



THE BIBLE

TRUSTED & TREASURED

Establish & Equip Seminar Series

THE BIBLE

TRUSTED & TREASURED

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6:7 RESOURCES

Resourcing the Movement of the Gospel in the World

Encounter Series

ESTABLISH & EQUIP *Seminar Series*

The VALUE of the Bible

What value should we place on the Bible?

The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...**What value should we place on the Bible?
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1...**Can we trust the Bible?
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2...**Can we trust the Bible?
- **APPROACHING the Bible ...**What attitude should we have as read the Bible?
- **UNDERSTANDING the Bible ...**How do we understand and interpret the Bible?
- **EXPERIENCING God in the Bible...**How do we experience God when we read the Bible?
- **PERSEVERING in the Bible...**How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?

INTRODUCTION: What's our problem?

Q: Why is it easier to binge watch your favorite show (Sports Center, Fixer Upper, Grey's Anatomy) for 2 hours versus spending 10 minutes reading the Bible?

The Value of the Bible

Our Treasured Possession

Psalm 119:24 - Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

Psalm 119:72 - The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Psalm 119:103 - How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth

WHY? The Bible is the sovereign Creator's communication with us

- The use of personal pronouns
 - Q:** What does the consistent use of personal pronouns teach us?
- The primary way God reveals Himself

The Bible isn't merely a guidebook but a story through which we meet and know God.

The Attributes of the Bible

God identifies Himself with His Word

- 2 Samuel 12:9-10
- John 14:23

" God's Word is an extension of Himself - His identity, purposes, affections, and power."

- **Jonathan Leeman, Word-Centered Church, page 30**

→ The Bible is _____

Psalm 119:4 - You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

- 1) All of life is **subject** to what God says in the Bible
- 2) The Bible is the **standard** of life

The VALUE of the Bible

What value should we place on the Bible?

Q: Why do we often have an allergic reaction to the authority of the Bible?

Q: How does the Bible being authoritative increase the value we place on it?

A God who must submit to you and your authority is not God at all but an idol you have crafted to your own liking (Romans 1:21-25). We were created to be tethered to revelation and to interpret life through God's revelation (Genesis 1-2). When we see that God's greatest glory and our greatest good are behind all His commands, then we will not feel His authority is restrictive (1 John 5:2-3).

→ The Bible is _____ & _____

Psalm 119:160 - All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal.

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

- 1) God is truthful so ALL of His Words are true
- 2) Because His Words are TRUE, they are also RELEVANT to every desire of our hearts

Q: How does the Bible being true and relevant increase the value we place on it?

*God is true and relevant to us and so is His Word.
The true and eternally relevant story of the Bible defines reality and ought to define our lives.
The story of the Bible ought to be the lens through which we view everything.*

→ The Bible is _____

The Bible is living and has the power to...

- 1) Create spiritual life - 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18
- 2) Free us from the bondage of sin - John 8:31-32
- 3) Transform us to be more like Jesus Christ - John 17:17
- 4) Guide us in our daily lives - Psalm 119:105
- 5) Accomplish God's work in the world - Acts 12:24; 13:49; 19:20; Colossians 1:6

"The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun." - **Thomas Guthrie**

*God is the ultimate AUTHORITY. He is TRUE. He is RELEVANT. He is SUFFICIENT for us.
Therefore, the Bible is authoritative, true, relevant, and sufficient.
To the degree that we value and treasure God, we will value and treasure the Bible.*

The VALUE of the Bible

What value should we place on the Bible?

Where do I go from here?

→ **LOOK INWARD** - Think about your own heart...

Q: *What functional value do you place on the Bible?*

DISTRUST ----- DISINTEREST----- DUTY ----- DESIRE----- DELIGHT

Q: *What needs realignment in how you view the Bible?*

"Do you struggle to make the Bible a regular part of your routine? Consider what you are not believing about the word? Do we believe it has something relevant to say? Do you believe there are answers to life's hardest questions in the Bible? Do you think you will find the comfort and presence of Christ in this book? The Bereans went to the Scriptures daily because they were eager to listen to God and they believed the Bible was the place to go to hear his voice.

Why do we check email compulsively? Or Facebook? Or Twitter? Or the old fashioned mailbox? Because we believe there is news for us--there's something there. Someone may have just put up a sweet video of a cat or a status update about someone who made a nice lemonade. Really important stuff like that. We check because we believe we may hear something relevant and necessary. And yet, what could be more relevant or necessary than God's word?

Let this truth be a diagnostic tool you and for me: Our behavior with the Scriptures is an indication of our belief about the Scriptures. The Bereans looked into the Bible every day because they expected to find something there. Do we?" - **Kevin DeYoung**

→ **PAUSE & THINK** - Before you open the Bible pause and remember that this is your Creator & Redeemer's communication to you!

→ **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar
The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:1-24 this upcoming week

Psalm 34:8 - *"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"*

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:1-24

[1] Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! [2] Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, [3] who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! [4] You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. [5] Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! [6] Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. [7] I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. [8] I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!

[9] How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. [10] With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! [11] I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. [12] Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! [13] With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. [14] In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. [15] I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. [16] I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

[17] Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. [18] Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. [19] I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! [20] My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. [21] You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. [22] Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies. [23] Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. [24] Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1

Can we trust the Bible?

The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...***What value should we place on the Bible?*
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INTRODUCTION: *Why is the reliability of the Bible a critical question?*

Historical confidence vs. Mathematical certainty

What do we mean by reliable?

2 Options - *The Bible IS God's Word (thus fully reliable) or The Bible ISN'T God's Word (thus not reliable)*

The Doctrine of Inspiration

The reliability of the Bible is based on the Doctrine of Inspiration

Defining Inspiration

"Inspiration is to be defined as a supernatural, providential influence of God's Holy Spirit upon the human authors which caused them to write what He wished to be written for the communication of revealed truth to others."

- **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 77**

2 Timothy 3:15-17

2 Peter 1:19-21

The Bible is reliable in that it is both inerrant and infallible in the arenas in which it speaks - the Bible is without error and fully trustworthy

"The Bible is 'without error' in the sense that all that the Biblical authors intended to teach is true and does not conflict with reality or with the will of God." - **John Piper**

- **The Bible DOES speak to...**what God considered important for us to know about Him, His created world, and our duty to Him (it is very selective in all its accounts)
- **The Bible DOES NOT speak to...**everything that we may want to know regarding the what, the when, the why and the how (there is a degree of mystery)

Shorter Catechism Question #3: The Bible is a historical and factual narrative in which God reveals what we need to know about Him and our duty to Him.

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1

Can we trust the Bible?

Can we trust the translations?

How can we be sure that the translations of the Bible from the original language accurately reflect the original?

The original languages in which the Bible was written:

- Hebrew (most of the Old Testament)
- Aramaic (portions of the Old Testament)
- Greek (all of the New Testament)

Steps in the translation process:

- A committee is formed of scholars in the original languages
- They work as a team to understand the meaning and structure of the original language
- They work as a team to choose the right words and order that will be understandable in the new language

There are 3 main types of Bible translations available to us...

1. **'Word for Word'** (Formal Equivalency) - *These translations work to follow the original language as closely as possible in a word for word fashion. These tend to be very accurate translations to the original but due to the nuances of languages they can be cumbersome and awkward to read at times. However, because of the word for word accuracy, these translations are great for Bible study.*

Recommended: English Standard Version (ESV), New American Standard Version (NASB), Revised Version (RV), New King James Version (NKJV), Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

2. **'Thought for Thought'** (Dynamic Equivalency) - *These translations seek to balance word for word accuracy with readability therefore each word or phrase is translated to its English equivalents. The priority is placed upon what was intended in the original language along with comprehension in English. This makes this form of translation more readable yet at times it does not convey the original as clearly as the word for word translation.*

Recommended: New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New Living Translation (NLT) *The NLT leans further towards a paraphrase than the other two recommended

3. **'Paraphrase'** - *These translations seek to take the intended meaning of the text and translate it into English. The priority is placed upon readability and comprehension in English. The translator not only translates into English but also interprets the meaning of the text. Because of this freedom, the translation may misinterpret or leave out important details in a text. These can be helpful in reading long portions of the Bible or using a resource to gain more understanding as to the meaning of a passage.*

Examples of Paraphrases: The Message, The Living Bible (TLB), Amplified Bible

Can we trust the copies?

How can we be sure that the Bible we read is accurate to the original documents?

Key Challenge: *Inerrancy and infallibility are technically limited to the autographic codex and text (the original physical documents of the different portions of Scripture). We now only have copies and translations of these documents.*

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1

Can we trust the Bible?

The use of copies in biblical history

The existence of copies does not NEGATE the authority and reliability of the text...

- Biblical figures used copies and considered them authoritative
- Jesus raised no doubts as to the copies of the Old Testament Scriptures in the synagogues
- Copies are authoritative and reliable to the degree that they reflect the original work of God

The science of textual criticism

Comparison of the New Testament and Other Classics				
<i>Work</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Earliest Copy</i>	<i>Time Span</i>	<i># of Copies</i>
Iliad (Homer)	900 BC	400 BC	500 yrs.	643
Gallic War (Caesar)	58-50 BC	AD 850	900 yrs.	10
Tetralogies (Plato)	427-347 BC	AD 900	1,200 yrs.	7
Aristotle Works	384-322 BC	AD 1100	1,400 yrs.	49
New Testament	AD 40-100	AD 125	25 years	24,000+

This many copies allows them to compare and contrast and find out just where copyist and translations errors are and confirm what the original would be. Among what scholars (Daniel Wallace) have found...

- (1) 75% of all variants are spelling errors or saying, essentially "an" instead of "a,"
- (2) the second most common variants are synonyms and changes in word order
- (3) a small group that produces meaningful variations- around 1% of all variations- none of which, even skeptic scholars like Bart Ehrman agree, affects any essential belief of the Bible.

Can we trust that we have the right books?

How did we get the books of the Bible? The formation of the New Testament Canon

The word "canon" is from the Greek word "kanon," signifying a measuring rod

To have the Bible "canonized" meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority.

