

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF

Lesson 1—Sunday School

BASIC BIBLE STUDY—OBSERVATION

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

2 Tim 2:15

BASIC BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

- *A good translation of the Bible.* A paraphrase is helpful, but it is not a substitute for a literal translation.
- *A Bible Dictionary.* This is really more of a one-volume encyclopedia of the Bible.
- *A Concordance.* This will help you find any verse in the Bible. Many concordances, such as Strong’s, even give you the original Hebrew and Greek words.
- *A good Bible program for your computer.* A good program can come with all kinds of Bibles, commentaries and helps.
- *A note on commentaries.* Even the best of us can profit from the wisdom of godly commentators. Use them, but be careful not to depend on them too much instead of doing your own study.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

The word “inductive” means taking a number of facts and drawing a logical conclusion from them. Inductive Bible study involves looking at the Scriptures and drawing logical conclusions from the facts. This is the opposite of “deductive” study, which means starting with a statement or idea and then finding facts that prove that the statement or idea is true.

- *Induction:* fact + fact + fact = a conclusion
- *Deduction:* statement or idea is proven by fact + fact + fact.

There is legitimacy to deductive study. It is reasonable to start with a proven doctrine and search out all the facts relating to it. This is topical or doctrinal study. The danger of deductive Bible study though is that it is possible to start with a flawed, or even a good idea, and then find verses that *appear* to back it up, but which are really taken out of context, misinterpreted and misapplied.

While there are a number of different styles of Bible study, all valid methods carefully observe the three basic steps of *observation*, *interpretation* and *application*.

- *Observation*: The first and foremost rule of observation is *observe!* Examine the text *carefully!* We need to ask ourselves, what do I see in this passage? This is where most of the work of Bible study is done. Learn to study the text carefully rather than just glancing at it. Remember that this is God’s Word to us—we need to find out exactly what God has said. Observation, then, involves gathering information and paying careful attention to the details and facts related to the text.
- *Interpretation*: What do these facts mean? This is the inductive stage, where the facts are assembled to form conclusions. There is only one correct interpretation of a passage—that which the author intended. The difference between observation and interpretation can be clearly seen in Proverbs 24:30-34:

30 “I passed by the field of the sluggard
And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,
31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles;
Its surface was covered with nettles,
And its stone wall was broken down.

Verses 30-31 are observation

32 When I saw, I reflected upon it;
I looked, *and* received instruction.
33 “A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest,”
34 Then your poverty will come *as* a robber
And your want like an armed man.

Verses 32-34 are interpretation.

- *Application:* What does this mean to me? i.e. How does this apply to my life? There may be many applications of a text, all based on the same interpretation. Be careful not to merely *understand* how a text applies to you. Follow through by *obeying* it.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF A GOOD BIBLE INTERPRETER

- Faith and a close relationship with God (1 Cor. 2:14). A committed Christian has the ability to prayerfully call upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to illuminate the text. Apart from Him, we can learn very little (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12-16).
- Theological confidence in the scriptures and a right attitude. That is, we all tend to approach the scriptures with our minds already made up as to whether we believe them to be the fully inspired Word of God or not (or somewhere in-between). We also either approach the Word of God in submission to its authority, or we approach it with the view that *we* are the authority. To be submissive to the authority of scripture is the attitude we want. To approach it otherwise is deadly.
- Industry & diligence. Not even the illumination provided by the Holy Spirit will help the lazy or careless student of the Word. As Paul exhorted Timothy, “Be *diligent* to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).
- Willingness to listen to & learn from others. Your pastor, Sunday School teacher, Bible Study teacher and fellow believers may have a lot of sound Bible knowledge to offer. *Be teachable!*

OBSERVATION

The most common-sense way to study the scriptures is by what is known as the literal-historical-grammatical approach, or simply the literal-grammatical method.

Practical preparation—before we get down to the *mechanics* of observation, let’s consider a few practical points.

Take care in observation. Two High School students visited Arlington Cemetery. One remarked afterward on seeing such and such a general's grave and the tombstones of a number of famous notables from different eras and different conflicts. The other student's remark? "I've never seen so many dead guys before!" One student was a careful observer. The other didn't see anything but tombstones. It's the same way in the study of God's Word: careful observers will note every point, every significant word, every weighty clause; they will make note of their observations and avoid skipping over what they think are the unimportant parts. Others will simply skim the text superficially and see nothing but the numerous words of "a bunch of dead guys."

Read the passage multiple times. There is no substitute for reading, rereading and rereading the text.

Keep in mind the guiding assumptions of literal hermeneutics:

Since God is the author of scripture, there are no *genuine* contradictions, whether historical or doctrinal.

Revelation is progressive (more on this under interpretation)

Scripture interprets scripture (*see interpretation*)

Observation is the detective part of the operation. Here is where we look for the fingerprints, the murder weapon and the possible motives. It is natural that we will find ourselves interpreting as we observe. Be careful, however, not to jump to conclusions before all the evidence is in. To do so is to risk hanging the innocent.

Remember that I said earlier that the first and foremost rule of observation is to observe!

The second most important rule is to *pay attention to the context* of the text you are studying. By context, I mean the setting for the text. The first type of context is the historical, cultural, and often geographical setting in which the event takes place or in which the letter is written. The second type of context is that of the text itself—the theme or subject of the story, book, chapter or paragraph; and the text before and after the passage you are studying. *So, with context in mind...*

Historical / Cultural / Geographical Context—Always begin your study of the Bible by looking at *when, where and how* the people of the Bible lived at the time when the biblical events took place. This is a key component in understanding the scriptures. We tend to look at everything from a modern, Western perspective. But scripture was written in the Middle East and stamped with the imprint of Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian influences. Learn what factors made up their everyday lives, and you will be able to understand how the people of a given time and place thought and behaved.

Practical tips in establishing the historical, cultural and geographic context

Check a Bible dictionary or other reference book to see what historical or cultural conditions might be relevant to the passage.

Example: Lk 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan. Why a cultural / historical understanding is needed: to appreciate the intended impact of this parable on Jesus' listeners.

Check a Bible map or atlas to see if geography plays a role in understanding a passage.

Example: Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan followed the Fertile Crescent since the more direct route was across forbidding desert.

Ask questions.

Who are the persons involved? Does the text speak of God, man, angels, demons?

What is the rank, relationship, race, religion, etc. of those involved?

What is happening? What feeling is being felt or expressed? Notice the verbs, commands, promises, conversations, cries, speeches, singing, etc.?

Where is the action taking place? In what geographical location, social situation, religious environment? Where was the book written?

When do the events occur? Is this period (day, week, month, year) significant for some political, religious, cultural, personal, spiritual, prophetic or other reason?

