



## How to Study the Bible

---

### Intro

#### Role of the Holy Spirit in study

- Guides us into truth
- Enables us to discern error
- Illuminates our minds with insight to understand and accept the truth

#### Power of God's Word

- Combats sin
- Causes spiritual growth
- Reveals our true motives
- Conforms us to Christ's image

#### Purpose of God's Word

- Reveals God's nature, character and will for His creation

### THREE BASIC STEPS: COMPREHENSION, INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION

#### Comprehension – *What does it say?*

##### Read

- Carefully
- Repeatedly
- Patiently
- Prayerfully
- Purposefully
- Inquisitively

##### Ask the right questions

- Who is talking and/or being talked to?
- What is the subject or object being discussed; what comes before and what follows after?
- Where is the activity or discussion taking place?
- When is the activity or discussion taking place?
- Why? The purpose?
- How are the people involved responding?

##### What to look for

- Key words and phrases – Is anything repeated?

- Structure – How is it arranged?
- Atmosphere – What is the context? (doubt, joy, instruction, encouragement, etc.)
- Literary form
  - **Narrative** – Conveys history and truth in the form of facts, stories, parables, accounts, biographies, etc. from a theological perspective (ex. Genesis, Exodus, Acts)
  - **Discourse** – Designed to present ideas, concepts, doctrines or facts in a logical, orderly fashion and often in the form of an argument, letter, lecture, sermon or speech (ex. Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, the Sermon on the Mount)
  - **Poetry** – Primarily involves the expression of emotions, feeling and ideas as a means of conveying truth (ex. Job, Psalms, Song of Solomon)
  - **Prophetic** – Involves the use of symbolic language to “reveal” or “uncover” that which was previously unknown (ex. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelation)

#### Interpretation – *Determining the meaning of the passage when it was originally written*

##### Key questions to ask

- What does this mean?
- What is the significance of this?
- Why did God include this?
- What is the purpose of this passage?
- How did the author intend the words to be understood?
- How does this fit with the balance of Scripture?

##### General rules

- Interpret literally
  - Plain literal – God formed man of the dust
  - Figurative literal – Herod is a fox/Watch out for the dogs
- Interpret in context
  - Single most important factor in correct interpretation

- Verse – sentence – paragraph – surrounding paragraphs – chapter – section – book – entire Bible
- Interpret in view of historical setting
  - Author
  - Date
  - Place of writing
  - Reason for writing
  - Readers
  - Political
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Religious
  - Legal
  - Ethical
- Interpret in view of cultural setting
  - Believe
  - Say
  - Do
  - Wear
  - Eat
  - Make
  - Practice
    - What was the purpose of the cultural practice or teaching?
    - Would that cultural practice have the same significance today?
    - Is there a timeless principle?
  - Assume every teaching or practice of Scripture is applicable today unless:
    - Context restricts it
    - Later revelation overrules it
    - It conflicts with other Scripture
    - It is clearly unique to that culture
- Interpret in light of literary form
  - The form matters
  - See list of literary forms above
- Scripture interprets Scripture
  - The Bible will never contradict itself
  - Choose a simple, natural meaning over a more complex one
  - The Old Testament helps us understand the New Testament and vice versa
  - Interpret unclear or ambiguous passages in view of plain, clear, central ones
- Interpret in view of theological consistency
  - Test any proposed interpretation to determine its theological consistency

### Special rules

- Parables teach one key truth
- Proverbs are principles, not promises
- Poetry
  - Examine the figurative language and parallel structure to determine its meaning
  - Line 1/Line 2
- Symbols
  - Jesus – lamb, lion, rock, branch, root, stumbling block
  - Holy Spirit – water, oil, wind, dove
- Prophecy
  - Near application/far fulfillment
  - Partial fulfillment to date (progressive)

### Application – *What shall I do?*

#### Results of not obeying

- Deceit
- Decay

#### Effective application

- Decision, not emotion
- Takes place over an appropriate period of time (not delayed)
- Complete, not partial
- Plan to put it into action

**Goal of application is obedience. Obedience brings joy and blessing.**

### Practice – John 15:1-17