The Old Testament canon was formed well before the birth of Christ

Jesus considered the Old Testament true (John 10:35-36) and authoritative (Matthew 5:17-19), and that He viewed Himself as the fulfillment of what was written in it (Luke 24:44). He considered biblical history in the Old Testament as straightforward historical facts (Matthew 12:38-42). He quoted from most books of it and quoted it as the very words of God (Matthew 19:3-6).

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1

Can we trust the Bible?

The human means by which the books were received as authoritative

- ✓ APOSTOLICITY: The text must have originated with the apostolic eyewitnesses or close associates of the eyewitness.
- ✓ ANTIQUITY: The text must have been written in the 1st century so that it could be verified and found to be in agreement.
- ✓ ORTHODOX: The text must agree with the known teaching handed down from Jesus Himself.
- ✓ UNIVERSALITY: The overseers closest to the apostles (geographically and chronologically) must have viewed the book as authoritative, genuine, and true. Those books recognized as authoritative were the ones used by Christians in every part of the known world.

The core list, apart from the controversial books, was known, at the latest, in the latter second century (Irenaeus, about 180 AD).

The first list known to us with all 27 books is in the Festal Letter of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in AD 367. This list was affirmed by the Synod of Hippo in 393.

The importance of Apostleship in forming the New Testament canon

Apostle - 'One chosen and sent with a special commission as the fully authorized representative of the sender.'

- Jesus promised inspiration and authority for His Apostles after His departure - *John 14:25-26, John 16:12-14, Acts 1:1-4*
- The Apostles teaching was considered authoritative in the early church - *Acts 2:42, Ephesians 2:19-20, 2 Peter 3:1-2, 2 Peter 3:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27*

The process of forming the New Testament canon

Early on, the Gospels and most letters were being circulated by the church and considered authoritative...

- The four Gospels, Paul's 13 Epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Acts were universally recognized from the beginning
- Only Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Revelation were disputed by some but recognized by the majority

Where do I go from here?

- **ASK QUESTIONS** - God (and the Bible) can handle your questions. Seek out answers where you are troubled.
- **STAND CONFIDENT** - Stand with courage and confidence in a hostile world that seeks to attack truth.
- **KNOW** - Know and be assured that God is personal and knowable. He has preserved His communication for you.
- **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!
The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:25-48 this upcoming week

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:25-48

[25] My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! [26] When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! [27] Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. [28] My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! [29] Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! [30] I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. [31] I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! [32] I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

[33] Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. [34] Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. [35] Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. [36] Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! [37] Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. [38] Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. [39] Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. [40] Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

[41] Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; [42] then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word. [43] And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. [44] I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, [45] and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. [46] I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, [47] for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. [48] I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2

Can we trust the Bible?

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INTRODUCTION: *Why is the reliability of the Bible a critical question?*

Historical confidence vs. Mathematical certainty

How can we be sure that what is recorded in the Bible is true & accurate?

#1 - The Continuity of the Bible

The Bible consists of 66 books of wide ranging types of literature, written by 40 different authors over a period of 1500 years who lived on 3 different continents and spoke 3 different languages and came from very diverse walks of life (from kings to shepherds to fisherman to prophets)...**YET it is a progressive revelation of the story of redemption.**

Q: *Why might the continuity of the Bible point to its trustworthiness?*

- **Continuity amongst the various types of literature, writers, and time periods of writing to reveal one grand story**

"The Bible is a unity. That is perhaps the most amazing of all the amazing things that are true of it. It consists of sixty-six separate units, written over more than a thousand years against a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, by people who for the most part worked independently of each other and show no awareness that their books would become canonical Scripture. The books themselves are of all kinds: prose jostling poetry, hymns rubbing shoulders with history, sermons with statistics, letters with liturgies, lurid visions with a love song. Why do we bind up this collection between the same two covers, call it The Holy Bible, and treat it as one book? One justification for doing this—one of many—is that the collection as a whole, once we start to explore it, proves to have an organic coherence that is simply stunning. Books written centuries apart seem to have been designed for the express purpose of supplementing and illuminating each other. There is throughout one leading character (God the Creator), one historical perspective (world redemption), one focal figure (Jesus of Nazareth, who is both Son of God and Savior), and one solid body of harmonious teaching about God and godliness." - **JI Packer**

- **Continuity in the multitude of prophecies**

#2 - Archeological & Historical Corroboration of the Bible

- **There is an abundance of information that history could either corroborate or deny.**
 - Almost every book of the Old Testament references historical people, places, and events
 - The Gospels and Acts reference historical people, places, and events
 - Luke references 32 countries, 54 cities, & 9 islands WITHOUT ERROR

"On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine." - **Millar Burrows, Yale Archeologist**

Q: *Why might historical accuracy be important as we wrestle with its trustworthiness?*

The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2

Can we trust the Bible?

#3 - New Testament Eyewitness Authorship

- **The New Testament was written by people who witnessed and testified as to what they had seen. Their testimony could be confirmed or denied.**

Luke 1:1-4

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

"It is not only Christ's supporters who were still alive. Also still alive were many bystanders, officials, and opponents who had actually heard him teach, seen his actions, and watched him die. They would have been especially ready to challenge any accounts that were fabricated. For a highly altered, fictionalized account of an event to take hold in the public imagination it is necessary that the eyewitnesses (and their children and grandchildren) all be long dead. They must be off the scene so they cannot contradict or debunk the embellishments and falsehoods of the story.

The gospels were written far too soon for this to occur." - **Tim Keller**

- **New Testament eyewitness authorship, and biblical authorship in general, are counterproductive if the goal was to fabricate a story or movement.**

#4 - The Bible's Relevance across Cultures

- **The Bible makes the most sense of the world around us...**

Why we are relational // our desire for justice and grace // the origin of morality and suffering // our longing for satisfaction

- **The Bible gives the clearest answers to the biggest questions that every culture faces...**

Who am I? Why am I here? What is wrong with the world? How can what is wrong be made right?

Q: *Why might its relevance across cultures be important as we wrestle with its trustworthiness?*

Within the Bible, we have a beautiful continuity which is further strengthened by external accuracy in regards to history and archeology as well as compelling evidence that what we read matches the original text. Also, we see the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, providing powerful evidence of unity and validity. This, in addition to its relevance across cultures, gives us great confidence that the Bible you hold is inspired by God and thus reliable in every way.

Where do I go from here?

- **ASK QUESTIONS** - God (and the Bible) can handle your questions. Seek out answers where you are troubled.
- **STAND CONFIDENT** - Stand with courage and confidence in a hostile world that seeks to attack truth
- **KNOW** - Know and be assured that God is personal and knowable. He has preserved His communication for you.
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The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:49-72 this upcoming week

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:49-72

[49] Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. [50] This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. [51] The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. [52] When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. [53] Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. [54] Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. [55] I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. [56] This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.

[57] The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words. [58] I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. [59] When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; [60] I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. [61] Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. [62] At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. [63] I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. [64] The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!

[65] You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word. [66] Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. [67] Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. [68] You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. [69] The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; [70] their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. [71] It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. [72] The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

APPROACHING the Bible

What attitude should we have as we read the Bible?

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INTRODUCTION: Our value of something greatly affects our approach of it

Ways we often Approach the Bible

...Studying for a test

...Eating fast food

...Critiquing a Movie

...Visiting a Lunch Buffet

Q: *In what ways can you resonate with one of these approaches to the Bible?*

The Proverbs 2 Approach to the Bible

Proverbs 2:1-6 - (1) My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, (2) turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, (3) and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, (4) and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, (5) then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. (6) For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Q: *What are goals we might have when we approach the Bible?*

Our Goal: _____ & _____ - Verse 5

God's Role: *The Lord* _____ - Verse 6

Q: *How might understanding this affect our approach to the Bible?*

Our Role:

→ _____ - Verses 1-2 Other Scripture: Psalm 119:12, 14, 105; Hebrews 4:12

Q: *Practically, what would it look like to approach the Bible in submission?*

APPROACHING the Bible

What attitude should we have as we read the Bible?

→ _____ - Verse 3 Other Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; Psalm 119:18, 27

Q: Practically, what would it look like to approach the Bible with desperation?

→ _____ - Verse 4 Other Scripture: Ezra 7:10, Psalm 1:1-3, 42:1-2, Philippians 3:12-14

Q: Practically, what would it look like to approach the Bible with determination?

Where do I go from here?

→ **REFLECT** on your approach of the Bible

Q: How would you describe your attitude towards pursuing God in the Bible over the past month? Compare your attitude to the attitudes we should have according to Proverbs 2:1-6.

Q: How do you typically respond when you feel "dry" spiritually or just don't feel like pursuing God? What, if anything, needs to specifically change about how you respond?

→ **BE READY FOR RESISTANCE** - What should you do when you don't feel like approaching the Bible in this way?

2 ways to respond

→ **PRAY** Proverbs 2 type prayers before you approach the Bible. Read "Praying in our Struggle to Study the Bible."

→ **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!

The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:73-96 this upcoming week

→ **LEARN** a method to study the Bible that helps foster this approach

APPROACHING the Bible

What attitude should we have as we read the Bible?

A Method for a Miner

Why learn a method to study the Bible?

1) To help us be a miner

2 Timothy 2:7 - *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

"You can learn more from a book if you stop and ask it questions than if you just read it passively. That includes the Bible too. One of the great problems in Bible reading is that we move our eyes over the words and come to the end of a column and don't know what we've read; we don't feel our minds or spirits expanded because we saw nothing fresh. It was purely mechanical. There was no discovery, no life, no breakthroughs to new insight. One of the best ways to change that is to train yourself to ask questions of the text." - **John Piper**

2) To help us understand what we read

2 Timothy 2:15 - *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

3) To help us learn to eat on our own

The O.I.A.M. Method of Studying the Bible

3 Stages

Stage 1: Observation - we answer the question, 'What does it say?'

Stage 2: Interpretation - we answer the question, 'What does it mean?'

Stage 3: Application & Meditation - we answer the question, 'What does it mean for me?'