Why did it happen? How is this event related to the immediate or long-term personal, political, cultural, spiritual or prophetic history of the person, group or nations involved in terms of cause and effect? Is this a natural consequence, a judgment of God, a prophetic fulfillment, a fulfilled promise?

How did it happen? What steps, process, causes or consequences are involved?

Does it describe thought, will, emotion, legal action, speech or behavior?

Does it happen quietly, suddenly, publicly, privately, gently, violently, between individuals or nations? Collect all the facts by careful observation.

And, last but not least, So what? What difference does it make?

Content—History, culture, geography and interpersonal interactions not only provide context, but content as well. Observe these things as though you are a detective, historian, cultural anthropologist, geographer, judge and counselor. Look for words, facts, nuances, actions and anything else that makes up the account.

1. Grammatical guidelines: Look closely at the meaning and relationships of words.
 1. Use a literal translation in exegesis because the sentence structure is closest to the original. *NAS, KJV, NKJV, ESV*
 2. Look for words unknown to you—especially if they are used to make a point, are theological words, or are words that rarely appear in scripture (cf. propitiation, expiation, justification, etc.).
 3. Look for key words. These may be words that are repeated in a passage or words that appear to link to other words, teachings, actions etc., in the passage.
 1. Example: 1 Jn. 4:7 “Beloved, let us **love** one another, for **love** is from God; and everyone who **loves** is born of God and knows God.”
 2. Example: Ps. 1:1-3
 4. Look for commands: James 4:7 “**Submit** therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you.”
 5. Note verbs—action words (ran, wept, spoke, walked, etc.)
 6. Note adjectives—descriptive words (*fierce gale, angry mob, silent night, etc.*)
 7. Look for clauses—phrases that distinguish thoughts:
 1. Temporal clauses—where a time element is involved
 1. Key words: after, before, later
 2. Example: Rev. 11:11a “But **after** the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them,”
 2. Local or geographic clauses
 1. Key words: up, down, with, apart

2. Example: Jn. 2:13 “The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went **up** to Jerusalem.”
3. Logical clauses: clauses which show a . . .
 1. Reason for something (cause-and-effect)
 1. Key words: because, for, since
 2. Examples: Mt. 1:21 “and you shall call His name Jesus, **for** He will save His people from their sins.” “*Jesus*” means “*Savior*.”
 2. Result
 1. Key words: so, then, therefore, thus
 2. Example: 2 Cor. 5:17 “**Therefore** if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”
 3. Method by which something takes place
 1. Key words: by, by means of
 2. Example: Rom. 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed **by** the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” *Let’s see what all else this very important verse has in it.*
 4. Purpose
 1. Key words: that*, in order that, so that
 2. Example: Rom. 12:2 “...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **so that** you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
 3. *Note: “that” is not always a purpose clause (Rom.12:2) “**that** which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
 5. Contrast
 1. Key words: but, never-the-less, yet, however, much more, otherwise
 2. Example: Rom. 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, **but** be transformed by the renewing of your mind,”
 6. Continuation
 1. Key word: and (ties ideas together)
 2. Example: Rom. 12:2a “**And** do not be conformed to this world,”

7. Comparison

1. Key words: also, like, as (“in the same way”)
2. Example: Jn. 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as** I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

8. Condition

1. Key word: if
2. Example: 1 Jn. 1:9 “**If** we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

9. Emphasis

1. Key words: verily verily, truly truly, indeed, only
2. Example: Jn. 5:24 “**Truly, truly**, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life....”

OBSERVATION EXERCISE

John 3:14-16

John 3:14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

First of all, we need to understand our context. Jesus has been drawing a great deal of attention to Himself, not all of it favorable. Nicodemus, an *honest* member of the Sanhedrin, has come to talk to Jesus at night and Jesus is explaining about the gospel and the new birth. That’s a summary sketch of the context, but it will do for our purposes.

1. As indicates: comparison. So does *even so*. The comparison is between the way Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and the way the Son of Man will be lifted up. *If you don’t know the story of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, you’ll want to look at it in Numbers 21:4-9. We know, of course, who the Son of Man is.*
2. The next thing we want to notice is the word *must*. This tells us that this *has* to happen. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that this is part of God’s plan for Him.
3. *Lifted up* tells us something about what is going to happen to Jesus. Just like Moses’ bronze serpent was help up on a pole for all to see, Jesus is going to be stuck—quite literally—up on a pole—a cross—for all to see. Notice, too, that He will *be* lifted up. He’s not going to lift Himself up; someone else will do it to Him.
4. Now look at the start of verse 15. Here we see the words *so that*. On our Key Word Quick Reference Chart, those two words indicate *purpose*. God has a purpose in having Jesus stuck up on a cross.
5. *Whoever*—that’s a biggie! It sort of crosses gender, age, racial, ethnic and national boundaries, doesn’t it?
6. Now for a verb: *believes*. That’s a word I want to look up to see just what all it means to believe. From my concordance, I find that is the Greek word *pistuo*. In the Dictionary of Biblical Languages, on my computer, I discovered that *pistuo* means “think to be true, to believe, implying *trust*. That tells me there’s more than mere intellectual acceptance involved here.
7. The next word is so important. It’s *will have*—two words in English, but only one in the Greek. It’s the word *have* in the future tense.

8. When we look at the rest of the verse we see that *will have* goes with the words *eternal life!* Wow! *Will have eternal life.* That looks like a promise, doesn't it?
9. Of course, now we want to understand what eternal life means (for the sake of making good observations we're playing dumb ☺). So, we look up eternal and discover that it is an adjective that tells us something about this promised life. And guess what? We discover that *eternal* means... eternal! Everlasting. Without end. Guess we didn't really need to look that word up, did we? Only about 10% of the words in the Bible text need further explanation, like *believes*. The rest are pretty self-explanatory. Nonetheless, life *eternal* tells us that we have one incredible life promised to us, doesn't it?
10. And lastly, we jump back two words and see that this eternal life that is promised for whoever believes or trusts is *in Him*. Who is *Him*? Well, the last person mentioned before this is Jesus. And I'd say it's a pretty good bet that Jesus was referring, in the third person, to Himself rather than to Moses.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF¹

Lesson 2—Worship Service

BASIC BIBLE STUDY – OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

INTRO: Welcome to Bible Study Methods 101! For those of you who may be here for the first time or who missed the announcement last week, we're doing something different today. I've been asked to present a short course on basic Bible study methods in three sessions. Frankly, I can't give you an in-depth course in just one day. However, my goal this morning is to give the most basic, essential tools for learning how to study the Bible for yourself. If you really do want to understand God's word, His instruction to us is clear: "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*" 2 Tim 2:15.

