statutes existed before Mt Sinai
- Clean and unclean foods was before Mt Sinai

There is a general rule for Old Testament law.

- If it was repeated in New Testament then it's still binding.
- If it was amended, it is binding within its amendment.
- If it was not restated or amended then it's possible that it does not exist. When laws are not restated or reinforced, these laws may no longer be binding; yet the principle may still exist. We talked about tattoo's. Many of the laws that encompass the tattoo law were laws to separate God's people from the pagan world. While we don't see the tattoo law in the New Testament, we do see the principle is still there.

The following laws are NOT binding today: Israel's civil laws and the ceremonial laws that surrounded the temple system and gave atonement for sin.

The following laws are definitely binding today: The Ten Commandments and some of the statutes of God; as we see on the sermon on the mount.

5. All the Old Testament laws is still the Word of God **FOR** us, even though it's not a command of God **TO** us. Just because an Old Testament law may not be binding, it does not mean the law does not matter. It is still very valuable.

*"When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it
(Deuteronomy 22:8)*

That law is not binding, yet the principle is still there. It's good to realize that God cared enough about the visitor to our home so that they wouldn't get hurt.

There are still some difficulties surrounding the laws. Just because it was amended does not mean the old is gone. Sometimes those amendments are stricter.

*" You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. ' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment
(Matthew 5:21-22)*

*" You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery. ' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart
(Matthew 5:27-28)*

Be careful not to confuse restated for amendments making it gone. Remember that the authors of the letters are addressing an issue they are having in the church. The authors are not writing a systematic doctrinal statement. Often the author is quoting Old Testament ceremonial law to make a point. As used earlier, Paul talking about meats, drinks, sabbaths, and moons, is not talking about clean and unclean foods nor whether or not the Lord's Sabbath is gone. He's quoting from Old Testament ceremonial laws and telling the church that the ceremonial feast's and rituals for salvation are gone. Notice the parallels in the statement by Paul and the Old Testament writing.

*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ
(Colossians 2:16-17)*

17 Then it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and DRINK offerings, at the FEAST (festivals), the NEW MOONS, the SABBATHS, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel. He shall prepare the SIN OFFERING, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings TO MAKE ATONEMENT for the house of Israel (Ezekiel 45:17)

When we understand what is going on at the church of the Colossians we know the truth in this passage.

A practical process for reading Old Testament Law...

1. Observe their home: What do I see?

Look at the laws collectively. You'll feel like your drowning if you try to look at every single one so, when you can, look at them as groups and try to determine what God's intent was from that group of laws in that time.

Look at the laws in their context. God said not to cook a goat in it's mothers milk. This was a Canaanite practice of pagan gods and He did not want them associating in what they did as idol worship.

2. Understand their home: What does it mean?

When viewing in the Old Testament Laws, understand the Laws are God's inspired Word for you, not God's direct command to you

Understand the character of God in the Law including His Justice, mercy, Holiness and love.

Look at the Law as a gift and not a limitation. These laws are good things not bad things. We would not need keys if everyone kept the law - that's peace and freedom.

Understand the essence of the law that is repeated in the New Testament

For each law and series of laws, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: "What do these laws mean?"

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate?

Look for the biblical and compatible by identifying a theological principle in its Old Testament context. Then, filter that theological principle through the New Testament. Ask two primary questions:

- a. Does the New Testament add to that principle?
- b. Does the New Testament modify that principle?

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural and remember that the value of the Old Testament law is eternal.

Look for the applicable and write out the timeless truth(s), using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Old Testament law...

> Leviticus 5:2-6

“Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and he is unaware of it, he also shall be unclean and guilty. 3 Or if he touches human uncleanness—whatever uncleanness with which a man may be defiled, and he is unaware of it—when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty.

4 “Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it—when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters.

5 “And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; 6 and he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin

(Leviticus 5:2-6)

We see this picture that transcends to our time, culture, and New Testament. While there may be no New Testament Law about touching carcasses, God wants us to avoid the unclean things in this world and to watch out for, and be selective in, the words that come out of our mouth. If we do mess up, we have a Lamb there for us.