OIAM is a Way of Thinking

"I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I shake the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb - study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings." - **Martin Luther**

The O.I.A.M Method of Studying the Bible

WHAT DOES IT SAY? *Observation*

Gather your content so you know what interpretive questions to ask...

C → Context... Take note of what is before and after the passage

5 Archeological Questions of Context - *Who wrote it? When was it written? To whom was it written? In what style was it written? Why was it written?*

S → Structure...

- Break down the passage phrase by phrase
- What words/ideas are emphasized? Repeated?
- Note words like "as", "but", "so that", "therefore"

I → Interpretive Questions... What questions do you need to answer in order to understand the author's intent?

Types of Questions - *Why has the person written this? What concerns or problems is the writer addressing? How does this passage connect with the overall themes of Scripture? Look at the details of the verse...Why are they included? Would it make any difference if they were omitted?*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? *Interpretation*

Determine what this passage means by determining the author's intent...

- Define key words & look up cross references
- Answer interpretive questions
- Read other translations & consult a commentary to give more insight
- Summarize the passage & what you learned in your own words

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME? *Application & Meditation*

Jesus is the central theme of the Bible

- How is Jesus AND/OR my need for Him seen in this passage?

Why is the Lord showing me this today?

- **The 3 R's** - *Rejoice, Repent, Request*
 - How can I *rejoice* today in light of this passage?
 - What do I need to *repent* of today in light of this passage?
 - What *requests* do I need to make today in light of this passage?

Praying in our Struggle to Study the Bible

*Excerpt from Chapter 9 of [When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy](#) by John Piper

Very practically what this means for the fight for joy is that every day we must not just go to the Word, but pray over the Word—indeed before we even get to the Word, lest he fail to come. I close this chapter with the way this works in my own experience. Almost every day I pray early in the morning that God would give me desires for him and his Word, because the desires I ought to have are absent or weak. In fact, I follow the acronym myself that I have given to many people to help them fight for joy. The acronym is I O U S. It is very limited and focused. It's not all we should pray for. But this book (and most of my life) is about the fight for joy. And that is what I O U S focuses on. Here's the way I pray over the Word in my fight for joy.

I – Incline!

The first thing my soul needs is an inclination toward God and his Word. Without that, nothing else will happen of any value in my life. I must want to know God and read his Word and draw near to him. Where does that “want to” come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 119:36 teaches us to pray, **“Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!”** Very simply we ask God to take our hearts, which are more inclined to breakfast and the newspaper, and change that inclination. We are asking that God create desires that are not there.

O – Open!

Next I need to have the eyes of my heart opened so that when my inclination leads me to the Word, I see what is really there, and not just my own ideas. Who opens the eyes of the heart? God does. So Psalm 119:18 teaches us to pray, **“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”** So many times we read the Bible and see nothing wonderful. Its reading does not produce joy. So what can we do? We can cry to God: “Open the eyes of my heart, O Lord, to see what it says about you as wonderful.”

U – Unite!

Then I am concerned that my heart is badly fragmented. Parts of it are inclined, and parts of it are not. Parts see wonder, and parts say, “That's not so wonderful.” What I long for is a united heart where all the parts say a joyful Yes! to what God reveals in his Word. Where does that wholeness and unity come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 86:11 teaches us to pray, **“Unite my heart to fear your name.”** Don't stumble over the word fear when you thought we were seeking joy. The fear of the Lord is a joyful experience when you renounce all sin. A thunderstorm can be a trembling joy when you know you can't be destroyed by lightning. “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to . . . the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name” (Neh. 1:11). “His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:3). Therefore pray that God would unite your heart to joyfully fear the Lord.

S – Satisfy!

What I really want from all this engagement with the Word of God and the work of his Spirit in answer to my prayers is for my heart to be satisfied with God and not with the world. Where does that satisfaction come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 90:14 teaches us to pray, **“Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”**

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:73-96

[73] Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. [74] Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word. [75] I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. [76] Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. [77] Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight. [78] Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts. [79] Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies. [80] May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!

[81] My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. [82] My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?" [83] For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes. [84] How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me? [85] The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law. [86] All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me! [87] They have almost made an end of me on earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. [88] In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

[89] Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. [90] Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. [91] By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. [92] If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. [93] I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. [94] I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts. [95] The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies. [96] I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

UNDERSTANDING the Bible

How do we understand and interpret the Bible?

The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...***What value should we place on the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **APPROACHING the Bible ...***What attitude should we have as read the Bible?*
- **UNDERSTANDING the Bible ...***How do we understand and interpret the Bible?*
- **EXPERIENCING God in the Bible...***How do we experience God when we read the Bible?*
- **PERSEVERING in the Bible...***How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?*

INTRODUCTION: The goal in studying the Bible is *transformation* **NOT** *information* **BUT** *information* is critical to *transformation*

"The heart cannot love what the mind does not know. Yes, it is sinful to acquire knowledge for knowledge's sake, but acquiring knowledge about One we love, for the sake of loving him more deeply, will always be for our transformation." - **Jen Wilkin, Women of the Word, page 31**

The Critical Need to Understand Rightly

Q: *What are some of the bigger challenges we face in understanding the Bible?*

Two assumptions as we seek to interpret & understand the Bible...

- *We can trust what we read...IT IS RELIABLE*
- *We can understand what we read...IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE*

The Doctrine of the Perspicuity (or Clarity) of Scripture

The Goal of Original Intent

A COMMON DANGER: *The danger of reading 'me' into the story*

Q: *What are the potential dangers of opening the Bible and first asking, 'What does this mean for me?'*

→ *We need to first ask, 'what this meant for them' BEFORE asking 'what this means for me'*

- **WHY? God's Word to us was *first* His Word to them**
- **The goal of interpretation is to discover the original intent of the author**

"Before you can hear it with your ears, hear it with theirs. Before you can understand it today, understand it back then."
- **Jen Wilkin, Women of the Word, page 63**

UNDERSTANDING the Bible

How do we understand and interpret the Bible?

→ *We must depend upon God and work hard as we seek to understand the original intent*

“So when you think about reading the Bible supernaturally, do not think the urgency and effort of reading the Bible naturally will be less than with any other book. All the human effort and skill that you can muster to construe the meaning of biblical passages will be called for. The glory is seen through the *meaning* of the text. And the meaning is found by reading and thinking. God is united to the man Jesus. The glory of God is united to the meaning of biblical texts. Therefore, when the miracle of seeing and savoring the glory of God happens, it is *in* the act of reading and thinking. We read. God reveals. God *gives* the supernatural miracle. We *act* the supernatural miracle...

...The ordinary aim of reading that I am commending is that we read to discover what the author intended to communicate. Which implies that meaning is outside of us. It is discovery, not creation. We do not bring it to the Bible. It is already there because the authors, with God’s guidance, put their words together so as to communicate what they intended. When we read the Bible, its meaning is not the ideas that come into our head that may be ‘meaningful’ to us. Those ideas may or may not be part of what the author meant. Rather, when we read the Bible we are digging for the gold of what inspired writers wanted to communicate. We are not creating meaning. We are seeking it...

...The Bible’s meaning is not something already in our head. It is what was in the author’s head and is now imbedded, by the wonder of language, in the words and their structure on the page. The ordinary aim of reading is to dig it out. It is a glorious work. The rewards are inestimable.”

- **John Piper, Reading the Bible Supernaturally, pages 234, 313**

The Principle of Context

1) _____ **CONTEXT**

“From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is telling us about the reign and rule of God. This is the Big Story of the Bible, the purpose for which it was written. Each of its sixty-six books contributes to telling this Big Story—a story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. The Bible purposes to tell us this Big Story in a thousand smaller stories, from its first page to its last.” - **Jen Wilkin, Women of the Word, page 50**

“The Word of God is an exceedingly complex unity. The different items and the various kinds of material which make it up—laws, promises, liturgies, genealogies, arguments, narratives, meditations, visions, aphorisms, homilies, parables and the rest—do not stand in Scripture as isolated fragments, but as parts of a whole. The expositions of them, therefore, involves exhibiting them in right relation both to the whole and to each other.”

- **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 101**

Q: *What are the potential dangers of failing to interpreting the Bible in light of the big story of redemption?*

We must learn to ask, 'How does what I am reading fit into the big story of redemption?'

2) _____ **CONTEXT**

→ *Historical & Cultural Context*

PRACTICALLY...

- **Embrace 5 Archeological Questions of Context** - *Who wrote it? When was it written? To whom was it written? In what style was it written? Why was it written?*

UNDERSTANDING the Bible

How do we understand and interpret the Bible?

→ *Literary Context*

'**Genres**' - The Bible is filled with various types (genres) of literature that all affect how we understand it.

'**Paragraphs**' - The Bible is filled with words that form sentences and sentences that form paragraphs and paragraphs that form letters and books. This impacts how we understand the Bible.

PRACTICALLY...

- Know what type of literature you are reading
- Read before & after the verses you are studying

To understand what God originally intended we must work to place the text within the big story of the Bible and within the original historical context and type of literature...

"Every text has its immediate context in the passage from which it comes, its broader context in the book to which it belongs, and its ultimate context in the Bible as a whole; and it needs to be rightly related to each of these contexts if its character, scope and significance is to be adequately understood."

- **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 101**

The Principle of Using Scripture to Interpret Scripture

PRACTICALLY...

- Look to more clear passages to shed light on more unclear passages
- Use 'Cross References' in your Bible to help you understand the passage you are reading

Everyone who reads the Bible interprets the Bible...the question is are we good interpreters? If, depending upon the Holy Spirit, we seek to lay aside our bias, set our sights on the original intent of the author, and seek to set the verse we are studying within the context of the broader passage and the story of redemption, we will find that the Bible will become more understandable and more profitable for our souls.

Where do I go from here?

→ **BE SOBERED** - Don't be paralyzed BUT rather sobered

→ **DEPEND ON GOD** - Depend on the Holy Spirit for understanding AND transformation

...It follows that the Christian must approach the study of Scripture in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, sure that he can learn from it nothing of spiritual significance unless he is taught of God. Confidence on one's own powers of discernment is an effective barrier to spiritual understanding."