While there are a number of different styles of Bible study, all valid methods carefully observe the three basic steps of *observation*, *interpretation* and *application*. We covered the basics of observation in Sunday School and we'll look at interpretation and application following the Soup and Sharing time after the morning service. In this session, I'm going to review the basic rules of observation for those of you who weren't in Sunday School, and demonstrate how good observation of a biblical text will lead to clear interpretation.

Let's begin with the most basic rules of Observation.

¹ Much of the material in this study was either adapted or quoted directly from the book "Explore the Bible Yourself," by Rick Yohn, published by Navpress, 1982.

The first and foremost rule of observation is *observe!* Examine the text carefully. We need to ask ourselves, what do I see in this passage? This is where most of the work of Bible study is done. Learn to study the text carefully rather than just glancing at it. Remember that this is God's Word to us—we need to find out exactly what God has said. Observation, then, involves gathering information and paying careful attention to the details and facts related to the text.

The second most important rule is to *pay attention to the context* of the text you are studying. By context, I mean the setting for the text. The first type of context is the historical, cultural, and often geographical setting in which the event takes place or in which the letter is written. The second type of context is that of the text itself—the theme or subject of the story, book, chapter or paragraph; and the text before and after the passage you are studying. So, with context in mind,...

Begin your study of the Bible by looking at *when, where and how* the people of the Bible lived at the time when the biblical events took place. No matter whether you are looking at the Old Testament or the New, this is a key component in understanding the scriptures. We Americans tend to look at everything from a modern, Western perspective. But scripture was written in the Middle East and stamped with the imprint of Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian influences. Learn what factors made up their everyday lives, and you will be able to understand how the people of a given time and place thought and behaved.

Practical tips for establishing the historical, cultural and geographic context

Check a Bible dictionary or other reference book to see what historical or cultural conditions might be relevant to the passage.

Check a Bible map or atlas to see if geography plays a role in understanding a passage. Nain is where Jesus brought the widow's son back to life.

Ask questions.

Who is involved?

What is happening?

Where is the action taking place?

When do the events occur?

Why did it/they happen?

How did it/they happen?

And, last but not least, So what? What difference does it make?

History, culture, geography and interpersonal interactions not only provide context, but content as well. Observe these things as though you are a detective, historian, cultural anthropologist, explorer, judge and counselor. Look for words, facts, nuances, actions and anything else that makes up the account.

So, begin your study of the Bible by looking at when, where and how the people of the Bible lived at the time when the biblical events took place.

1. Next, study the text itself. Look closely at the meaning and relationships of words.
 1. Look up words you don't know.
 2. Look for key words that are repeated or that appear to link to other words, teachings, or actions in the passage.
 3. Look for commands.
 4. Take note of verbs—action words. (walked, ran, wept, slept, etc.)
 5. Note adjectives—descriptive words (*fierce gale, angry mob, silent night, etc.*)

6. Look for words like *after*, *before*, and *later*, which tell us *when* something happened.

And most important of all, look for words which show:

A *reason* for something

A *result* of something

A method by which something *takes place*

A *purpose* for something

A contrast or continuation

And lastly, a comparison, a conditional situation or words that add emphasis to something that is being said or done. You'll find a link on the church website to a document that lists the words which will indicate all these things.

The more careful attention you pay to the types and meanings of words, the better you will be at Bible study.

Lastly, even though this is somewhat more a principle of interpretation, which we'll cover this afternoon, consider what other passages in the Bible might have to say about the setting or the subject you are studying. Comparing scripture with scripture is a very important part of Bible study. To ensure that you are teaching the truth, make sure that it is something the rest of the Bible agrees with. It is also important for getting all the facts of a situation. For example, following Judas' betrayal of Jesus, we read of his suicide in Mt. 27:3-5 In Acts 1:16-18, however, we find another piece of information. In Matthew, we see that he hung himself. In Acts, however, we learn something else. The question is, how do we put these two pieces of the puzzle together? My logical assumption is that either that he tied a lousy knot or that either the rope or the tree limb broke.

With that said, let's begin our investigation of a very familiar Bible story: The Last Supper in John 13:21-30; with insertions from Matthew, Mark and Luke.

INTRO: Some of you may have seen the new movie, "Son of God," about the life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It had quite an impact on me emotionally and was definitely well worth seeing.

Scripturally, however, the movie played foot-loose and fancy free with its depictions and the chronology of Jesus' teachings and biblical events. But there is an even older, much more famous, and *highly* inaccurate picture of Jesus' last supper with His disciples, by Leonardo da Vinci. This morning I'd like to walk with you through this story in light of the culture of that time in history, and by noting the significant words and phrases. In the process, I'll show you some details that a great many people never see in this very personal event. By the way, the painting had deteriorated to the point of almost being invisible when the doorway was cut through Jesus' feet in 1652.

So, to begin:

I. **THE TIME HAD COME AND THE PLACE WAS PREPARED FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WOULD EVER EAT.**

Our main text is the gospel of John, chapter 13. Let me set the stage and establish the context of

the evening by summing up the details that come before the portion I want to focus on.

The time of Jesus' crucifixion was at hand. By comparing the four gospels with the help of a Harmony of the Gospels, we can see that Matthew, Mark and Luke all note that this took place on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. This was the Passover Meal, with all the special dishes and traditional rituals that were observed in this most important of all the Jewish yearly feasts—the celebration of Israel's

exodus from slavery in Egypt. Everything about this meal was significant, which we'll note, just briefly, at the end of this study.

The disciples had been shown to a house with a large, furnished upper room where the supper was to be held.

¹³ And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴ And when the hour had come He reclined at the table and the apostles with Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Following this, we read in John 13:1-20 of Jesus washing the disciples feet, Picking up now with verse 21, let me read on down to verse 30.

²¹ When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." ²² The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. ²³ There was reclining on Jesus' breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." ²⁵ He, leaning back thus on Jesus' breast, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus therefore answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, "What you do, do quickly." ²⁸ Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. ²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give

something to the poor.³⁰ And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night. ...

The time had come and the place was prepared for the most important meal Jesus and His disciples would ever eat. Let's begin looking at the cultural and historical context, *and* at certain key words that give us clues to *what* is going on and *how* the evening unfolded.

THE TABLE WAS SET AND EVERYONE WAS SEATED

Or were they?

For our purposes, a single word in verse 23 is probably the most important clue in the whole story, because prior to Judas leaving, the crucial conversations *required* that everyone be situated just right. Verse 23: “There was *reclining* on Jesus’ breast one of His disciples...”