I see two main point here: first we are to avoid. I think often we don't avoid enough because we see Christ as this safety net and we tend to take chances; but we are to avoid. Second, there is Christ when we mess up.

POETRY

Difficulties in reading Old Testament poetry...

One of the big difficulties in Old Testament poetry is that it's bi-directional. Sometimes it's God's words to us and sometimes it's our words to God. We often see the Bible as God's Word to us, and it is; but there's parts that are our words to God. How do we interpret our words to God and apply them as God's words to us? are you confused? So, this can make things difficult

Also, Old Testament poetry is blatantly **honest**

*Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me
(Psalms 88:14)*

If you prayed that prayer in church today, you'd probably not be called on to pray again.

General guidelines for reading Old Testament poetry...

1. Old Testament poetry is **EMOTIONAL**. We've got to be careful and look at the emotion of the text and not over study to get all of what we get out of Galatians.
2. Old Testament poetry is **METAPHORICAL**. In Psalms 23 we read that the Lord is our Shepherd - it a metaphor.
3. Old Testament poetry is **VARIABLE**. There are all kinds of different types of poems in the Old Testament poetry books: Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Lamentations, and the prophetic books.

In the Psalms alone, there are all kinds of different poetry

- a. Individual (3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 88, 120, 139, 142).
- b. Corporate (12, 44, 80, 94, 137).
- c. Thanksgiving psalms (18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 65-67, 75, 92, 107, 116, 118, 124, 136, 138).
- d. Hymns of praise (8, 19, 33, 103-104, 111, 113-114, 117, 145-150).
- e. Salvation-History Psalms (78, 105-106, 135-136).
- f. Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation (2, 18, 20-21, 24, 29, 45-48, 50, 72, 76, 81, 84, 87, 89, 93, 95-99, 101, 110, 132, 144).
- g. Wisdom Psalms (36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133).
- h. Songs of Trust (11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131).

A practical process for reading Old Testament poetry...

1. Observe their home: What do I see?

Notice the concise and exact use of words in the writings of Old Testament poetry. The Old Testament uses a minimum number of words when it comes to poetry

"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths;" (Psalm 25:4)

That's actually only five words in the Hebrew - three words in the first part and 2 words in the second part.

Notice the structure of Old Testament poetry. We talked about this some with the Gospels.

° **PARALLELISM** - One thought expressed by two-four lines of text. And, synonymous poems where there is close similarity between lines.

"The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." (Psalm 19:8)

There's **DEVELOPMENTAL** poems where the second line develops off the previous.

*"He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;"
(Psalm 121:3)*

“Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.” (Psalm 31:21)

Look for **ILLUSTRATIVE** poems where the first line conveys the idea and the second line illustrates it.

*“O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle—”
(Psalm 140:7)*

Look for poems that uses a **CONTRAST**

“For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” (Psalm 1:6)

“Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.” (Proverbs 10:12)

Notice the figurative imagery in Old Testament poetry. Look for a **SIMILE**.

*“Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.”
(Proverbs 11:22)*

Does that inspire you or what?

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

Look for **METAPHORS**.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” (Psalm 23:1)

*“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.”
(Psalm 68:5)*

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”
(Proverbs 17:22)*

There are poems that offer an indirect **ANALOGY**. The author assumes that the reader can make the comparison without explicit instruction as to what it means.

“Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.” (Psalm 22:13)

“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.” (Psalm 18:16)

*“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”
(Psalm 91:4)*

There’s poems that use **EXAGGERATION**.

“My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (Psalm 42:3)

“I beat them as fine as dust borne on the wind; I poured them out like mud in the streets.” (Psalm 18:42)

*“For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.”
(Psalm 40:12)*

There's Personification and Anthropomorphism (An-thra-po-mor-fism) poems. I included the pronunciation but it probably helped you as much as it helps me. These types of poems attribute to one entity the characteristics of another type of entity.

*"Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in."
(Psalm 24:7)*

*"Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel."
(Isaiah 44:23)*

*"Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,"
(Psalm 19:4)*

We have **CAUSE** and **EFFECT** poems.

"Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice." (Psalm 51:8)

"A foolish son is his father's ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping." (Proverbs 19:13)
(Sarcastically) - These are good encouraging text

° Representation (part for the whole).

A part is used to represent a whole

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." (Psalm 40:2)

Sometimes the writers address a person like they are present when in fact they are not. These are called **APOSTROPHE**.

"Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth." (Psalm 2:10)

"Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping." (Psalm 6:8)

"Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back," (Psalm 114:5)

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? Don't interpret Old Testament poetry like you would interpret a New Testament letter. Letters appeal to logic and poetry appeals to emotion. Rational arguments are central in Paul's writings and images are central in poetry.

Look at all these figures of speech and for each segment of poetry, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: "What does this segment mean?"

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate?

Look for the Biblical and compatible by identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context. Then, filter that theological principle through the New Testament and ask two primary questions:

- a. Does the New Testament add to that principle?
- b. Does the New Testament modify that principle?

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural and look for the applicable. Write out the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in its original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels

the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Old Testament poetry...

> Psalm 116:1-4

PROPHETS

Difficulties in reading Old Testament prophecy...

The prophets are some of the hardest books to understand. If you just getting started in studying the Bible, I would encourage you to stay away from the books of prophecy.

We have gruesome text in prophecy.

*‘As a shepherd saves from the lion’s mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved, those who sit in Samaria on the edge of their beds and in Damascus on their couches.’”
(Amos 3:12)*

This is a picture in Jeremiah 2 that is just downright insulting. How God speaks to His people in this way, but it got the point across. What do we do with insulting texts?

*“How can you say, ‘I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals’? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving—in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her.”
(Jeremiah 2:23-24)*

What do we do with texts of judgment?

“Then the Lord said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the Lord says: “ ‘Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.’” (Jeremiah 15:1-2)

One reason this is so difficult is because we have text like this sometimes and when you read through the prophets your like, “how did that get in here?”

No where else in history or current writings do we have a genre of text like the prophets, therefore, we don’t have anything like this to compare to. We don’t have contemporary literature like this.

We don’t hear much about the prophets themselves. Typically, the narratives tell us about the prophets and the prophets tell us what they said; but they don’t give us much background.

General guidelines for reading Old Testament prophecy...

1. Old Testament prophets were **ENFORCING** and **MEDITATING** the Old Covenant. The prophets’ message is unoriginal. Prophets are not about foretelling future events. The prophets are about correcting current mis-practices and life practices by using Scripture already provided. They then give a warning of what will be IF the issue is not corrected.

The prophets’ message is **CONFRONTATIONAL**. They confront people in their sin and God’s love for them. This is why I have problems with most self-proclaimed prophets today - it’s always about love with no correction.

The prophets’ message is about 99% **COMPLETED**. Often when we go to prophecy and we try to relate it to events that are either happening or are going to happen but less than 1% has not happened.

The Old Testament prophets were God’s direct **REPRESENTATIVES**.

A practical process for reading Old Testament prophecy...

1. Observe their home: What do I see? We look at paragraphs in letters, we look at segments in poetry, we look at stories or discourses in other parts of genre. In prophecies, look at entire oracles.

Look at oracles individually. The different oracles don’t flow together as easily as letters or parables so look at them individually.

Look at oracles historically. You got to know the historical context. You need to know what was going on in those times.

Look for certain figures of speech. Instead of Amos saying God is mad, he's saying the Lion is roaring. Isaiah says though your sins are like scarlet they'll be washed as white as what? snow

Notice certain forms of prophecy.

◦ The **LAWSUIT**- The full lawsuit contains a summons, a charge, and a verdict. For example, when we look at Isaiah chapter 3, we see the full lawsuit (13-14a), the indictment (14b-16), and the judgement sentence (17-26).

◦ The **WOE** - The woe contains three elements: An announcement of distress (the "woe"), the reason for the distress, and a prediction of doom.

*"Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, 'Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?' Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them."
(Habakkuk 2:6-8)*

◦ The **PROMISE** - The Promise is a salvation oracle that gives reference to the future, mention of radical change, and a promise of blessing.