- **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 112**

→ **EMBRACE** mystery

→ **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!

The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:97-120 this upcoming week

→ **LEARN** a method to help you interpret faithfully!

O.I.A.M. Workshop

Jeremiah 2:13

OBSERVATION - What does it say?

C → Context... Take note of the archeological questions and of what is before and after the passage

Jeremiah - a prophet (speaks to people on behalf of God)

Before - different ways Israel had sinned against God and what it said to God.

v. 12 - God calls the heavens to be shocked and appalled.

After - God continues to challenge the Israelites by telling them about their sin

S → Structure... Break down the passage phrase by phrase. What words/ideas are emphasized? Repeated? Note words (as, but, so that, therefore, etc.)

for my people have committed two evils: ¹they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and ²hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

God described as...

comparison

describing how they are broken

I → Interpretive Questions... What questions do you need to answer in order to understand the author's intent?

What is the meaning of the metaphor of water? Water is used as a metaphor for life and fulfillment

What is the difference between a fountain and a cistern? A fountain is like a spring, always flowing while a cistern is a pit dug into the ground that you pour water into. It can be contaminated and lose water.

What does it mean that God is the fountain of living waters? When you put the definition together with the cross references the picture is that God is the source of life and satisfaction from which we drink from and feast on.

How are they cisterns broken? What do they represent? If God is the source of life and satisfaction THEN the comparison that Jeremiah is trying to get across is the cisterns are the other places we go to for life and satisfaction besides Him. They are broken because they really can't deliver the life and satisfaction they promise.

How have they forsaken God? They abandoned God as their source of satisfaction and ran to other things besides Him for satisfaction and life.

What does this passage teach about God? Sin? God is an unending fountain of life and is deeply offended by sin. Sin is not just an outward act of disobedience nor is just doing something morally wrong. This passage helps us see that sin is when we turn to anything besides God as our source of satisfaction and life.

How is verse 13 connected to verse 12? When we read this passage in the context of verse 12 we also see how serious it is for us to do this. God says the heavens should be appalled and shocked that we would do such a thing. We see from this passage the nature of what sin is and how serious it is.

INTERPRETATION - What does it mean?

Define key words & look up any cross references - Answer your Interpretive Q's, summarize the passage & what you learned in your own words

DEFINITIONS

forsaken - to abandon and leave behind

fountain - a natural continuous spring of water, figuratively a source of life, joy

hewed out - dig or cut out

cistern - something you would dig out to hold water

CROSS REFERENCES

"fountain" - Psalm 36:9 - with God is the fountain of life...so people feast on the abundance of His house and He gives them drink from the river of His delights

"living waters" - John 4:10 - Jesus is referring to Himself as the living water

SUMMARY - God is the fountain of life and satisfaction. To turn from Him to be satisfied in other things is not only evil BUT foolish because those things cannot satisfy. My sin is not just that I turn from Him but that I would turn to other things that can't satisfy like He can. There is a double offense to that.

APPLICATION & MEDITATION - What does it mean for me?

How is Jesus AND/OR my need for Him seen in this passage?

Why is the Lord showing me this today? The 3 R's - Rejoice, Repent, Request

→ How can I rejoice today in light of this passage?

→ What do I need to repent of today in light of this passage?

→ What requests do I need to make today in light of this passage?

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:97-120

[97] Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. [98] Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. [99] I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. [100] I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. [101] I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. [102] I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. [103] How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [104] Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

[105] Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. [106] I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules. [107] I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word! [108] Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules. [109] I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. [110] The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. [111] Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. [112] I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

[113] I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. [114] You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. [115] Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God. [116] Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! [117] Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! [118] You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain. [119] All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. [120] My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.

EXPERIENCING God in the Bible

How do we experience God when we read the Bible?

The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...***What value should we place on the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **APPROACHING the Bible ...***What attitude should we have as read the Bible?*
- **UNDERSTANDING the Bible ...***How do we understand and interpret the Bible?*
- **EXPERIENCING God in the Bible...***How do we experience God when we read the Bible?*
- **PERSEVERING in the Bible...***How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?*

INTRODUCTION: *Expectations matter!*

Our goal in approaching God's Word is awe & intimacy...

- *We want to be humbled and amazed by the majesty of our King*
- *We want to be satisfied with the joy and delight of knowing God as our Father*

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Studying the Bible

The role of the Holy Spirit in studying the Bible is to make the truth come ALIVE. The Holy Spirit enables our hearts to spiritually see and taste the reality of what we read in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

Jonathan Edwards on spiritual understanding...

"Spiritually to understand the Scripture, is to have the eyes of the mind opened, to behold the wonderful spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in the true meaning of it...When the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness or true moral good that is in divine things is discovered to the soul, it as it were opens a new world to its views. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God, and of everything appertaining to the divine Being."

"It is possible that a man might know how to interpret all the types, parables, enigmas, and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind; because he may not have the least degree of that spiritual sense of the holy beauty of divine things which has been spoken of, and may see nothing of this kind of glory in anything contained in any of these mysteries, or any other part of the Scripture."

"This is the work of the Spirit: to shine the light of truth on the glory of Christ so that we see it for what it really is, namely, infinitely precious." - **John Piper, God is the Gospel, page 91**

We NEED the Holy Spirit because the world we live in, as well as our hearts and minds, have been infected by sin

- 1) We need the Holy Spirit to **learn** and **understand** what the author intended along with its connection to the themes of the Bible - Luke 24:27
- 2) We need the Holy Spirit to **see** and **savor** the beauty of Christ because we are naturally blind to this reality - 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 1:16-21; Psalm 119:18
- 3) We need the Holy Spirit to **woo** us from our other loves that rival God in our hearts - Psalm 119:35-36
- 4) We need the Holy Spirit to **resist** our enemy who seeks to hinder the impact of the Bible in our lives - Revelation 12:9; Matthew 13:19

EXPERIENCING God in the Bible

How do we experience God when we read the Bible?

"The Spirit is not given to make Bible study needless, but to make it effective...without the Spirit's help there can be no grasp of the message of Scripture, no conviction of the truth of scripture, and no faith in the God of Scripture. Without the Spirit, nothing is possible but spiritual blindness and unbelief." - **J.I. Packer, Fundamentalism and the Word of God, page 112**

The Daily Experience

Two word pictures to set healthy expectations...

A Feast vs. A Well-Balanced Meal

Slow-Cooker Christian Experience

Romans 12:2 - *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Renewing of our **Mind** → Transforming of our **Desires** → Empowering of our **Will**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - *16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

The Holy Spirit uses our study of the Bible to...

- Teach
- Rebuke
- Correct
- Train

The 'X' Factor - *God meeting us in the midst of trials and hardship through His Word and prayer*

The Holy Spirit enables us to spiritually see and taste the realities we read in the Bible. He makes truth come alive. Sometimes this comes in the form of spiritual feasts but oftentimes it is more in the form of day to day well-balanced spiritual meals. He, over time, through His Word, renews our minds, transforms our desires, and empowers our will to follow Him. He is committed to using trial and hardship to deepen our understanding of Him through bringing His Word to bear in our situations.

Where do I go from here?

- **EMBRACE** the slow-cooker Christian experience...Don't give up...Commit to eating well-balanced meals!
- **PRAY** Psalm 119 Prayers
Psalm 119:18 - *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*
Psalm 119:36-37 - **36** *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!* **37** *Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*
- **RECEIVE** the trials and suffering that your King & Father has brought...embrace His Work through filtering them through His Word & prayer
- **FALL FORWARD** - Commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more during this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!
The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:121-144 this upcoming week
- **LEARN** to eat a well-balanced meal of Bible study

O.I.A.M. Workshop

Hebrews 12:1-2

OBSERVATION - *What does it say?*

C → Context...Take note of the archeological questions and of what is before and after the passage

S → Structure...Break down the passage phrase by phrase. What words/ideas are emphasized? Repeated? Note words (as, but, so that, therefore, etc.)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

I → Interpretive Questions...What questions do you need to answer in order to understand the author's intent?

INTERPRETATION - *What does it mean?*

Define key words & look up any cross references - Answer your Interpretive Q's, summarize the passage & what you learned in your own words

APPLICATION & MEDITATION - *What does it mean for me?*

How is Jesus AND/OR my need for Him seen in this passage?

Why is the Lord showing me this today? The 3 R's - *Rejoice, Repent, Request*

- How can I *rejoice* today in light of this passage?
- What do I need to *repent* of today in light of this passage?
- What *requests* do I need to make today in light of this passage?

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:121-144

[121] I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors. [122] Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. [123] My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. [124] Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. [125] I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! [126] It is time for the LORD to act, for your law has been broken. [127] Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. [128] Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

[129] Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. [130] The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. [131] I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. [132] Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name. [133] Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. [134] Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts. [135] Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes. [136] My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.

[137] Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. [138] You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. [139] My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words. [140] Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it. [141] I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts. [142] Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. [143] Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight. [144] Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.

PERSEVERING in the Bible

How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?

The Seminar Series: The Bible

- **The VALUE of the Bible...***What value should we place on the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 1...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **The RELIABILITY of the Bible - Part 2...***Can we trust the Bible?*
- **APPROACHING the Bible ...***What attitude should we have as read the Bible?*
- **UNDERSTANDING the Bible ...***How do we understand and interpret the Bible?*
- **EXPERIENCING God in the Bible...***How do we experience God when we read the Bible?*
- **PERSEVERING in the Bible...***How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?*

INTRODUCTION: *Weathering the various seasons & storms of life while continuing to bear fruit*

Ecclesiastes 12:1 - *Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"*

Experiencing God through the Seasons of Life

Psalms 1:1-6 - *1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Two Metaphors: *Flourishing tree OR windblown chaff* - verses 3-4

Two Paths: *Influenced by the world OR influenced by the Word* - verses 1-2

Staying in the Path of Flourishing: *Meditate & Obey*

→ *Meditate on the Bible*

"Meditation on the Bible is more than just intense thinking. The Bible contains information, but it is more than that. It talks about itself as a living and active agent (Hebrews 4:12). The gospel, the message of the Bible, is said to be not just a word but a power (Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:5). When Paul talks about the Word of God 'dwelling richly' within us (Colossians 3:16), he is clearly talking of something beyond mere assent to information. He is talking about 'a deep and penetrating contemplation' that enables the Bible's message to have transforming power. Psalm 1's metaphors convey all of this. Meditation is likened to tree roots taking in water. That means not merely knowing a truth but taking it inside and making it part of yourself. Meditation is spiritually 'tasting' the Scripture—delighting in it, sensing the sweetness of the teaching, feeling the conviction of what it tells us about ourselves, and thanking God and praising God for what it shows us about him. Meditation is also spiritually 'digesting' the Scripture—applying it, thinking out how it affects you, describes you, guides you in the most practical way. It is drawing strength from the Scripture, letting it give you hope, using it to remember how loved you are. To shift metaphors, meditation is taking the truth down into our hearts until it catches fire there and begins to melt and shape our reactions to God, ourselves, and the world." - **Tim Keller, Prayer, page 151**

→ *Obey the Bible*

The impact of continually meditating on the Bible and seeking to walk in obedience to it in and out of the harsh winters and threatening storms of life is flourishing and fruit bearing.