Da Vinci’s painting of The Last Supper is 15’ high by 29’ long and covers an end wall of the dining hall at the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, [Italy](#). As his model, he painted the table and chairs that the monks used during mealtime.

No one sat on chairs at the Last Supper! This picture was copied from “The Land & People Jesus Knew,” which is just one of a number of great books available that show what life was like in those far off days—definitely something to have in your library if you’re serious about Bible study.

Among the better-off people in Israel in Jesus’ day it was the custom to eat while laying on a mat, a pillow, or a low couch, leaning on the left arm so as to be able to eat with the right hand. Each individual would have had his or her own mat, pillow or couch. For the sake of simplicity, I’m just going to use the word couch. Jesus and His disciples were *not* wealthy. Nevertheless, when given the opportunity for formal dining, they would have followed the customs of the day.

It is because of this arrangement that a slave or servant could, as was the custom, walk around behind the diners, removing each one's sandals in turn and washing their feet. As we saw, Jesus performed this menial task that evening, demonstrating not only a profound example of humility, but also metaphorically illustrating the washing of rebirth and daily cleansing necessary for one who would follow Him.

Normally the couches were arranged on three sides of a rectangular table, while the fourth side was left open for the servants or server to work with the dishes and food. In larger groups, multiple tables and couches would have been used.

Of the three couches I mentioned, the one in the middle was considered to be the most honorable. The host would have reclined on this couch. The couch to the host's *left* was next in importance, while the third couch was the lessor of the three. In this setting, with thirteen people present, these three chief positions would have been together at the beginning of the row of couches, although it is also possible that the host sat in the center couch of the whole row, as many pictures show. As the Master, Jesus reclined on the center couch. We know from verse 23 that "There was reclining on Jesus' breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." In the gospel of John, this is how the apostle John always refers to himself, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." By looking at the introduction to the book of John in my Ryrie Study Bible, I learn that this unknown disciple "was a Palestinian Jew who was an eyewitness of the events of Christ's life, for he displays knowledge of Jewish customs and of the land of Palestine and he includes details of an eyewitness. Eliminating the other disciples that belonged to the 'inner circle' (because James had been martyred before [this gospel was written], and because Peter is named in close association with the disciple whom Jesus loved, one concludes that John is the author." Study notes in your Bible and introductions to the books of the Bible such as these are a great help for anyone who reads the Bible.

Since Jesus was leaning on his left elbow or arm, John would have been the disciple who was in a position to lean back on Jesus' breast and quietly ask Him about the traitor. John, then, was on the right hand couch. He was at the head of the table. The chief place next to Jesus, however, would have been to His left. Judas was there. How do we know that? Because he was placed right where he and Jesus could whisper to each other without anyone else hearing what was said. Those were the two places of honor. The rest of the disciples would have taken whatever seats they wanted, with the exception of Peter. Alfred Edersheim, a very excellent nineteenth century Jewish-Christian scholar, and author of the classic book "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," who set me straight on all these details, believes Peter, humbled earlier, would have taken the very last couch, directly opposite John. This would explain why Peter had to gesture to John to ask him to ask Jesus who the traitor was.

So, the table was set and everyone was reclining. Now, let's reenact the story. For,

THE MEAL ITSELF WAS UNLIKE ANY OTHER MEAL THEY'D EATEN TOGETHER.

Jesus said, verse 21, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." If you remember in the brief summary I gave you at the beginning I told you to look for words that add *emphasis* to something that is being said or done. When Jesus repeats Himself, saying "Truly, truly," He's *emphasizing* that what He is about to say is very, very important. "One of you will betray Me." That's important!

To understand the impact of this statement, imagine that *you* are at that table. Projecting yourself into the story or text you're studying is an excellent way to get a feel for the actions and possible emotions in the scene. You're already upset because Jesus has been talking about

dying at the hands of the religious authorities. Now to hear that one of *you* is going to turn Him in? “**WHAT????**”

²² “The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.”

²³ “There was reclining on Jesus’ breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” You’re studying this passage. Suddenly, a disturbing thought pops into your mind. You’ve read that the so-called “gay” believes Jesus and John had an abhorrent relationship. You ask yourself, “I wonder if studying this word can help me have an answer in case anyone ever dares to throw *that* interpretation in my face?” So, what do you do? You look to see which Greek word for “loved” is used here. And you find it either in a printed concordance or on a *free* and very excellent computer program called e-Sword, which any one of you with a computer can download. The word is *agapao*.

A look at Vine’s dictionary tells us that *agape* (the noun) and *agapao* (the verb) “are used in the NT (a) to describe the attitude of God toward His Son, the human race, generally, and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ particularly; (b) to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another, and toward all men; (c) to express the essential nature of God.” When used of God, “it expresses the deep and constant ‘love’ and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential ‘love’ in them towards the Giver, and a practical ‘love’ towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver.” In other words, Jesus loved John with a pure, holy, unselfish love.

There was *nothing* evil in this relationship!

²⁴ “Simon Peter *therefore* gestured (presumably across the table) to him (John), and said to him, ‘Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.’” *Therefore* is a key word to notice because it tells us that what happens next is a *result* of what we just read. When I see the word

therefore, I want to know what it's *there* for. Since Peter was *across* the table from Jesus, he *therefore* gestured to John to have him ask Jesus who it was. Maybe Peter didn't want Jesus to speak the traitor's name for *everyone* to hear. Who knows? By comparing texts, we do see that Luke tells us in 22:23 that, "the disciples began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing." This tells me that the noise level around the table went up and the other disciples may or may not have heard Peter speak across the table to John. They were busy talking among themselves, which would have helped to keep the words John, Jesus and Judas exchanged even more private.

In verse 25, then, John, "leaning back thus on Jesus' breast, said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' ²⁶

Jesus therefore answered, 'That is the one for whom I *shall* dip the morsel and give it to him.'" All of us know that when we say I *shall* or *will* do something, we haven't done it yet. The word *shall* is in the future tense. Jesus hadn't given Judas the morsel *yet*, but He was *about* to. The timing is important because Jesus *wanted* John to know who His betrayer was. One thing you need to understand about Bible study materials is that most of them are based on one particular translation. As the oldest and most widely venerated English Bible translated, a lot of older works key their studies to it. This means that unless you use the King James Version, which many of you do, you may have to check how it translates a certain word in order to look up the word in some books. "So when He had dipped the morsel (sop in the KJV), He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot." By looking up the King James word "sop" in a bible dictionary on e-Sword I discovered the morsel was a piece of bread. Dipping it in the common bowl and handing it to the person beside you was part of the Passover ritual. Everyone got one. That means

nobody *except John*, who had been tipped off about this *particular* sop, would have thought anything of it.

