

How to Understand God's Word
(Rules for Proper Interpretation of Scripture)

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INTRODUCTION ON HOW TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD

2 Tim. 2:15 states "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

We see an example in scripture where there was need for someone to interpret the scripture. (read: Acts 8:26-31)

Why study? (Heb. 11:6) First because God is there and He will reward those that diligently seek for Him.

We start with some PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. We start with the triune God revealed in the Bible.
2. The Bible is the infallible word of God.
3. Jesus as the second person in the triune God-head is infallible.
4. The laws of logic apply to the word of God.
 - a. Law of identity $A=A$ and therefore A/A cannot also be true so we can understand what we are talking about in a given context.
 - b. Law of contradictories, A is not non A , a term in language which excludes from its meaning its contradictory.
 - c. Law of excluded middle. A is either B or non- B .
Language may refer to classifications and if the terms are precisely defined the classifications may either be true or false - there is no middle ground between the truth and falsehood or unambiguous propositions.

5. So we know that: God cannot lie.
 - a. (Heb. 6:18) It is impossible for God to lie.
 - b. (Titus 1:2) Our God cannot lie.

6. God is consistent to His own nature.
(2 Tim. 2:13) He cannot deny Himself.

7. God is a God of absolutes. He hates lies.
 - a. (Prov. 13:5) A righteous man hateth lying.
 - b. (Ps. 101:7) He who practices deceit shall not dwell within My house.
 - c. (Acts 5:1-11) Note the judgment on Ananias & Sapphira.
 - d. (Rev. 21:8,27) All liars will be in the lake of fire.

8. God is the God of truth.
 - a. (Isa. 65:16) A God of truth.
 - b. (Deut. 32:4) Without injustice.

So God gives us empirical evidence as to His character & nature. Real evidence by our experience and observation. (Rom. 1:19-20)

INTRODUCTION ON HOW TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD - Continued

So this points to the objective evidence to judge God's existence. Jesus pointed to the objective proof that He was indeed the Son of God. (Jn. 15:24,25; Jn. 10:37,38)

So as a Christian we can state that these are our findings and they can be verified by others. So there is no PRIVATE interpretation of the scripture, it can be seen by all who will search for God with their whole heart. (2 Pet. 1:20,21; Jer. 29:11-13)

Scripture Interprets Scripture

The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is that scripture must answer questions about itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the truth or falsehood of any scripture as to its meaning, one must search other places in the scriptures that speak more plainly on the same subject.

God revealed His will to His servants. (Amos 3:7; Gen. 18:17)

God instructed that His word was to be written down.(Ex. 17:14; Ex. 24:4; Ex. 34:27; Num. 33:2, Deut. 25:19; Jos. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25)

God has always instructed that His word was not to be added to or detracted from. (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6)

The scripture is not given by man but by God. (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:10-12)

There is a unity in scripture - God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

1. O.T. is preparation. (Isa. 40:3)
2. Gospel is the manifestation. (Jn. 1:29)
3. Acts is the propagation. (Acts 1:8)
4. Epistles give the explanation. (Col. 1:27)
5. Revelation is the consummation. (Rev. 1:7)

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

1. It is God's love letter to the world. (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8)
2. It is a light. (Ps. 119:105)

Examples of lights:

- a. Headlights - used when driving at night to stay on the road, shows the road ahead and when to turn.

b. Flashlight - use to find your way in the dark, provides light in otherwise dark places, removes fear.

c. Lamp- lights a dark room to enable you to work.

3. It is a map. (Mat. 7:13,14)

It tells us what to do and how to live. It tells us the right road to heaven.

4. It is a tool chest. (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:16,17)

It provides every tool needed for Christian living and provides all we need to find God, to love Him and serve Him.

There are 66 books, not one book. It is a whole library. Even though God used 40 different men, the author is God, telling the same story - that God loves man and wants him to have eternal life.