Practical takeaway in every season → Fall forward in meditating on and obeying God's Word

PERSEVERING in the Bible

How do we experience God through the Bible for a lifetime?

Where do I go from here?

→ **BUILD** into your life the rhythm of reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible

→ **BE FLEXIBLE** to stay connected to the Bible in the different stages and seasons

IF you have **5 minutes** with the Bible...*read a verse or passage using the 3 A's*

ADORE - What did you learn about God for which you could praise or thank Him?

ADMIT - What did you learn about yourself for which you could repent?

ASPIRE - What did you learn about life that you could aspire to, ask for, and act on?

IF you have **15 minutes** with the Bible...*read a passage or chapter using the Gospel Grid*

GOD - What does this passage teach or reveal about God (His character or work)?

MAN - What does this passage teach or reveal about people (our sin or needs)?

CHRIST - What does this passage teach or reveal about Jesus (foreshadowing, directly speaking about, or revealing the need for His work on the cross and empowerment)?

RESPONSE - What difference should these truths make in the ways I think, believe, live? How would I think, believe and live if I forgot these truths?

IF you have **30 minutes** with the Bible...*study a verse or passage using O.I.A.M.*

How often should I do OIAM?

Where should I begin in reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible?

- Proverbs, Gospels, Psalms, Philippians, Ephesians, James
- Read through the entire Bible at some point using 3As or Gospel Grid questions to help you meditate

→ **UTILIZE** the body of Christ by taking advantages of studying the Bible with other followers of Christ

→ **INVEST** whatever time you are able and trust God to use it

→ **FALL FORWARD** - Continue to commit to immersing yourself in the Bible more and more upon the completion of this seminar. God wants to communicate to you!

The Psalm 119 experiment - read & pray through Psalm 119:145-176 this upcoming week

O.I.A.M. Workshop

Hebrews 3:12-13

OBSERVATION - *What does it say?*

C → Context...Take note of the archeological questions and of what is before and after the passage

S → Structure...Break down the passage phrase by phrase. What words/ideas are emphasized? Repeated? Note words (as, but, so that, therefore, etc.)

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

I → Interpretive Questions...What questions do you need to answer in order to understand the author's intent?

INTERPRETATION - *What does it mean?*

Define key words & look up any cross references - Answer your Interpretive Q's, summarize the passage & what you learned in your own words

APPLICATION & MEDITATION - *What does it mean for me?*

How is Jesus AND/OR my need for Him seen in this passage?

Why is the Lord showing me this today? The 3 R's - Rejoice, Repent, Request

- How can I *rejoice* today in light of this passage?
- What do I need to *repent* of today in light of this passage?
- What *requests* do I need to make today in light of this passage?

The Psalm 119 Experiment

Read & Pray through Psalm 119:145-176

[145] With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes. [146] I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies. [147] I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. [148] My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. [149] Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O LORD, according to your justice give me life. [150] They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law. [151] But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true. [152] Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever.

[153] Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. [154] Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise! [155] Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes. [156] Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your rules. [157] Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I do not swerve from your testimonies. [158] I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commands. [159] Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love. [160] The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

[161] Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. [162] I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. [163] I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law. [164] Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. [165] Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. [166] I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments. [167] My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. [168] I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you.

[169] Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! [170] Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. [171] My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. [172] My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right. [173] Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. [174] I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. [175] Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. [176] I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

STUDYING THE BIBLE

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"If we learn to read the Bible down (into our hearts), across (the plot line of Scripture), out (to the end of the story), and up (to the glory of God in the face of Christ), we will find that every bit of the Bible is profitable for us."

Kevin DeYoung

THE O.I.A.M. METHOD FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE

Martin Luther once said, *"I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I shake the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb - study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings."* The goal of Bible study is to help you shake the tree of the Word and to gain much good fruit from it. This study method, called O.I.A.M. (Observation, Interpretation, Application & Meditation), is designed to aid you in that process. This method is designed to help you dig deep in the Word of God so that you may be changed by it. Oftentimes as we approach the Bible, we have a tendency to turn off our minds and just read till we "feel" something, as though this is the spiritual way. This couldn't be further from the truth. God has given us a mind and intellect for a reason, and it is a very spiritual exercise to use it when we read the Bible. God desires for us to use our mind to understand His truth so that it can affect our heart and life. He created every aspect of our being and longs to meet with us on every level.

As you seek to study the Bible your first undertaking is to understand the writer's intent in the passage so that you can learn how it applies to your life today. There are 3 main questions that one should ask when they seek to study a particular passage of Scripture, thus the foundation of the O.I.A.M. method.

- 1. What does it say?** - *Observation*
- 2. What does it mean?** - *Interpretation*
- 3. What does it mean for me? ("How should what it means affect my life", or "In what ways should this affect my life")** - *Application & Meditation*

The O.I.A.M method gives you a framework for each of these questions and helps you make accurate observations of a passage so that you can understand the author's intent (interpretation) and then know how it should affect your life (application and meditation). On the next page you will find the method in its entirety. This method may seem a bit cumbersome at first but as you become more familiar with it, you will become more comfortable. It really begins to inform and influence the way you see Scripture. This method can be done in 10 minutes but also gives you the tools to spend much more time in a passage as desired.

This method is in no way a formula to meeting with God. It is designed to help you dig deeper, meditate, and apply the Word to your life. This method positions you to learn more about God as He reveals Himself to you through His Word. The emphasis in the Bible on meditation and application is tremendous. This is an easily neglected and overlooked aspect of Bible Study but an absolute necessity. The time of application and meditation should lead you into a time of prayer and responding to God over what you have studied. Again, this is in no way a formula to meet with God but a way to live in light of Psalm 1:1-3 and James 1:22-25. It is helpful to use various types of application and meditation questions to keep this aspect of Bible study fresh.

THE O.I.A.M. METHOD FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE

**Since the Holy Spirit is our teacher it is always good to pray and invite Him to work in you before you begin to study the Bible (Psalm 119:18; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16)*

WHAT DOES IT SAY? *Observation*

Gather your content so you know what interpretive questions to ask...

**The hard work is here; observation can seem the most tedious and what we are prone to skip...*

C → Context...Take note of what is before and after the passage.

5 Archeological Questions of Context - *Who wrote it? When was it written? To whom was it written? In what style was it written? Why was it written?*

S → Structure...Break down the passage phrase by phrase

- What ideas/concepts are emphasized? Repeated?
- Note words like "as", "but", "so that", "therefore"

I → Interpretive Questions...What questions do you need to answer in order to understand the author's intent?

Types of Questions - *Why has the person written this? What concerns or problems is the writer addressing? How does this passage connect with the overall themes of Scripture? Look at the details of the verse...Why are they included? Would it make any difference if they were omitted?*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? *Interpretation*

**Careful observation leads to accurate interpretation. Interpretation will often be plain after good observation.*

Determine what this passage means by determining the author's intent...

- Define key words & look up Cross References
- Answer your interpretive questions
- Read other translations & consult a commentary to give more insight
- Summarize the passage & what you learned in your own words

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME? *Application & Meditation*

**Careful observation leads to accurate interpretation, which will lead to proper application.*

Jesus is the Central theme of the Bible - How is Jesus AND/OR my need for Him seen in this passage?

**This is crucial and will help protect you from thinking you have to obey to earn your Father's love and will also help you see more and more how amazing Jesus is.*

Why is the Lord showing me this today? The 3 R's - *Rejoice, Repent, Request*

**Your Father brought you to this passage today. Why? What does He want to teach you from it? These 3Rs are simple to remember and can help you process what God is trying to do in you.*

- How can I rejoice today in light of this passage?
- What do I need to repent of today in light of this passage?
- What requests do I need to make today in light of this passage?

**Application and meditation should transition you from study to prayerfully bringing what you have learned before God.*

MEDITATION & APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How does this affect my relationship with God, myself, the enemy, the Body of Christ, the lost world?

Meditation Q's based on the Gospel

GOD - *What does this passage teach or reveal about God (His character or work)?*

MAN - *What does this passage teach or reveal about people (our design, sin, or needs)?*

CHRIST - *What does this passage teach or reveal about Jesus (foreshadowing, directly speaking about, or revealing the need for His work on the cross and empowerment)?*

RESPONSE - *What difference should these truths make in the way I think, believe, live? How would I think, believe and live if I forgot these truths?*

Getting SPECIFIC with Application

S- what **Sin** is there to repent of or avoid?

P- what **Promise** can you claim and act on?

E- what **Example** can you follow?

C- what **Command** is there to obey?

I- what **Idea** is there for prayer?

F- did you **Find** a verse to memorize?

I- what **Information** is there to strengthen your faith?

C- how is **Christ** seen, or your need for Him?

Meditation Q's from Tim Keller Meditation Guide

- How can I praise God or Christ for what this reveals about him?
- Does my life demonstrate that I am remembering and acting out of this?
- What wrong behavior, harmful emotions, or false attitudes result in me when I forget He is like this?
- What sins do I need to confess in light of this?
- Why is God showing me these particular things today?
- What do I need to do or become in light of this? Ask him for it!