John, alone, because of his special relationship with Jesus, knew who would betray Him. And we don't know whether he silently passed this information along to Peter or not. My educated guess is that he didn't, because knowing from reading the gospels how impetuous Peter was, he probably would have jumped across the table and killed Judas on the spot!

A quick look at Matthew 26:25, tells us that when Jesus handed the morsel to him, "Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' [Jesus] said to him, 'You have said it yourself.'"

²⁷ "And *after* the morsel—notice the key word that tells us *when* this happened—, Satan *then* entered into him."—*Satan* entered into him. Judas was not a believer who lost his salvation. Judas was not a believer *period!* "Jesus therefore—there's that word again—*therefore*, as a result, said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'²⁸ Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, 'Buy the things we have need of for the feast'; or else, that he should give something to the poor.³⁰ And so *after* receiving the morsel he went out *immediately*; and it was night."

As I said at the beginning of this point, this meal was unlike any other meal they'd eaten together. That was not only because of the tension of impending doom and the drama of learning of a betrayer in their midst, but also because...

**THIS MEAL WOULD COME TO SYMBOLIZE A WHOLE NEW RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.**

Remember that this is a Passover supper. This is the yearly, ritual-laden Jewish supper that commemorated Israel's redemption from enslavement in Egypt. You can read all about the Passover in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. I have three different Passover Haggadahs or instruction manuals for what to do during a Passover celebration. In this age of the Internet, you can simply Google *Passover Haggadah* and find all that out. From these I learn that the celebration begins with an elaborate service in which ritual words, questions, prayers and items of food and drink are used to commemorate the exodus from Egypt. Notice that all but one of the men have their hair covered. The little cap is called a Kippa or yarmulke (yar-mul-ka) and no pious male Jew will ever do anything religious without his yarmulke on his head. As you can see, everyone has a copy of a Haggadah, and there are ritual dishes in the center of the table. The actual eating of the meal follows this ceremonial time. Then there are the *closing* ritual ceremonies.

By doing some research online or looking in a book on the Passover, you will discover that during the evening four cups of wine are traditionally shared among the participants, each cup related to one of the four promises of God to Israel in Exodus 6:6-7. The first two cups are passed during the ritual service. The first cup is known as the cup of blessing or sanctification, because of the first promise in verse 6: "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." The second is known as the cup of wrath, plagues or deliverance, from the second promise of verse 6: "I will deliver you from their bondage." If you remember, God used ten plagues to force Pharaoh to free the Israelites. The *third* cup is the cup of *blessing, salvation or redemption* related to the third promise in verse 6: "I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgment." The importance of this cup is that it is passed during the closing rituals *after* the meal. After the

actual meal, Jesus then took *this* particular cup and made it a symbolic commemoration of His blood, spilled for our redemption from enslavement to sin. He also took the bread and used it as a symbol of His body, broken for us. He took from a traditional *Jewish* ceremony, two elements that would become a sacred *Christian* ceremony—one which we celebrate, here at Grace Church, on the first Sunday of every month. ...

There is much, *much* more we could discover in this passage if we wanted to spend the time. But our time is up for this session.

By way of a very brief interpretation, or understanding of this remarkable story, let me simply say that in this, the most important ceremony of Jewish *remembrance*—the exodus from Egypt, —the Passover Lamb Himself amidst solemn ritual, in a meal overshadowed with His prediction of His own impending death ... *punctuated* by the bitter announcement of a traitor in their midst, Jesus took the portrayal of Jewish deliverance and from it gave His followers the symbols of the ultimate deliverance from sin and death—the symbols of His own broken body and spilled blood. ... We have a reminder now that not only takes us back in time to His sacrifice, but forward, as well, to His *second* coming to take us home.

Our sharing at the Lord's Table—at communion—is not something to be taken lightly. This is a sacred ceremony for God's people alone. And I'm sure there may be a few you at least who are wondering just *why* I spent so much time focusing on the interaction between Jesus, Peter, John and Judas if I was then going to jump to the importance of communion at the end. Why did I do that? Because, even though I have *not* completed my study to my own satisfaction yet, in comparing the gospels it *appears*—and a number of commentators *believe*—that as one of Christ's disciples, Judas celebrated the main ceremony of Passover. After all, he was a Jew. But prior to the eating of the actual meal itself, Jesus made His

declaration of a traitor in their midst, whereupon, as we saw, events moved quickly and Judas left—as some thought, to buy things for the meal they were about to eat.

This means that following the meal, when the third cup was passed, Judas may very probably have been gone. If so, Jesus showed His love for Judas in allowing him to stay for the first ceremony. But the traitor, the unredeemed man now filled with Satan, was carefully and deliberately excluded from that holiest of all remembrance ceremonies—the Lord’s Supper—intended *only* for those who know Jesus as Savior and Lord. ... *Something to think about....*

CONC: I hope I’ve been able to give you some sense of how to observe what’s happening in your study of the Bible, even if it’s been a very quick, condensed look.

As we close this session, let me urge you to stay for the third session, on interpretation and application, following the soup and sharing time. And let me make it clear: *everything* that I’ve presented to you this morning is information that you, yourselves, can find in the pages of the Bible, and in the excellent study helps that are readily available to anyone of you who are willing to put some time and effort into showing yourselves approved as workmen—and women—who do not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF

Lesson 3—Afternoon

BASIC BIBLE STUDY– INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

INTERPRETATION

Have you ever, in a Sunday School class or Bible study, heard the question, “What does this verse mean *to you*?” Here is where we sometimes confuse the *interpretation* of a passage with its *application*. The meaning or interpretation of a passage is what the original writer of that passage intended to say. There is only one true interpretation of a passage. This doesn’t change. Application, on the other hand, can vary from person to person and situation to situation

Example: the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians saying, “Do not lie to one another.”

Interpretation: Do not lie to one another—period. Application: one person may apply it to the need for honesty in his workplace. Another may see the need for admonishing children not to tell “little white lies.” Both applications are valid, but both are based on the one correct interpretation of the text.

By using sound principles of interpretation, we can discover most of what the Bible has to say, whether on a given text or a broad subject.

1. Approach interpretation carefully.

1. The Framework— Interpretation must be Appropriate

All of Scripture is of benefit to us today. We do, however, need to recognize the distinctions between the ages, the intended audiences, the covenants, and the nation of Israel and the Church. Within this framework, we are free to view each and every part of the whole of scripture in the context in which it was written, applying it according to sound exegetical principles wherever we legitimately can.