The Bible is a living book where we not only meet God but also the men He used. We can see that God can and will use us as we turn to Him in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are 66 books in the Bible; 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament covers a period in history from about 4000 B.C. to 450 B.C. The New Testament covers a period in history from the Birth of Jesus to about 95 A.D.

The Bible contains different types of writing that should be examined in different ways. It contains History, Poetry, Laws, Prophecy and Letters that were sent to the early believers in Jesus.

Old Testament

Genesis	Job
Exodus	Psalms
Pentateuch (LAW)	Leviticus
	Numbers
	Deuteronomy
	Joshua
	Judges
	Ruth
	1 & 2 Samuel
	1 & 2 Kings
	1 & 2 Chronicles
	Ezra
	Nehemiah
	Esther

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah

Proverbs POETRY

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

HISTORY

Isaiah

Jeremiah MAJOR

Lamentations PROPHETS

Ezekiel

Daniel

Jonah MINOR
Micah PROPHETS
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zachariah
Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT Romans
 1 & 2 Corinthians
 Matthew Galatians
GOSPEL Mark Ephesians
 Luke HISTORY Philippians
 John Colossians
 Acts 1 & 2 Thessalonians
 1 & 2 Timothy LETTERS
 Titus
 Philemon
 Revelation - PROPHECY Hebrews
 James
 1 & 2 Peter
 1, 2 & 3 John
 Jude

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

I. Historical Information:

1. Authorship -

Ex. Mark, all available testimony from the early church fathers place Mark as the attendant of Peter. (Acts 12:12; 1 Pet. 5:13) The background information you gain about the author will help you to understand his style of writing and give you insight into God's methods of calling men into service. Ex. Paul

2. Date -

Dates will help you to fix the events recorded into its historical context. This gives us a clearer view of God working in human history to bring about His will.

3. Where the book was written -

Ex. Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians were all written by Paul when he was in prison.

4. Who was the book written to -

The better we understand the people that the book was given to, we will better understand the contents of the book. Ex. Romans and Galatians

5. The conditions that prompted the writing -

This will disclose much about the books' meaning and shed light on difficult passages. Ex. The city of Corinth was one of wealth, luxury and immorality.

II. Form of the writing:

1. History - What was the historical background?

What actually happened?

Who was involved?

2. Law -

Is the message moral law, dealing with matters of behavior?

Is the passage social or state law?

Is the passage domestic law, dealing with matters of hygiene?

Is the passage religious law, dealing with worship & sacrifice?

What was the main aim of the law at the time it was given?

Was it superseded in the New Testament? If so, what was the principle involved?

GENERAL PRINCIPLES - Continued

3. Poetry- Is it a drama?

Does it express one person's feelings that we can share?

Is it highly symbolical?

Is the language from the worship or the history of Israel? If so, what is referred to?

Is there a historical setting which will help us understand the poem?

Is there repetition or contrast within the poem? If so, what emphasis is being made?

4. Proverbs - Is it a saying that can stand alone or is there a common theme?

Is it a witty comment on life?

Is it a statement of what happens as a general rule?

Is it expressing the situation of man without God?

5. Prophecy - What was the historical background?

Is the language highly symbolical? If so, what is the imagery taken from? Does the author himself provide the meanings to the symbols within his writing?

What was the original purpose of the prophecy in its time?

What is the universal principle involved?

Are there specific claims to its fulfillment in the New Testament?

6. Parable - Was the parable told to answer a question or to illustrate a point?

What was the one main point of the parable?

Are the details given meaning in the passage itself, or are the details just part of the story?

Is there an explanation of the parable given?

7. Letters - What was the purpose of the letter?

What was the argument or theme of the book as a whole?

How does each passage fit into this theme?