Meditation Q's based on Psalm 119:9-16

- How can this truth enable me to fight sin & stay pure?
- How can I delight in this truth? OR How can this truth lead me to delight in God more?
- What is beautiful or wonderful or glorious about this truth?
- How can I not neglect the Word here?
- Why would following this truth be greater than all riches?
- How can I live according to this truth?
- What would it look like for me to stray from this command?

The 5-10-15 Minute Bible Study Guide

...pursuing intimacy with your King & Father in different seasons of life...

***This is a guide, not law.** This guide should not bind your conscience in any way but is helpful to give you direction.

IF you have **5 minutes** with the Bible...*read a verse or passage using the 3 A's*

ADORE - What did you learn about God for which you could praise or thank Him?

ADMIT - What did you learn about yourself for which you could repent?

ASPIRE - What did you learn about life that you could aspire to, ask for, and act on?

IF you have **15 minutes** with the Bible...*read a passage or chapter using the Gospel Grid*

GOD - What does this passage teach or reveal about God (His character or work)?

MAN - What does this passage teach or reveal about people (our design, sin, or needs)?

CHRIST - What does this passage teach or reveal about Jesus (foreshadowing, directly speaking about, or revealing the need for His work on the cross and empowerment)?

RESPONSE - What difference should these truths make in the ways I think, believe, live? How would I think, believe and live if I forgot these truths?

IF you have **30 minutes** with the Bible...*study a verse or passage using O.I.A.M.*

In the way of Your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.

Psalm 119:14-18

ELEMENTS of a *Quiet Time*

*Adapted from Redeemer Church - NYC

Three Elements

There are three parts to a Quiet Time. (I used to think there were only two, and really, the third one is the most important.) They are:

1. *Bible Study*. This means you need to read a passage of the Bible and try to get the gist of what it means.
2. *Prayer*. This is talking to God by A) praising Him, B) confessing sins, C) asking for things
3. *Meditation*. This is the most important—and it is a “cross” between prayer and Bible study, a blend. Meditation is really to “pray the truth into the heart.”

Format

BIBLE STUDY

Read a paragraph or a chapter. Answer a question set. (Only choose one set of questions; or create your own set of questions by choosing some from each column. But don't try to answer all twelve!)

Set #1

1. List what it tells about God or Christ.
2. List what it tells about man or me.
3. List examples to follow or avoid.
 commands to obey.
 promises to claim.

Set #2

1. The key verse that impressed me.
2. Put verse in your own words.
3. What is the thought just before the verse and just after?
4. Give 2-3 reasons it helped you.

Set #3

1. What did you like?
2. What did you not like?
3. What did you not get?
4. How should you apply what you learned?

MEDITATION

Now write out one or two (at most) of the main thoughts/teachings you derived from the passage. For each main thought, write out the answers to each of these questions.

- How can I praise God or Christ for what this reveals about him?
- Does my life demonstrate that I am remembering and acting out of this?
- What wrong behavior, harmful emotions, false attitudes result in me when I forget He is like this?
- What sins do I need to confess in light of this?
- Why is God showing me these particular things today?
- What do I need to do or become in light of this? Ask him for it!

PRAYER

First, pray for the things that came out of your meditation.

- Praise him for things you saw.
- Confess sins that you saw.
- Prayer list—keep it on the front page. New items that came up during this QT—write them on your prayer list.
- Old items—for self, for family, for friends.

SUMMARIZING A CHAPTER & BOOK OF THE BIBLE

This guide is intended to aid you in summarizing a chapter or book of the Bible. Before you are able to summarize a chapter, or book, you must give adequate time studying it verse by verse or passage by passage. The O.I.A.M. (observation, interpretation, application, and meditation) method is a great approach to studying a chapter or book more in depth. The role of this guide is to synthesize and summarize what you have learned from your deeper study.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

REVIEW YOUR STUDY - Read the chapter several times and review your study notes/journal

SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT

- *Title* - Capture the essence of the chapter
- *Theme* - Develop one sentence that communicates the main thought the author is communicating in the chapter
- *Key Verse(s)* - Identify the verse(s) that best communicates the theme of the chapter
- *Outline* - Pull together the major points of the chapter into a simple outline

PROCESS YOUR APPLICATIONS

→ What were your top 1-3 personal applications from this chapter?

IDENTIFY YOUR REMAINING QUESTIONS

? What questions arose during your study that you would like to investigate later?

BOOK SUMMARY

REVIEW YOUR STUDY - Read through the book several times and review your chapter summaries

RECAP THE BACKGROUND

- *Author* - Who were the writer(s) of the book?
- *Date* - When was the book written?
- *Audience* - Who was the book written to?
- *Mood* - What was the historical atmosphere of the time?

SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT

- *Title* - Capture the essence of the book
- *Theme* - Develop one sentence that communicates the main thought the author is communicating in the book
- *Key Verse(s)* - Identify the verse(s) that best communicates the theme of the book
- *Outline* - Pull together the major points of the book into a simple outline

PROCESS YOUR APPLICATIONS

→ What were your top 5 personal applications from this chapter?

IDENTIFY YOUR REMAINING QUESTIONS

? Prioritize your list questions that arose during your study that you would like to investigate later

DEVELOPING A BIBLE CHARACTER STUDY

THE WHY

Why are there so many stories about people in the Bible?

There are over 2900 men and women referenced in the Bible. WHY?

- 1) They help us understand that the Bible is a historical reality
- 2) They help us learn and grow from their example
1 Corinthians 10:11 - *"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come."*
Hebrews 11
Romans 15:4 - *"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*
- 3) They help us see the power of God and His grace in the lives of people
The Bible does not hide the sins or flaws of God's people. We can identify with and be encouraged by how God was committed to His people.
- 4) To unmistakably make it clear that Jesus is the true hero
The only leader without flaw or struggle was Jesus Himself, our true hero

Perspectives as you study

- *Study with a bent towards transformation, not merely learning information*
The goal of your time in the Bible is not merely information but to meet with God and be transformed by His Spirit. As you study think about how you can relate, how you can apply this to your heart and life, and how you see Jesus in this person's life.
- *Study with a willingness to put forth some mental work and effort*
Proverbs 2:4-5 - *"...if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."*
- *Study in light of the Greater story of redemption*
The Bible is not like the Christian encyclopedia of facts or merely the instruction manual for a good life. It can provide guidance but most importantly it is a grand story of redemption. God is on a mission to restore all things from the brokenness of sin. His Son is the hero and the central figure of the whole Bible. We must read the Bible, and study the characters of the Bible, in light of this reality.

Luke 24:27 - *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."*

John 5:39 - *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me..."*

DEVELOPING A BIBLE CHARACTER STUDY

THE HOW

GETTING STARTED

1. Chose a person from the Bible to study
2. In a concordance look up every reference to this person. Make sure you consider surrounding verses and chapters.
 - Be aware of which specific person you may be looking up as there are many different people in the Bible with the same name.
 - Helpful web tools for searching - www.biblegateway.com, www.esvbible.org, www.biblestudytools.com
3. Organize these verses and passages into manageable daily sections to study.

READ - As you read each passage try to put yourself in their world by imagining what might they be thinking, feeling, etc.

MAKE OBSERVATIONS

**Make observations about these areas as you study. Let these categories be a guide. There may be other questions you need to ask.

- *General* - Gather biographical information about the person...
 - What general facts about their life are recorded (names, background, conversion, etc.)?
 - What circumstances/challenges did they face?
 - What did they accomplish?
- *Timeline* - If applicable, form a general timeline of the major events for this person
- *Strengths* - What godly traits, attributes, or qualities do you observe in the person? (you may look at what others said about them or how they responded to situations, etc.)
- *Weaknesses* - What areas of struggle and need for development do you observe in the person? (you may look at what people said about them or how they responded to situations, etc.)
- *Relationship with God* - What do you observe about how they relate to God? How does God change them? How does God use them?

PROCESS YOUR APPLICATIONS

- *Personal* - How can you relate to this person? What can you learn from this person's life? What can you apply and what can you avoid?
- *Redemptive* - How did you see Jesus Christ in and through this person's life? (their need for Jesus, how they point to Jesus Christ, or what role they played in the history of God's plan)

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

After you have studied the passages and processed your applications, write a summary including...

- Main lesson(s) from their life
- Main characteristic(s) of their life
- Main application(s) for your life

TRANSLATIONS, CONCORDANCES, COMMENTARIES

Translations

The books of the Bible were originally written in Hebrew (most of the Old Testament), Aramaic (portions of the Old Testament) and Greek (all of the New Testament). Unless you are a scholar of those languages you will need to depend on a good English translation of the Bible. Of the Bible translations recommended, all were formed by the committee of scholars who studies the original languages and formed the translation together. Because no one language corresponds perfectly with another, there is a degree of interpretation involved in every translation (although some more than others). There are 3 main types of Bible translations available to us...

- 1) **'Word for Word'** (Formal Equivalency) – *These translations work to follow the original language as closely as possible in a word for word fashion. These tend to be very accurate translations to the original but due to the nuances of languages they can be cumbersome and awkward to read at times. However, because of the word for word accuracy, these translations are great for Bible study.*

Recommended: English Standard Version (ESV), New American Standard Version (NASB), Revised Version (RV), New King James Version (NKJV), Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

- 2) **'Thought for Thought'** (Dynamic Equivalency) – *These translations seek to balance word for word accuracy with readability therefore each word or phrase is translated to its English equivalents. The priority is placed upon what was intended in the original language along with comprehension in English. This makes this form of translation more readable yet at times it does not convey the original as clearly as the word for word translation.*

Recommended: New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New Living Translation (NLT) *The NLT leans further towards a paraphrase than the other two recommended

- 3) **'Paraphrase'** – *These translations seek to take the intended meaning of the text and translate it into English. The priority is placed upon readability and comprehension in English. The translator not only translates into English but also interprets the meaning of the text. Because of this freedom, the translation may misinterpret or leave out important details in a text. These can be helpful in reading long portions of the Bible or using a resource to gain more understanding as to the meaning of a passage.*

Examples of Paraphrases: The Message, The Living Bible (TLB), Amplified Bible

**It is most helpful to use a few different translations when studying the Bible in depth. Avoid using paraphrase versions when studying the Bible.*

Concordances

A concordance lists every occurrence of a particular word in the Bible along with the Hebrew or Greek words behind the English words. Each Hebrew and Greek word is given a reference number (Strong's Number) and you are able to search these words based off of those numbers. They are a good resource to help us better understand a particular word in the Bible and also to do a thorough study of a particular topic in the Bible.