*"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord, who will do these things. "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God."
(Amos 9:11-15)*

◦ The **ENACTMENT** Prophecy; which is really interesting. This is when God accompanies His Word with symbolic actions.

*"Then the Lord said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt's shame."
(Isaiah 20:3-4)*

Do you realize what this is saying? God instructed poor Isaiah to go out in his underwear, at least periodically, for three years just to be an illustration of what was going to happen in this picture. It may not be fun to be a prophet but so many desire that.

◦ The **MESSENGER SPEECH** - This is the "Thus says the Lord..." prophecy that is most often referred to.

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? Remember to think in full oracles. There are three basic points in prophetic oracles:

a. You have broken the covenant; repent!

Repenting from Idolatry.

*"Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good."
(Jeremiah 10:5)*

Repenting from lack of Social Justice.

“Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”
(Micah 6:7-8)

Repenting from their Religious Ritualism.

“The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your evil assemblies.”
(Isaiah 1:11-13)

- b. If you don't repent, you will experience judgment.
- c. Yet you have hope beyond judgment for future restoration.

For each oracle, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: “What's the meaning of this oracle?”

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate?

Look for the biblical and compatible by identifying a theological principle in its Old Testament context.

Then, filter that theological principle through the New Testament and ask two primary questions:

- a. Does the New Testament add to that principle?
- b. Does the New Testament modify that principle?

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural and look for the applicable. Then, write out the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in its original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Old Testament prophecy...

> Jeremiah 7

WISDOM LITERATURE

Difficulties in reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

Wisdom literature is found in Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. It's often difficult to follow the line of thinking in these books.

It can also be difficult to understand literary styles. That's dangerous because if we can't understand them it leads to abuse of the text.

Sometimes it's difficult to determine meaning.

*"How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats (is this a compliment?) descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone."
(Song of Solomon 4:1-2)*

Wow!!! If you looking for a wife, look for teeth like a flock of sheep. So, application - don't marry someone without good hygiene. Is that what this is talking about? Only if she has white teeth and none of them are missing - ok. So, what do you do with that?

General guidelines for reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

1. The goal of wisdom literature is to apply the Word to practical living. That's what wisdom is - Knowledge APPLIED
2. The wisdom books are not a collection of universal promises. If you read Proverbs 22:11, it doesn't mean if you have gracious speech that the presidents going to be your friend now.
3. They are insights and guidelines for development of godly character. It's God's knowledge applied to life.

*"He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend."
(Proverbs 22:11)*

*"Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you."
(Proverbs 22:26-27)*

*"If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked."
(Proverbs 29:12)*

A practical process for reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

1. Observe their home: What do I see?

Look for figures of speech. Also, look closely for the historical-cultural background. When you read...

*"Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife."
(Proverbs 25:24)*

... understand that it was possible to live on a corner of a roof at that time.

2. Understand their home: What does it mean? Interpret wisdom literature in light of its specific book context. What's going on in this book? Proverbs is a collection of proverbs and not necessarily intended to flow from one to the next.

Interpret wisdom literature in light of its overall biblical context. The overall context of the books are:

- ° The Basic Approach to Life – Rational and Ordered (Proverbs).
- ° The Suffering of the Righteous (Job).
- ° The Failure of the Rational, Ordered Approach to Provide Ultimate Meaning (Ecclesiastes).
- ° The Irrationality of Romantic Love Between a Husband and Wife (Song of Solomon).

For each segment of wisdom literature, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: "What does this segment mean?"

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate?

Look for the Biblical and compatible by identifying a theological principle in its Old Testament context. Then, filter that theological principle through the new covenant and ask two primary questions:

- a. Does the New Testament add to that principle?
- b. Does the New Testament modify that principle?

Look for the eternal and cross-cultural and look for the applicable. Write out the timeless truth(s) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in it's original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

An example of reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

> Job 19

REVELATION

Difficulties in reading Revelation...

Difficulties in reading Revelation. where do I start? There are so many details, so many images, so many numbers, so many different views, that it's an easy recipe for a headache.

General guidelines for reading Revelation...

I'm not going to pretend in the next 60 seconds that your going to understand Revelation; yet, here are just some simple guidelines.