GENERAL PRINCIPLES - Continued

III. Word Study

1. Because we are dealing with material that is nearly 2000 years old or older, the precise meaning of some words can be vague as it is so far removed from our present day. So we must question what the historical meaning of the word was when it was spoken. Ex. "Eye of the needle" (Mt. 19:24; Mk. 10:25)

2. Because we do not read our bible in the original language that it was written in, we must rely on translations. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. It is helpful to use a present day recognized literal translation of the scriptures. This will shed light on words that appear contradictory or vague. Ex. The word "tempt" in Gen. 22:1 (KJV) should read "test". It is the same Hebrew word used in 1 Sam. 17:39 (Proved). This solves any problems with James 1:13.

IV. Grammatical:

1. The meaning of a word depends not only on what it is in itself but on its relationship other words and the other sentences which form its context.

2. Look for the literal meaning of the words and phrases in a normal natural reading.

3. Avoid looking for hidden and symbolic meanings. *Historical note: The dark ages of history began when the Bible held ONLY hidden and symbolic meanings that only the "learned" or "spiritual" understood. The scriptures were written for all men true meaning can be found by any one who will turn to God and honestly search for Him with their whole heart. (Jer. 29:13) Literal interpretation is the check upon all irresponsible interpretation whether it be found in history or in some contemporary cult.

4. The grammatical method pays very strict attention to the context of a passage.

5. Remember to also look at the context of the Old Testament or New Testament, the context of the book, the context of the chapter, and the context of the paragraph.

6. Cultural elements: references to persons, events, social practices, geography (cities, towns, rivers, mountains) and plants - understanding these elements will help your understanding of the passage. This is not only a matter of learning the particular items in the text, but attempting to RECREATE the political and sociological world of the past.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES - Continued

7. Remember * the writer of scripture had a meaning that was most often literal. He was writing in terms of reality not symbols. The events happened in time and space, to real people in real places.

8. Grammatical interpretation PRECEEDS theological interpretation.

V. The Scripture is truthful and it does not change:

1. Scripture is truthful:

a. The trustworthiness of God's character. God cannot lie.
(Isa. 65:16; Titus 1:2)

b. The consistency of the Holy Spirit.
(Heb. 9:14; Malachi 3:6)

c. The teaching of Jesus.
(Mat. 5:17f; Jn. 10:35; Heb. 13:8)

2. The Word of God does not change and it is not to be added to or taken away from. It must be accepted as it stands.
(Ps. 119:89; Rev. 22:18; Prov. 30:5,6; Deut. 4:2)

3. The Bible is completely without error because it was given to us by God. The very words were guided by God that we may learn from all that He has given us. (2 Tim. 3:16,17)

VI. Canonization:

Canon means "rule" or "measuring stick". The books that we have are those that passed the test of authority and authenticity (39 in the O.T. and 27 in the N.T. - see pg.4)

1. Canonization Criteria:

- a. Claims Divine Authorship
- b. Written by recognized spokesmen for God
- c. Agrees with previously accepted Revelation
- d. Universally accepted by believers

2. Canonization Process:

- a. Immediate recognition by believers
- b. Authentication within other scriptures
- c. Recognition by Church Fathers of the 1st century

NOTE: The Apocrypha was not recognized by the Jews as coming from God, and the early believers did not accept it as coming from God. It was not received as Canon by the Catholic Church until 1546 A.D. Also, no Church Father ever quoted from it.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES - Continued

VII. Application

All scripture is to bring us into contact with Jesus Christ. (Jn. 5:39,40) If we do not come into contact with the Living God through Jesus Christ and learn to love Him and respond to His love in obedience; we will ever be learning and never come into the knowledge of the Truth, Life or the Way of Salvation. (Jn. 14:6) As we look at scripture, we are searching for more understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we are to live in response to Him. (Ps. 119:59; 2 Tim. 2:15)

Some Questions to Ask:

1. What does the passage mean today?
2. What is an equivalent situation today to that of the original reader?
3. Does the passage have some specific teaching about God, man, the world, the church...?
4. Is there an example to follow, or a warning, or a promise?
5. Is there any action to be taken in light of the passage?
6. Does it lead to prayer or praise?
7. Can we make the writer's words or expressions of feeling our own?
8. What does the passage teach me to believe?
9. What does the passage teach me to become?
10. What does the passage teach me to do?