TRANSLATIONS, CONCORDANCES, COMMENTARIES

Commentaries

A commentary is a collection of a writer or group of writer's analysis of a particular word/verse/passage or book of the Bible. It can come in the form of study notes in your Bible or deep theological volumes on particular book of the Bible. It is a secondary source so our primary attention doesn't go to it. The Bible is our primary source of spiritual food.

Good commentaries...

- 1) Allow you to check your thoughts - *They are a great way to check and make sure your interpretations are in line with what Biblical scholars typically think. The idea here is not that you are not right if a commentary disagrees but that there is nothing new under the sun. You are not going to find an interpretation of a passage that the Lord has hidden from His church for hundreds of years.*
- 2) Help you interpret difficult passages - *Often times you will come across passages that you just have a hard time understanding. A trusted commentator can help bring some light to these passages.*
- 3) Deepen your understanding - *Often times the commentators have done extensive research into the historical and cultural context which can be very insightful. Also, most good commentators are experts in Hebrew and Greek which can be great when you are dealing with the definitions of words.*

Recommended Resources

Study Bibles:

ESV Study Bible
Gospel Transformation Study Bible
NIV Study Bible
Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible

Commentators/Commentaries:

IVP Tyndale series commentaries
IVP Bible Background commentary on Old and New Testament
Bible Speaks Today series edited by John Stott
Baker's New Testament Commentary
New International Commentary on the Old Testament
New International Commentary on the New Testament
Matthew Henry Complete Bible Commentary
John Gill's Exposition of the Bible commentary
New International Commentary
John MacArthur New Testament commentaries

Websites:

www.biblestudytools.net
www.studylight.org
www.e-sword.net
www.monergism.com
www.gracetoyou.com
www.desiringgod.org
www.gospelinlife.com
www.blueletterbible.org

Other Resources:

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
Holman Bible Dictionary
Dictionary of Biblical Imagery
International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
New Bible Dictionary

INTERPRETING DIFFERENT BIBLICAL GENRES

Old Testament

*Adapted from Downline Ministries

A genre is a category of composition that is classified based on similarities in style, subject matter, etc. You can have different genres of movies, music, books, and so on. The Bible also has different genres like narrative, history, poetry, letters, and prophecy. A genre of a particular writing affects how you read and interpret it. For example, the word honey is interpreted differently in scientific writings than it would be in a love letter. It is important to understand the purpose of these different genres so that we will be able to determine the author's original intent.

Historical Books → Anything from Historical Narrative to the Law (Genesis to Esther)

The Hebrew term used to describe the first five books of the Old Testament is the word *torah*. While this term can have the connotation of 'rule' or 'law,' its primary meaning is that of 'teaching,' or 'instruction.' Referring to the first five books of the Bible as "the Law" derives from the Greek word, *nomos*, which means 'law,' which was used to translate *torah*. While such a term is not incorrect, it can be misleading. It is important to remember that the Jews did not look at the Law as a burden or taskmaster, but as a gift from above. The *torah* revealed the one true God to the people of Israel. Its teaching revealed who he was, what he had done for them, what he would do for them, and what he required of them. No other nation on earth had received this amazing revelation. The books of the Law would have been written in styles and forms with which the people of the time were familiar, just as if someone were to write a biography today, it would be similar to other modern biographies. The differences result from the fact that the Law was written to counteract the idolatrous beliefs of the other nations & to reveal the true God.

Historical narrative literature recounts specific events from which the audience must draw meaning. It is not a random assortment of events, nor a complete listing of events; rather, certain events are selected to address specific questions. Unfortunately the author rarely states his purpose explicitly; the audience must wrestle with the text to determine what the author intends to convey. Narrative literature should, as a general rule, be viewed as descriptive, meaning that it simply describes behavior, rather than prescriptive, meaning that it, in itself, specifies certain types of behavior to be emulated or avoided. Narrative literature may reinforce a prescriptive code already present in a given community, but should not be viewed as being prescriptive outside of such a code. This doesn't mean we can't learn from narrative literature; after all, all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable (2 Tim 3:16) and the things written in the OT were written for the instruction of later generations (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6,11). Rather, the point being made here is that we should approach interpretation of narrative passages through the lens that the genre itself is primarily descriptive and not necessarily prescriptive.

Principles: The following are 4 guidelines to remember when studying biblical prose (Law & Narrative)...

- *What happened?* - Who are the characters? What is the background? What is the spiritual truth presented?
- *How does it fit into **Israel's** history?* - What does it teach about Israel's past? How does it affect them?
- *How does it fit into **redemptive** history?* - Does this teach us anything about Christ? Is it a direct prophecy about Him?

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Poetry → Typically found in Job through Song of Solomon but shows up in other genres (ex. Exodus 15 & Judges 5)

Our world is flooded with self-help books that promise to improve our lives through new gimmicks or secret information that had previously been kept from the public. Every year, new books appear with even newer solutions to life's difficulties, thanks especially to the fact that the previous year's tips had not proven ultimately successful in creating meaning and joy in peoples' lives. The Poetical books seek to help us understand and enjoy life, not through gimmicks, but through the application of wisdom.

The classification of these books as "Poetry" can be a little confusing to English readers as these books do not always seem like English poetry. The distinction consists primarily in the fact that these books are not narrative literature, like the historical books. It's important to understand that the Poetical books are actually Wisdom Literature. Like Psalms and Proverbs, these books attempt to convey God's wisdom to the reader in an understandable and applicable format. Narrative literature uses character interaction, plot, and structure to tell a story and make a point; poetry involves figures of speech, word plays, repetition, and, especially in Hebrew poetry, parallelism to evoke a response in its audience.

Principles: The following are three guidelines to remember when studying Biblical Poetry

- **Structure** is important. Ancient Hebrew developed its poetic structure around thoughts (expressed in beats per line), not rhyme. Look for synonyms, antitheses and syntheses.
- Poetry is usually **figurative** over literal. It seeks to stir the emotions.
- Be careful not to push figurative language into **doctrinal** formulas.

Proverbs

"Wisdom" is slightly different from "knowledge" but inseparable from it. Generally it means "skill, expertise," or "masterful understanding" and denotes one's ability to navigate life's challenges in a way that honors God. In this way, wisdom is the correct use of knowledge. Perhaps more so than some other books, the Proverbs help us to understand in practical, day-to-day ways what it means to live with wisdom and to obey the Lord.

While narrative literature relies on character interaction, plot, and structure to convey intended meaning, proverbs are short, pithy sayings that give brief statements about the motivations and results of certain actions with a view toward urging the reader to specific types of behavior. They do not intend to give full details, but rather to stir one's thinking.

Principles: The following are four guidelines to remember when studying Biblical Wisdom

- Proverbs deal with daily life; therefore look for **practical** application
- Always look for **parallel** passages with similar practical application nearby to further illustrate the point
- Identify figures of speech and try to determine the **purpose** of the proverb
- Remember, proverbs are not **absolute** truths, but general ones to follow. They are not guarantees but general truths that are typically true. They are principles, not promises.

INTERPRETING DIFFERENT BIBLICAL GENRES

Old Testament

Prophecy → The prophetic books of the Old Testament. Prophecy also may be found within other genres.

What is a Prophet? Though frequently viewed as someone who merely tells the future, a prophet is much more than that. The prophet functioned as a spokesman for God himself. He summoned people to repent of their sins and return to their devotion to the one true God. Any prediction of the future served this primary goal, rather than functioning to simply give curious people a timeline of the future. Prophets called people to return to following the Torah, so that God's coming judgment might not fall on them.

Though the distinction between Major and Minor Prophets refers to the size of the books they have left behind, the Major Prophets serve a very special purpose in relation to redemptive history. They point toward the future of God through the Messiah to bring about God's ultimate victory over his enemies and salvation for his people in a way that the Minor Prophets do not do as frequently.

The Minor Prophets call us to remember our devotion to the Lord and to live our lives in response to what the Lord has done and will do for us and for the world. They summon us to evaluate how we serve the Lord, whether we strive to obey him throughout the week by doing good to others, or whether we use attendance at Sunday services to excuse disregard for the Lord the rest of the week.

Principles: The following are four basic structural forms to identify when studying biblical prophecy (may be in varied order)...

- **Accusation:** The prophet presents an accusation usually dealing with a violation of the Law of God; usually accompanied by a "woe" to the reader.
- **Punishment:** The prophet presents God's judgment upon the nation for their disobedience.
- **Repentance:** The prophet issues a call to repent and return to the Lord.
- **Intervention:** The prophet presents God's gracious commitment to His covenant leading to restoration after a period of discipline.

INTERPRETING DIFFERENT BIBLICAL GENRES

New Testament

Gospel/Narrative → Matthew through Acts

No documents are as foundational for the church as the Gospels for the simple reason that no person is as foundational as Jesus Christ. More than simply biographies of his life, the Gospels present to us the person, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ and summon us to respond to him. Thus each of these books is named 'gospel,' because they present to us the good news of Jesus Christ. Why four Gospels? The early church wrestled with the reason for having the one gospel message presented in four gospels. Eventually they realized that each of the evangelists offered a picture of Jesus that emphasized different aspects of his person and ministry. Matthew emphasized his role as Israel's king, Mark his role as the suffering servant; Luke his role as Lord and Savior of the world, and John his deity (among other emphases). They realized that the truth about Jesus was so amazing, it could not be contained in just one book. Indeed, even the four Gospels they passed down to us do not exhaust the truth of Jesus' person and work.

