

How to Study the Bible

Chapter 3

Audio Lesson: Old Testament Survey lesson three



Objective: To learn how to study the Bible and to apply its truths to life.



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

—James 1:22

How do we get the most out of the Bible? If we study the Bible carefully and with wisdom and obey it, God will use it to change our lives. However, if we simply learn what Scripture says and do not apply it, our study is meaningless. Information without application is worthless.

Effective Bible study is a three-part process: observation, interpretation, and application. In other words, when we come to God's Word we ask ourselves these three questions: "What does it say?" "What does it mean?" and "What does it mean to me?" As you take these three steps in your study, also apply the following principles:

1. Even when there is only one interpretation of a verse, there may be a thousand applications. Do not expect the Holy Spirit to apply the verse to someone else's life exactly as He applies it to your life.
2. The Bible is a book about Jesus, so look for Him all the way through Scripture as you study.
3. Always interpret puzzling verses in light of verses that have a clear meaning.
4. Never come to a passage of Scripture with your mind already made up as to what it means.
5. Always approach the Word of God prayerfully, asking Him to teach you.
6. Be willing to obey Scripture before you teach it to others.
7. Always consider the context of any passage, observing who wrote it and to whom, and the historical circumstances and events that help us understand the passage.
8. Be humble and willing to admit there are some passages you do not understand.



If you follow these principles, God will use the Bible powerfully to transform your life. The first book of the Bible helps us understand our world and ourselves as we were intended to be and as we are now. "Genesis" literally means "beginning." In Genesis, we learn about the first sin, we see how God first communicated with man, we begin to understand how conflict came into this world, we learn of God's judgment and also of His salvation for us. Story after story in Genesis shows us that God is in charge and that faith in Him reconciles us with Him.

Choose one best answer unless instructed otherwise.

1. True or false? Observation is the first step in studying any passage of Scripture.
2. True or false? If we do not apply what we have learned, our study has not accomplished very much.
3. True or false? The first book of the Bible describes the beginning of the world.
4. True or false? Most of the book of Genesis describes how perfect life was for the first human beings before sin entered the world.
5. How can we prove that the Word of God is true?
 - a. by intellectual reason
 - b. by how we feel when we read it
 - c. by believing and doing it
 - d. by reading it in the original languages
6. Why did God give us the Bible?
 - a. because He wants to communicate with us
 - b. because He wants us to have abundant life
 - c. because He loves us
 - d. all of the above
7. What is the best reason to study the Bible?
 - a. It brings good luck.
 - b. to hear God's voice
 - c. to show how much we know
 - d. to learn about history
8. Draw a line from each step of Bible study to the question we ask in that step.

a. observation	i. What does it mean to me?
b. interpretation	ii. What does it say?
c. application	iii. What does it mean?

9. Which of the following questions are helpful to ask in the application part of our study?
- a. Are there any warnings to heed?
 - b. Are there any sins to forsake?
 - c. Are there any examples to follow?
 - d. Are there any truths about God or Jesus?
 - e. all of the above
10. What is the best way to interpret difficult verses?
- a. Try to understand what new doctrine God wants us to explore.
 - b. Choose the easiest explanation over the most difficult.
 - c. Do not try to understand them at all. Only pastors can understand God's Word.
 - d. Pray and ask God to help you understand and allow the rest of Scripture guide your thinking.
11. Which of the following is a safeguard against misinterpretation?
- a. Make up your own mind as to what a passage probably means.
 - b. Expect each verse to have only one application.
 - c. Try to understand the context of each passage.
 - d. Let each book of the Bible speak for itself, rather than trying to understand how it relates to the other books.
12. Who is your best Bible teacher?
- a. the Holy Spirit
 - b. your pastor
 - c. your family
 - d. the traditions of your culture



In light of what Genesis tells us about the origins of humanity and the first sin, how does this help us understand mankind's situation today?



Praise God for His Word and that you have this opportunity to study. Pray and ask God to teach you all He wants you to learn and how to apply the truths of His Word to your life. Ask God to help you to hear, understand, and obey. Ask God to help you know Him and His Word better, and be a strong witness to your family and friends who do not know Him.



Going Deeper

1. Explain precisely what we mean by observation. _____

2. Give several examples of principles we must follow as our observation leads to interpretation.

3. Discuss the importance of application and of how meaningful application depends upon accurate observation and interpretation. _____

4. Who should be your Teacher when you study the Word of God? (Consider 1 Corinthians 2: 9-16) _____

5. Explain how correlation and relating the passages we study to the rest of the Bible might help us better understand the Scripture we are studying. _____

6. What is the purpose of the book of Genesis? _____

7. In what way did Jesus show us how to interpret and apply the book of Genesis? (Consider Matthew 19: 3-6) _____