PRINCIPLES THAT ARE SPECIAL TO SCRIPTURE

I. Illumination

You will not understand scripture unless you have the Holy Spirit to guide you and trust in His illumination. (1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Pet. 1:16-21)

II. Unity of Scripture

Scripture has one theme, Jesus Christ and the redemption of mankind. (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39,40; 2 Tim. 3:16,17)

III. Progressive Revelation

The final and full revelation is Jesus Christ. (Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 2:8,9) If there is any tension between the older revelation and the newer, the older must give way to the new. So the place that a scripture is found will give weight to its importance.

IV. Self- Interpretation of Scripture

1. The whole of Scripture interprets the part of Scripture and thus no part of Scripture can be so interpreted as to deform the teaching of the whole of Scripture.

2. No one reference to a scripture can be made the pillar of truth.

3. "The Word of God is plain in itself; and if there appear any obscurity in one place the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to Himself, explains the same more clearly on other places so that there can remain no doubt but to such as obstinately remain ignorant." John Knox

V. A Note on Parables

A parable is given to establish one point and the individual details within the parable are given to bring you to that one point. The point of the parable is often found in the last sentence.

VI. A Note on Promises

1. We can see that it is possible to divide or interpret the scriptures wrong.(2 Tim. 2:15)

2. The Promises of Scripture were given that we can become partakers of God's Divine Nature in our lives, not that we might obtain worldly riches or power. (2 Pet. 1:2-4)

3. The person who is unteachable and is unstable in their lives being unprincipled, will distort the Word of God to their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:14-16) We must remain steadfast and continue to always grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:17,18)

4. There are two types of promises:

A. General - those given to all believers which can be:

1) Conditional to our response (1 Jn. 1:9; 2 Chron. 7:14)

2) Unconditional - dependent on God alone (Jn. 8:36; Rom. 4: 21)

B. Specific - Those that are limited to time, place or individual. (Ex. Isa. 7:14: Refers to Christ; Gen. 12:3: Refers to the Jews; Mat. 14:28,29: Refers to Peter)

5. Before you feel that God has let you down by not fulfilling a promise, REMEMBER: "God is not man that He should lie. Nor a son of man that He should repent: Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19; see also 2 Tim. 2:13) We must always check our motives (James 4:3) and wait before we pass judgment (1 Cor. 4:3-5) We must always have confidence in God's plan, as He will always glorify Himself in our lives. (See Rom. 14:7,8; Roms. 8:28,29; 1 Thess. 5:16-18)

IV. THOU SHALL NOT

1. Thou shall not allegorize.

2. Thou shall not rationalize.

3. Thou shall not apply every scripture universally.

4. Thou shall not find types everywhere.

5. Thou shall not dogmatize.

6. Thou shall not become an extreme literalist.
7. Thou shall not parallel scriptures to prove your point without regarding its context.

V. THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. The Bible is the final court of appeal.
2. The Bible is its own best commentary.
3. To understand scripture you must be "born again" and lead by the Holy Spirit into its meaning.
4. Personal experience must be interpreted by scripture. We must never interpret scripture by our experience.
5. Scriptural examples are authoritative when they are supported by a command.
6. The principle intent of scripture is to change lives, not increase knowledge.
7. Every believer has the liberty and the responsibility to examine and interpret scripture.
8. Church doctrine does not determine what scripture teaches; scripture determines what doctrine the Church teaches.
9. Promises must be interpreted properly before claiming them.
10. All scripture is to bring us to a deeper understanding of Jesus.