Each of the Gospels cover portions of Jesus' ministry from various perspectives and at various lengths, but each spends significant time covering his passion, death, and resurrection. Why do they arrange their material in this way? Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection are the fulfillment of his ministry and purpose for coming to earth. Jesus' death and resurrection inaugurate the new covenant and constitute God's victory over sin, Satan, and death, and are the basis for man's salvation. Prior to the Passion Week (Jesus' last week before the crucifixion), there are only 3-4 events from his entire life that are captured by all four Gospel writers, but there are more than 10 events in his final week that are captured by all four Gospel writers!

The book of Acts is actually a sequel to the book of Luke and is very profitably read in tandem with the gospel. When read together, it is possible to see common themes and emphases, such as Jesus' role as Lord not only of Israel but of the whole world. Acts helps to show continuity from Jesus to Peter, to Paul, and then to the churches he planted. The book of Acts provides a unique perspective on the birth of the church and the spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean world; it begins with Peter preaching the gospel in Jerusalem and ends with Paul preaching the Gospel in Rome.

Principles: The following are five guidelines to remember when studying Gospel/Narrative passages...

- The Gospels often have **parallel** stories in other Gospels, but it is still important to determine the meaning of the particular writer before comparing. Remember, it is the author who determines the meaning, not anyone else. Two Gospel writers could tell the same story for a slightly different reason or with a slightly different emphasis.
- **Historical** context is key to understanding Gospel narrative. Use Study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, atlases, and commentaries to determine the background of each book.
- The Gospels record the acts and sayings of Jesus and the disciples, but the **Epistles** interpret them into specific settings. Check parallels in the Epistles. An easy way to do this is to use a Bible that provides cross-references in the margin.
- Be careful of building whole **doctrines** on stories and parables. The Gospels and Acts include both descriptive (what happened) and prescriptive (how-to's) events. It could be dangerous to read a descriptive passage (what happened THEN) in a prescriptive way (what you are to do NOW).
- Determine the big idea and find application.

Epistles → Romans through 3 John

The Epistles consist of both Paul's letters and what are referred to as the General Epistles. As Christianity spread and gentile churches with no Old Testament foundation were formed, it was necessary to guide new converts in what it meant to live in a Christian way. The General Epistles helped to instruct believers as to how

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to 'walk' the Christian path. Also, Paul, who was the Apostle to the Gentiles, faced the daunting task of proclaiming a Jewish Messiah to non-Jewish peoples. This meant not only presenting Jesus to them but also reshaping their pagan ideas about life and reality around the one true God who had sent Jesus Christ to fulfill his plan for the world. While Paul's letters present the perspective of one author over the course of his ministry, the General Epistles provide the perspectives of several different authors on the Christian experience. Though certain themes such as the centrality of Christ appear here as well as in Paul's letters, the General Epistles often describe the Christian experience in different terms and with different emphases than Paul.

Principles: The following are two guidelines to remember when studying Epistolary scripture...

- **Historical Context**- When reading, ask some of the following questions: Who wrote it? Why did they write it? When was it written? Are there problems the author deals with? What is the attitude of the letter?
- **Literary Context** - Study each paragraph or logical section and write down a brief summary of what each one is trying to say. Show how each division of the book fits into a flow of ideas. Look for logical connections between divisions. Determine the overall theme of the letter and show how each division develops it further.

Prophecy → Revelation

Few books of the Bible have captured the public's imagination as much as Revelation. For modern readers, talk of the end of the world and images of catastrophic destruction often seem more like a script for a Hollywood movie rather than something to be taken seriously. Sadly, those who think the book of Revelation merely describes the end of the world miss the entire point of the book. One key when studying Revelation is to remember that the book is the revelation of Christ (1:7), not a book about weird monsters or crazy futuristic scenarios. If you miss the fact that it is to reveal Jesus and His plan to redeem creation, you will also have missed the point. Revelation also calls us to look at our present temptations and struggles in light of Christ's ultimate victory over sin, Satan, and death. It calls us to persevere in our faith in Christ in spite of the world's opposition and the lure of false teachers.

Attempting to understand Revelation in all its details is a daunting task. The imagery of the book draws heavily upon the imagery of the Old Testament but frequently fills older images with new meanings. To wrestle through these is a worthy task but requires great humility and, most importantly, that one should not miss the forest for the trees. Even when all the particulars of a given passage are not fully understood, the general meaning can be grasped. For example, the exact meaning of the symbols of the vision in Revelation 12 are debated, but the general lesson of God's provision for his people is clear. Likewise in Revelation 13, the exact meaning of the beast and his mark are questioned, but generally the lesson that we must guard against denying Christ in order to receive the benefits (buying & selling) of the world is clear.

Principles: The following are four guidelines to remember when studying NT Prophecy...

- Prophetic material should be interpreted first in relation to its own self-**contained** unit and then related to the larger context of the section and book of Revelation as a whole.
- Prophecy anticipates divine **intervention** of God for the salvation and judgment of all mankind and creation.
- Prophecy is primarily **futuristic** in its reference and uses present/current images of the day to express the unknown future.
- Familiarize yourself with the **whole** of prophetic scripture in the Bible to protect yourself from

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individual spiritualization and to give you the ability to differentiate between “near” and “far” fulfillment. In other words, some prophetic material has a fulfillment in the immediate context (“near”) of the writer while other material awaits a future (“far”) fulfillment and still other material has a “near” fulfillment while also awaiting a more complete, “far” fulfillment.

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SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

*Adapted from Downline Ministries

- ✓ **It is important to read the Old Testament not simply as an Old Testament Israelite would have read it but as a Christian.** To read the Old Testament as a Christian means to read it as revealing Christ and pointing toward the fulfillment of God's plan in the person and work of Christ.

- ✓ **Christian interpretation does not deny the original meaning but argues that there is also a Christological meaning implicit in some texts.**

EXAMPLES:

The Law: Consider the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. How does this point to Jesus? *God ultimately stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac and a substitute sacrifice is provided to take his place. This is pointing toward God's gracious provision of Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice for mankind.*

OT Historical Books: Consider the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. How would both meanings apply here? *God's promises to David were in the first place fulfilled by God's establishing his son, Solomon, as king, and then the rest of the kings of Judah. The greatest fulfillment of those promises, however, is in Christ, as the New Testament makes plain.*

Poetry & Wisdom Books: How could Song of Solomon (a book about love) be interpreted similarly with reference to Christ and the church? *In its original context, the Song of Solomon is love poetry, a goal to be pursued in the field of romance as Proverbs sets goals for righteousness in daily life, but through church history, interpreters have seen a picture of Christ's love for the church as Paul mentions in Ephesians 5:32.*

The Psalms: Consider Psalm 2. How would the original and Christological meanings fit here? *This was originally an enthronement psalm, a psalm used for the crowning of a new king. The language is only fully fulfilled in the one true Davidic King and Lord of the World, Jesus Christ.*

Proverbs: Consider Proverbs 8:22-36. How would the original and Christian meanings hold together here? *The original audience would have understood this passage metaphorically, as a personification of the Lord's wisdom for effect, but in light of the New Testament, we can understand this as pointing toward Christ, who is the Lord's wisdom and through whom God created the world. Compare Colossians 1:13-20.*

Major Prophets: Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the fourth "Servant Song," in which God speaks of the career of his servant. How does the Christological meaning work here? *The original audience would have probably understood the servant as a reference to Israel itself, but in light of Jesus' work, we understand that it was Jesus, as the representative of Israel, the one, true, faithful Israelite who fulfilled God's plan to provide salvation.*

Minor Prophets: Consider Micah 5:1-5. What does this text tell us about Jesus? *This passage foretells that Christ will be born in Bethlehem, a town of Judah that was otherwise small and insignificant. It tells he will shepherd his people & bring them peace.*

- ✓ **Reading the Old Testament with Jesus in view is not an exact science. It should be approached cautiously, but expectantly.**

EXAMPLES:

The Law: Consider the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-45, how might it be read with Jesus in view? *Joseph is rejected by his brothers, ends up ruling over the Gentiles, and ultimately brings salvation to both Gentiles and Jews, just as Jesus was rejected by Israel, was enthroned as Lord over heaven and earth, and will ultimately save both Gentiles and Jews.*

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OT Historical Books: Consider Joshua, who succeeded Moses and led the Israelites into the promised land, how does he prefigure Christ? *Christ is one who fulfills the Mosaic Law and inaugurates the New Covenant so that believers may fully enter into God's promised blessing.*

Poetry & Wisdom Books: How should wisdom books be read in light of Christ? *Paul tells us that Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24, Colossians 2:3). As such, all true wisdom teaching finds its focus in Christ. In him the questions of God's ultimate purpose is revealed for all to see. As we struggle with life's difficulties, we can look to the example of Christ, the one who suffered, died, and rose again, as our ultimate example of wisdom.*

The Psalms: Consider Psalm 110, the Psalm most quoted in the New Testament. How does this Psalm point to Christ? *David speaks of God talking to his Lord, someone of greater position than David, who also was a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Israelite priests were Levites, or the order of Aaron, but here we have a King greater than David who is also a priest, who can only be the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Proverbs: How should we read the Proverbs with such a Christological focus? *Jesus Christ is the full revelation of who God is and what he requires of us. He is our perfect example of righteousness and as such all our wrestling with issues of day-to-day obedience should always consider the example and teaching of the Lord as the interpretive framework for the Proverbs.*

Major Prophets: Consider Isaiah 9:1-7. The New Testament does not apply this text to Christ, but the church has recognized this passage as Christological for centuries. Why so? *The language of the text, though probably understood as partially hyperbolic by the original audience, fits so perfectly with the life of Christ that it is clear that it foreshadowed the ultimate Prince of Peace.*

Minor Prophets: Consider Zechariah 9:9-10. The New Testament applies this text to Christ. How does it prophesy his coming? *It pictures Jerusalem's king coming to her on a donkey, symbolizing peace rather than war, and bringing joy and salvation. Though a previous king could provide this in a limited way, Jesus will bring about universal peace*

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