1. Look at Revelation with humility. It's ok if you don't get it.
2. Look for Revelation's message to the original readers. This book was not inspired to write the left behind series. This book was written to first century believers; in the context of persecution.
3. Avoid trying to construct a strict chronological map of future events. What year is this going to happen? What's going to happen in the next year, or next few years? Many people have tried this through history; much to their shame and embarrassment.
4. Much of Revelation is a series of imagery about the same event or sequence of events. Many think that the seals are opened, then the trumpets blown, when actually it's two different perspectives of the same time frame.
5. Take Revelation seriously, but not always literally. Remember that Revelation is full of imagery. Much of this imagery is revealed through, and interpreted by other passages in Scripture.
6. Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Almost half of what is in Revelation comes from Scripture or the context of Scripture.
7. Revelation is not all future. There's nothing in Scripture that calls Revelation "End Day" prophecies. Revelations was mainly future to the audience of that day; but it starts with letters to churches of that day and travels through time, and historical events, to our day.
8. Revelations teachings are eternal. The book begins and ends with a blessing for ALL who read, understand, and do the writings in the book. The writings don't just apply to an imaginary seven year tribulation period that is not in the Bible. The book of Revelation applies to all churches, through all times, in all cultures.
9. Revelation is a prophecy and needs to be treated in the same manner that we treat Old Testament prophecy. Revelation is about rebuking the church and about correction to the church. You see the terms false prophet, whore, harlots. God called Israel a whore and harlot when it was pursuing the pleasures of this world more than Him. In Revelation, God's doing the same to the christian church.
10. The book of Revelation is in the Bible; it's for the Christian and not for the world. The book is NOT about political events, one world governments, one world leaders called "anti-christ (a term not even used in the Bible for "end day" prophecy). Prophecies are from God to His people or church and not to the world; therefore they relate to God's people or church as a warning to change. That's why it's sandwiched with a blessing to those who read and follow the book.

A practical process for reading Revelation...

1. Observe their home: What do I see? Look closely at the images that John specifically identifies. Look at various segments as a whole, not always pressing every detail.
2. Understand their home: What does it mean? Stay focused on the main idea. For each segment, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: "What's the point?"

3. Bring it back home: How does it relate?

- Look for the Biblical and compatible...
- Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
- Look for the applicable...
- Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.

4. Apply it in your home - What do I do? Meditate on the truth of the Scripture and relate the timeless truth to today by seeing the timeless truth in its original situation through a view of the key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) then identifying the truth to a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation. Look for key elements in the contemporary situation (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc) that parallel the original situation.

Practice the timeless truth and ask the five primary questions:

- Who should I be?
- How should I think?
- What should I do?
- Where should I go?
- Who will I teach?

*Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short
(Revelation 12:7-12)*

We have a picture of Satan, the dragon, being thrown down, being defeated by Christ. But at the same time, leading all the world astray from God and accusing the followers of God. We see him at work, day and night - spiritual warfare is real. These are timeless truths that come away from this passage. There's also a picture of God's people suffering, still suffering; but they triumph over death by making Christ their Lord and King. I want you to look at verse 11: *they triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death* - by the blood of the Lamb AND by their testimony - their proclamation to the world.

There is a true story of the Batak tribe of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. Most of the history of the Batak tribe was totally Muslim - 100% completely Muslim. Two missionaries came, a man and woman couple, and shared the Gospel with the tribe. The tribal leaders too the missionaries, when they would not stop sharing the Gospel, struck them down and killed them; and the tribe cannibalized them - eaten by that tribe. A few years later another missionary came to that tribe and shared the Gospel with them. This time, the tribal leader said, “This guy is saying the same thing the other couple had said. Maybe we should listen to him.” They did. They listened to him over and over again, and the tribal leaders came to faith in Christ. Once the tribal leaders came to faith in Christ, in a couple of months, the entire tribe converted to Christianity. Today there are nearly 3 million believers among the Botok tribe of northern Sumatra, Indonesia.

Those who give their life for the Gospel will gain their life. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Will you take this word to the nations, even if it means your life?

An example of reading Revelation...

> Revelation 12:1-17