VI. SUMMARY

1. A passage of scripture is to be taken as true in its natural, literal sense unless the context of the passage indicates otherwise, or an article of faith established elsewhere requires a broader understanding of that passage.
2. The prime article of faith to biblical interpretation is the attitude of Christ and His Apostles toward the Scriptures. It is therefore completely trustworthy and is not self-contradictory.
3. Extra-biblical linguistic and cultural considerations must never decide the meaning of a text; and any use of extra-biblical material to arrive at an interpretation inconsistent with the truth of a scriptural passage is to be rejected. Extra-biblical data can and should put critical questions to a test, but only Scripture itself can legitimately answer questions about itself.
4. The interpreter must not appeal to destructive literary forms which cast doubt on the reliability or morality of the Divine Author of Scripture.

5. The interpreter should employ all tools of scholarly research that do not make experience, reason, or feeling the basis of interpretation.

6. Harmonization of apparent scriptural difficulties should be pursued within reasonable limits, the interpreter must leave the problem open rather than, by assuming error, deny the absolute truthfulness of God who inspires all Holy Scriptures for our salvation and our learning. We must hold with St. Augustine, "If you chance upon anything (in Scripture) that does not seem to be true, you must not conclude that the sacred writer made a mistake; rather your attitude should be: the manuscript is faulty, or the version is not accurate or you, yourself do not understand the matter."

VII. THE PARABLES OF JESUS

NOTE: An attempt is made here to list and classify the parables of Jesus. They are arranged in nine categories:

1. The Message of God in the World

The patched cloth and the

A. Nature of the message: wine skins (Mat. 9:16,17; Mk. 2:21,22; Lk. 5:36-38)

B. Proclamation of the message: The sower (Mt. 13:3-9; 18-23; Mk. 4:1-9; 13:20; Lk. 8:4-15)

C. Growth of the truth (kingdom) in the world:

1. The seed growing secretly (Mk. 4:26-29)

2. The mustard seed (Mt. 13:31,32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18,19)

D. Corruption of the message and work of God:

1. The leaven (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20,21)

2. The parable of the wheat and tares (Mt. 13:24-30; 36-43)

2. Salvation and Forgiveness of Sin

1. The lost sheep (Lk. 15)

2. The lost coin (Lk. 15)

3. The prodigal son (Lk. 15)

4. Pharisee and the publican (Lk. 18:9-14)

5. Sons called to work (Mt. 21:28-32)

6. The hid treasure (Mt. 13:44)

7. The pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45,46)

8. The marriage of the king's son (Mt. 22:1-14)

9. The great supper (Lk. 14:16-24*)

10. The barren fig tree (Lk. 13:6-9)

11. The straight gate and shut door (Lk. 13:23-30)

12. The door of the sheep (Jn. 10:1-10)

13. The good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11-18; 25-30)
14. Defilement from without (Mt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26)
15. Defilement from within (Mt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26)
16. Inward light (Mt. 6:22,23; Lk. 11:34-36)
17. Under the figure of two roads (Mt. 7:13,14)
18. The builders (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:46-49)

3. Treatment of Christ

1. The wicked husbandmen (Mt. 21:33-41; Mk. 12:1-9; Lk. 20:9-16)
2. The rejected stone (Mt. 21:42-46; Mk. 12:10,11; Lk. 20:17-19)

THE PARABLES OF JESUS - Continued

4. Fellowship with God

A. Prayer

1. The importance friend (Lk. 11:5-8)
2. The unjust judge (Lk. 18:1-8)

B. Gratitude

The parable of the two debtors (Lk. 7:41-43)

C. Christ's relationship with His disciples

The parable of the bride and the bridegroom (Mk.2:19,20; Lk. 5:34,35)

D. Spiritual fellowship and nourishment

The parable of the vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-11)

E. Supply of temporal needs

The story of the rich fool (Lk. 12:16-21)

5. Witness or Discipleship

1. When building a tower, first count the cost (Lk. 14:28-30)
2. A king estimates his military resources before going to battle (Lk. 14:31,32)
The cost of discipleship is a life of complete self-renunciation.
3. A disciple without the spirit of self-denial is likened to salt which has lost its savor (Mt. 5:13; Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:33-35)
4. The parable of a Christian as a lighted lamp (Mt. 5:15; Mk. 4:21; Lk. 8:16,17; 11:33)
5. The parable on offending members (Mt. 5:29,30; Mk. 9:43,45,47)