2. The Privilege—Interpretation is Possible

We have the tools and the freedom to interpret Scripture accurately. That has not always been possible. One of the primary issues in the Protestant Reformation was the freedom to read the Scriptures in one's own language *and* to be able to interpret them for oneself. Following the distribution of Wycliffe's New Testament in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, vernacular translations without Episcopal approval were forbidden in England on the ground that an unauthorized version might misconstrue difficult passages, or color the rendering to support a heresy. Many clergymen had discouraged the reading of the Bible in any form, arguing that special knowledge was necessary to a right interpretation, and that Scriptural excerpts were being used to foment sedition (Durant 533).

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:16 about the Apostle Paul speaking in his letters "of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

3. The responsibility—Interpretation must be accurate

God has given us His sacred Word. As believers, He has also charged us, as Paul charged Timothy, to "Be diligent to present [ourselves] approved to God as ... [workmen] who [do] not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We have both a divine privilege and a divine responsibility.

2. Seek for a single meaning. There is only one interpretation of a passage. It means just what the author meant it to mean, not something else. This does not, however, negate the validity of dual fulfillments of prophetic passages (Lk. 4:16-19, cf. Is.61:1-2) or prophetic elements in contemporary condemnations (cf. Ez. 28:11-19 where the lamentation over the king of Tyre is very possibly also a view of Satan's former perfection and ultimate condemnation).
3. Draw logical conclusions from your observations (see Gen. 20:12 After getting caught lying, Abraham confesses the truth. It is logical to assume, then, that he is honest in verse 12 when he states that Sarah actually is his half sister.)
4. Approach Scripture from a normal, literal viewpoint. Read Scripture as you would any other literature, keeping in mind that it does include the differing genres we covered in a previous lecture: history, biography, letters, poetry and prophecy. Poetry, prophecy and parables often contain figures of speech and symbolism.

1. Example of the necessity of a normal interpretation: In Jn. 21:15-23, following Christ's resurrection, He walks with Peter along the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Verses 20-23 record that,

Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following [them;] the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Listening carefully to Jesus' words and interpreting them normally and literally, we understand He is simply making a hypothetical statement to illustrate a mundane point: What Jesus has in store for John is none of Peter's business. Yet, not listening clearly, someone (the text doesn't say who) took Jesus *too* literally and missed a clear point entirely. *Notice that this conversation was not entirely private.*

2. Example of a figure of speech: Ps. 36:7 "How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings." God does not have wings, but this word-picture enables us to compare God's shelter to that of a mother hen who gathers her chicks to safety.
3. Good rule of thumb: "Unless figurative language is clearly intended, seek no other sense but the plain sense, otherwise you may end up with nonsense."
5. Approach Scripture from a critical viewpoint—Do not be critical of the Scripture, but of your interpretation—especially if seems wildly different from what you or anyone else has previously gleaned from the passage.
6. Interpret the Bible as progressive revelation

The Bible is progressive in that God gave it to us over a period of about 1500 years. With each new book, prophecy or revelation, God added to the information He had already given.

1. Because of progressive revelation, the teachings of earlier Scriptures often find fulfillment and clarification in the later parts of Scripture.
2. God did not reveal everything about Himself at one time, nor tell everything to any one person. Therefore, in studying a topic in Scripture we must investigate truth from all of Scripture.

3. Example: Compare the information Adam and Eve were given about the Savior in Genesis 3:15 with later prophecies such as Isaiah 53 and with the fulfillment of the promise as recorded in such passages as Galatians 4:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

7. Interpret the Bible in context (Use Scripture to interpret Scripture).

Examine the context or setting of the passage to discover what the writer originally meant.

1. Pay attention the levels of context (*refer to context & correlation handout*).
 1. Look first at the immediate context. This refers to the verses that come before and after a passage (Example: Mt. 18:20 “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” Ask: How is this verse often interpreted? Then look at the preceding verses and consider how the context affects the interpretation).
 2. Look at the context of the book. Ask who is writing, why, to whom, and what about? (Ask these questions of the book of Matthew. Note that Jews would have understood the instruction of verse 16 on the basis of their knowledge of the Law—specifically Dt. 19:15).
2. Correlate your findings with other scripture. Observation asks “what does this say?” Interpretation asks, “what does this *mean*?” Correlation asks “what *else* does scripture have to say about this?” Generally speaking, no one passage reveals all there is to say on a particular subject, or all that is relevant to fully understanding a particular doctrine.
 1. Consider other books by the same author and/or that cover the same time period. What light might they throw on this passage? Here is where the work of correlation really begins.
 1. Example: Compare Mt. 28:19 and Acts 1:8 to get a larger picture of the Great Commission and the respective responsibilities of God and the Church.
 2. Example: Parallel accounts in the OT often draw a more complete picture when taken together. Compare 2 Ki. 21:16-18 with 2 Chron. 33:10-13.
 2. Consider the context of the particular testament. Consider whether other verses elsewhere in the same testament also speak of this same subject and may shed further light on it. For example, teaching on the Law and on historical violations of it is primarily found in the Old Testament; the Gospel in the New.

3. Take into account the Bible as a whole. This is particularly essential when dealing with progressive revelation, the ongoing progression of history, the unfolding plan of redemption, and the many different subjects scattered throughout the Bible. Remember that Scripture interprets Scripture.
 1. The OT sheds light on NT (For example, an understanding of the Law, in Exodus and Leviticus, provides a foundation for Hebrews).
 2. Parallel passages in the Gospels likewise build on each other, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels, as we've already seen in the comparisons of the Last Supper account.
 3. Acts provides the foundation for the Epistles, etc.
 4. Topics, researched throughout the Bible, can be correlated systematically for in-depth, theological understanding. Is the passage about giving? What does the OT have to say about giving? What does Jesus say about giving? What do the prophets say about giving? This fills out what God says through His word in totality.
3. Many Bibles have cross-references as an excellent built-in tool for better interpretation. Learn to make use of them, for they may direct you to other passages that will shed light on what you are studying.
8. Let the passage speak for itself—Be careful not to read into Scripture what isn't there. At Christmas we traditionally portray Mary seated on a donkey as she and Joseph plod towards Bethlehem. There is no record of a donkey however. We can advance reasonable arguments both for and against the presence of this sturdy beast of burden. We might even speculate that, if they did have a donkey, it may have been carrying Joseph's vital carpenter tools rather than pregnant Mary. We need not erase the little animal from our warm Christmas art, but we do need to be careful, at the same time, to understand our Scripture carefully.
9. Be wary of establishing a doctrine or policy on the basis of just one verse unless that verse is exceedingly clear and contextually supported.
10. As a rule-of-thumb, interpret those passages that are vague or that can lend themselves to several differing interpretations in light of those passages that are clear.