6. Relations with Others

- A. A forgiving spirit: The unmerciful servant (Mt. 18:23-35)

B. Neighborliness: The good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37)

7. Rewards

1. The parable of laborers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16)
2. A similar parable of service appears in Luke 17:7-10

8. The Return of Christ

Lk. 12:35-38; Lk. 12:39,40; Mt. 24:43,44; Mt. 24:45-51
(Lk. 12:42-46) The parable of the householder and the porter.
(Mk. 13:34-37) The unrighteous steward (Lk. 16:1-13)
(Mt. 24:32-35; Mk. 13:28-31; Lk. 21:29-33) The parable of the sprouting fig tree.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS - Continued

9. Judgment

Judgment of all people at the return of Christ]

1. The parable of the fish net (Mt. 13:47-50)
2. The ten pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) and the ten talents (Mt. 25:14-30)
3. The parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1-13)
4. The rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

I. Devotional Bible Study

The apostle Paul said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, Handling accurately the word of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). God has given us the Bible in order that we might know Him and do His will here on earth. Therefore, devotional Bible is the most important kind of Bible study. Devotional Bible study means reading and studying the Word of God in order that we may hear God's voice personally and that we may know how to do His will and to live a better Christian life.

For your devotional reading and study of the Bible, here are several important, practical suggestions:

1. Begin your Bible reading with prayer (Ps. 119:18; Jn. 16: 13-15)
2. Take brief notes on what you read. Keep a small notebook for your Bible study.
3. Read slowly through one chapter, or perhaps two or three chapters, or perhaps one paragraph at a time. After reading, ask yourself what this passage is about. Then reread it.
4. It is often very helpful in finding out the true meaning of a chapter or passage to ask yourself the following questions, and then write the answers in your notebook:

- a. What is the main subject of this passage?
- b. Who are the persons revealed in this passage? Who is speaking? About whom is he speaking? Who is acting, etc.?
- c. What is the key verse of this passage?
- d. What does this passage teach me about the Lord Jesus Christ?
- e. Is there any sin for me to confess and forsake in this passage?
- f. Is there any command for me to obey in this passage?
- g. Is there any promise for me to claim?
- h. Is there instruction for me to follow?
- i. Is there any prayer that I should pray?

*NOTE: Not all of these questions may be answered in every passage.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY - Continued

5. Keep a Spiritual diary. Either in your Bible study notebook or in a separate notebook entitled, "My Spiritual Diary". Write down daily what God says to you through the Bible.

6. Memorize passages of God's Word. No one is ever too old to memorize the Word of God. Write verses on a card with the reference on one side and the verses on the other. Carry these cards with you and review them while you are waiting for a bus, plane, standing in lunch line, etc.

II. Study for Bible Knowledge

1. Bible Study by Chapters

In the Bible there are 1,189 chapters in the Old and New Testaments. In a little over three years a person could make an intensive study of the whole Bible, just taking a chapter a day.

- a. Read through the chapter carefully, seeking to find its main subject or subjects.
- b. As you read each chapter, give a title which suggests its main content.
- c. Reread the chapter again and make a simple outline, which will include the main thoughts.
- d. Concerning each chapter ask and answer the questions suggested in the Devotional Bible Study.

2. Bible Study by Paragraphs:

A paragraph is a unit of thought in writing, usually containing several sentences. When an author changes his subject of emphasis in his writing, he usually begins a new paragraph. To make this clearer for you, the New American Standard Bible indicates the beginning of a new paragraph by a boldface type in the verse number. Studying the Bible by paragraphs like this is often called "analytic" Bible study.

- a. Read the paragraph carefully for its main thought or subject.

- b. From the text make a simple outline.
- c. It is helpful to look up important words that occur in the paragraph.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY - Continued

3. Bible Study by Verse

In studying the historical passages of the Bible, such as much of the Old Testament or parts of the Gospels, each verse may have only one simple meaning; but many verses in both the Old and New Testament are rich with great Bible truths which demand more detailed study. There are many ways you can study a single Bible verse:

- a. List any action verbs found in the verse.
- b. What or who is doing that action?
- c. What is the central message of the verse?
- d. Are there any promises or blessings given?
- e. Do you reflect the message of the verse?

4. Bible Study by Books

After you have begun to study the Bible by chapters, paragraphs or verses, you will be ready to study the Bible by books.

Several Methods of Bible Book Study

a. The Inductive Method

A method of studying in detail the contents of a Bible book and then drawing from these details, general conclusions or principles concerning the contents and purpose of the book.

b. The Synthetic Method

This is a method by which one reads the Bible book over several times to receive the general impression of the main ideas and purpose of the book without attention to the details. (It is sometimes hard to distinguish these two methods)

c. The Historical Method

This method approaches a book to reconstruct the historical situation in which the book was written and to determine its implications for us today.

1. Consider the ordering of events which lead up to the writing of the book.
2. Consider the geographical situation.
3. What else was going on at the same time in secular history, which possibly had an effect upon the writing of the book.

d. A General Method

1. Read the book through to get the mood, the sweep, and the general emphasis of the book.
2. Reread the book many times, each time asking yourself one main question and jotting down the answers you find as you read.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY - Continued

Here are the most important questions to ask:

First Reading: What is the central theme or emphasis of this book? What is the key verse in this book?

Second Reading: Remember the theme of the book, see how it is emphasized and developed in the book. Look for any special problems or applications to this theme.

Third Reading: What does this book tell me about the author and his circumstances when he wrote it?

Fourth Reading: What does this book tell me about the people to whom the book was written and their circumstances, needs, and problems? (These questions are particularly important when reading the Epistles of Paul)

Fifth Reading: What are the main divisions of the book? Is there any outline apparent in the logical organization and development of the book? During this reading, it is time to divide the text into the paragraphs as you see them and give a title to each paragraph. Draw a line down the right side of the outline and on the other side write any problems, questions, words, or ideas that require further study.

Sixth Reading & Successive Readings:

Look for other facts and information that your earlier reading has suggested. By now certain words will stand out in the book. See how often they recur. (For example, as you read the Book of Philippians, you will find that the word "joy" occurs many times. This is one of the key words of the book, so note its occurrences and the circumstances surrounding it.)

5. Bible Study by Words

A concordance is a great help in doing a general word study. You might begin with the study of the word "grace". By tracing the occurrences of this word through the Old Testament and then into the New Testament, you will come to see that God has always dealt with His people in grace.

6. Bible Study by Topics

7. Bible Study through Biography

The Bible is a record of God's revealing Himself to men and through men. The Old Testament as well as the New is rich in such biographical studies. such as:

- a. The Life of Noah (Gen. 5:32- 10:32)
- b. The Life of Abraham (Gen. 12:25)
- c. The Life of Joseph (Gen. 37-50)
- d. The Life of Deborah (Judges 4,5)

Appendix A

The Decrees of God

"The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory He hath foreordained what so ever comes to pass." Westminster Shorter Catechism

1. The end or final cause contemplated in all God's decrees, is His own Glory.
2. All His decrees are reducible to one eternal purpose. His Glory.
3. His decrees are free and sovereign, determined by the counsel of His own will.
4. His decrees comprehend all events and all creation.

See Rev. 4:11 Num. 14:21

There is no change in the purpose of God.

Change in purpose arises from either

1. the want of wisdom
2. the want of power

As God is infinite in wisdom and power there can never be any unforeseen emergency and no inadequacy in Himself or outside of Himself (ie. creation) to resist the execution of His original intention.

See James 1:17 Ps. 33:11 Isa. 14:24 Isa. 46:9,10