For example, some passages in the New Testament *appear* to suggest that salvation is a matter of faith plus something else, such as faith plus baptism (Mk. 16:16), or faith plus works (Rom. 2:5-10). However, such passages must be interpreted not only in context, but in light of other passages that are very clear on the subject (Lk. 23:39-43; 1Cor. 1:11-17; Eph. 2:8-10).

11. The big double-check: Ask yourself, *does my interpretation agree with what the rest of the Bible teaches?* This will help keep you from making radical interpretations. As Kay Arthur put it so clearly,

Be wary if in your study you find something that no one else has ever seen before. God probably would not blind godly men to truth for almost 2,000 years and suddenly reveal it to you (Arthur 65).

APPLICATION

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves”

James 1:22

In *interpretation* we ask “What does this *mean?*” In *application* we ask, “What does this truth mean *for me?*” Or, as Francis Schaeffer put it, “How shall we then live?” Application means putting truth to work personally.

Romans 12:17-21 tells us not to repay evil for evil. Your neighbor snubs you because you are a Christian. Even worse, this neighbor is spreading gossip about you throughout the neighborhood. You are finding it very difficult to “love your neighbor as yourself.” To obey the admonition in Romans 12 in the face of your natural feelings calls for a clearly defined plan of application.

Application should be both personal and practical. Asking particular questions can help you be more open to applying the passage personally.

The source of application: God’s inspired, inerrant, infallible Word

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

The Bible is our source of reproof and correction.

Reproof or rebuke brings sin to light. “Reproof is finding out where you have thought wrongly or where you haven’t been doing what God says is right” (Arthur 112).

Correction is the necessary companion to reproof. Often, this may take the form of simple confession and forsaking of the sin. In other instances, the Scriptures may lay out specific guidelines for correcting our behavior and dealing with the results of it (cf. Mt. 7:1-5; 5:23-24).

The Bible is also our guide for training in righteousness. The various means God's Word uses for our instruction include (from Arthur 113):

Teachings

Commands

Promises

Exhortations

Warnings

The examples of biblical characters
and, Accounts of God's dealings with man

The practical points of application

Be careful not to interpret *descriptive* passages as *prescriptive* passages.

Prescriptive passages tell us what to do. *Descriptive* passages tell us what *other people did*, whether it was right or wrong. We can draw *principles* from *descriptive* passages.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, commands (prescriptive passages) should always be followed. Prohibitions against lying, coveting and stealing and the command to live in obedience to governing authorities are straightforward. On the other hand, interpreting descriptive passages as commands to be obeyed rather than as principles, which may serve well in some circumstances and not so well in others, is a sure recipe for legalism.

Principles drawn from *descriptive* passages may or may not necessarily always be applicable to a given situation. Following the incredible mass conversion on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, Luke records that,

... all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart... (Acts 2:44-46).

The text describes the believers rejoicing and taking practical measures to minister to the needs of those who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost and suddenly found themselves staying to join in fellowship, yet running low on the necessary funds to do so. This is simply a record of a situation faced in the first days of the church. It is entirely possible that modern believers may find themselves in situations where they need or want to share things in common. On the other hand, Church history is full of examples of groups who have taken this entirely *descriptive* passage as *prescriptive* and taught that God's intent is for His people to live in communes. Avoid applying cultural standards rather than biblical standards. Matters of dress, styles of worship and prayer, rituals and customs change. Where elements of biblical culture correspond to modern culture, Scripture may be directly applicable; where they are unlike, look for general principles that are applicable today.

A simple example of a changing cultural standard is found in Ruth 4:7. The author of the book felt compelled to explain a custom that was no longer followed at the time the book was written: "Now this was the custom *in former times* (emphasis added) in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel." In the same way, legal practices of biblical times do not necessarily have relevance today.

On the other hand, since the nature of man has not changed since the fall in Eden, the wisdom of the book of Proverbs is just as applicable today as it when it was compiled, some 3000 years ago. In fact, the wealth of practical advice on godly living, avoiding bad company, controlling the tongue, avoiding lust, treating neighbors with honesty and respect, maintaining a right attitude towards material wealth and dealing with authority, laziness, fools and gossips is beyond compare in any other single book of the Bible! For the most part, then, the Proverbs are directly transferable to today.

Another example of a direct transfer is that of New Testament teachings on Christianity. Though we are far apart in time and culture, these teachings are directly applicable to Christians of today. The Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples in Mt. 28:18-20 is still very much valid for the church.

An example of a *principle* is found in Ephesians 6:5-9, where Paul gives guidance for slaves and masters. Legal slavery does not exist in America today. But the same principles are equally applicable to employees and employers.

Be careful not to let past training or teaching dictate how to apply Scripture

Believers who have been discipled in rigid, legalistic settings need to be very careful not to let their background blind and harden them in cases where God's Word needs to be applied with tact, love and compassion (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

The opposite is just as important, where a believer's background may be quite liberal. When the Holy Spirit brings conviction of something an individual may not have formerly thought of as serious, the believer must squarely and honestly face up to his sin and forsake it.

There may be many applications to a particular text. Applications may differ according to occupation, economic circumstances, age, culture, family makeup, personal strengths or weaknesses, likes and dislikes, the political climate, tragedy, and of course, the almost infinite variety of circumstances faced by different individuals in the course of daily life. 2 Corinthians 6:14 is a good example of a command with such a variety of applications.

2 Corinthians 6:14 tells us not to be bound together with unbelievers. For believers, Christ is the center of life and the One whom we obey. For unbelievers, He is not. Therefore, in being bound with unbelievers, we will almost certainly find ourselves at odds over our faith, our moral values, our business practices, etc.

No specific application is given in this passage. One very common one, however, is to marriage. Believers who marry unbelievers place themselves in a situation that can threaten the very heart of their relationship with their spouse and with their walk with their Savior.

Business is another area in which this command is extremely applicable. Believers and unbelievers who enter into a business partnership often find themselves at odds over moral and ethical issues in the practice of their business. The same is true for Christians employed by unbelievers, although the realities of life are such that a believer may not have much opportunity to choose to work for a Christian employer. In that case, where possible, the best possible application of 2 Cor. 6:14 may simply be to try to find employment in a position that is least likely to call for spiritual, ethical and moral compromise, and to resist the temptation to compromise if it does become an issue.

Yet another application of this text is to social commitments. Shortly after I was saved I was invited to have a role in a play (in a city of only 300 people, no acting talent is needed). I don't remember the name of the play but it was a perfectly fine story. Fine, that is, *until* a notorious local homosexual decided he wanted to alter the script along his likings. Thus endeth my aspiration to Broadway!

The practical questions for application

How should this truth affect my *knowledge* of God (Phil. 1:9-10; Col. 1:9-10)? How should it affect my knowledge of Christ? Of sin? Of salvation? Of the Church? Of future things?

How should this truth affect my ability to consistently *deny my fleshly impulses* (Gal. 5:19-24)? God knows our weaknesses. We are fools if we deny we have them. It is for good reason that Scripture repeatedly reminds us to avoid the temptations of the flesh and to allow God's Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us in overcoming evil habits.

How should this truth affect my *attitudes*? How should this truth affect what I *think* about God, other people, my circumstances, and about the way I look at my life in general?

What steps could I take to put this truth into practice?

What will I do today in order to obey what God is teaching me in this passage?

How should this truth affect my *relationships* with God and others?

What changes should I make in the way I speak to or about others?

Do I need to forgive someone?

Do I need to seek forgiveness myself?

Should I encourage someone?

Do I need to rebuke someone?

Do I need to be more submissive?

Should I be more dominant?

How should this truth affect my *motives* in life? Am I doing the right things but with the wrong motives? (cf. Mt. 6:1-6)

How should this truth affect my *values* in life? (Mt. 6:19-21)

What is important to me now?

What should be important to me?

How should this truth affect my *priorities* in life? (Mt. 10:37-39)

Who or what really comes first in my life?

Who or what should come first?

How should this truth affect my *character*?

Am I self-centered, or do I demonstrate Christ-likeness?

Am I dependable in the matter this text talks about?

How should this truth affect my overall *behavior*?

Is my behavior above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2)? Is it moral and ethical?

What dangers do I face if I disobey what God commands in this passage?

What are the benefits for me if I obey this command?

What habits should I change?

How should this truth *encourage* me?

Does this truth confirm something I am already doing right?

Does it confirm a glorious truth that I have been reluctant to believe?

The Ultimate Goal

“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

Reading God’s holy Word makes us responsible for putting it into practice. On the negative side, to disobey what we know to be God’s will for our lives is to be guilty of sin. On the positive side, being children of God, saved from His wrath by faith in His risen Son, new creatures, and heirs of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven should make us yearn with all our being to please Him who loved us so much as to give us all of eternity in Heaven with Him!

Our ultimate goal, then, must always be that of a transformed life and a deep and abiding relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for our good, His glory, and our mutual pleasure!

A Quick Guide to Observation

In observation you are looking for clues to understanding the text in-depth. Unless we look carefully at every component, we will often miss important points and misunderstand the author’s real or full intent.

What we observe:

- ❖ General Context / Content
 - Cultural
 - Historical
 - Geographical
 - Personal
 - The author
 - The recipients and their spiritual condition
- ❖ Textual Context / Correlation
 - Immediate context
 - Context of the book
 - Correlations with other books by the same author
 - Correlation with that particular Testament
 - Correlation with the Bible as a whole
- ❖ Grammar
 - Unknown words
 - Repeated words
 - Theologically significant words
 - Commands
 - Verbs
 - Main statements: Main statements are groups of words which (a) have a subject and verb, and which (b) make complete sense when standing alone. Main statements are often identified by key “tip-off” words (see chart)
 - Modifiers
 - Adverbs & adjectives
 - Subordinate (dependent) *clauses* or *phrases*
 - Clauses have a subject and verb and are indicated by key words (see: “Key Word Quick Reference Chart” and “Aids to Syntactical Analysis”)
 - Phrases either have no subject or no verb and are also indicated by key words

The components of an observation (What an observation should look like):

- ❖ Any information gleaned from the account, story, parable, lesson, interpersonal dialog or other interactions, etc.
- ❖ Any relevant grammatical information such as the Greek or Hebrew word, verb tenses, what a particular key word indicates (i.e. “Therefore = result” in Eph. 5:7).
- ❖ The complete observation drawn from the information (i.e. “Therefore = result. Because of—as a result of—God’s hatred of sin and judgment on sinners, v.7 says ‘do not be partakers with them’”).

Vs	Observations	Interpretations, applications, etc.
7	Therefore. Indicates result. As a result of God’s hatred of sin and judgment on sinners, in v.5-6, v.7 says ‘do not be partakers with them.’	God didn’t die for our sins (v.2) so that we might continue to sin!

KEY WORD QUICK REFERENCE CHART

ARRANGED BY USE		ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY
Temporal Clauses: time element involved		After (adv / prep/ conj / adj) - Temporal Also (adv) - Comparison And (conj) - Continuation Apart (adv) - Local or Geographic As (adv / conj / prep)- Comparison Because (conj) - Reason Before (adv / adj / prep / conj) - Temporal But (conj) - Contrast By (prep / adv) - Method or manner By means of - Method or manner Down (adv / adj) - Local or Geographic Even though - Contrast For (prep / conj) – Reason <i>or</i> Purpose However (conj / adv) - Contrast If (conj) - Condition In (prep / adv / adj) - Method or manner; local or geographic In order that - Purpose Indeed (adv) - Emphasis Later (adj / adv) - Temporal Like (adj / prep / conj) - Comparison Much more - Contrast Never-the-less - Contrast Only (adj / adv / conj) - Emphasis Otherwise (adv) - Contrast Since (adv / conj/ prep) - Reason So (adv / conj) – Result / Emphasis So that - Purpose That (conj / adj / adv) - Purpose Then (adv / adj) - Result Therefore (adv) - Result Through – Method or Manner Thus (adv) - Result Truly, truly - Emphasis Up (adv / adj / prep) - Local or Geographic When (conj / adv) - Temporal With (prep) - Local or Geographic Yet (adv / conj) – Contrast <i>Adj – adjective</i> <i>Adv – adverb</i> <i>Conj – conjunction</i> <i>Prep – preposition</i> <i>Each is listed above in order of primary use</i>
After Before Later When		
Local or Geographic Clauses		
Up Down With Apart In (may also indicate <i>method</i> or <i>manner</i>)		
Logical clauses: clauses which show a . . .		
<i>Reason</i> for something (an explanation or justification for something that has been done or will be done)	Because For Since	
<i>Result</i> of something	So Then Therefore Thus	
<i>Method or manner</i> by which something takes place	By By means of In Through	
<i>Purpose</i> for something (an intention or desired goal— something aimed at)	That In order that So that For	
<i>Contrast</i>	But Never-the-less Even though Yet However Much more Otherwise Even though	
<i>Continuation</i>	And	
<i>Comparison</i>	Also Like As Even so	
<i>Condition</i>	If	
<i>Emphasis</i>	Truly, truly Indeed Only So	

