

# **The Word**

**An Introduction to Bible Study Method**

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**“What Does God Want of Us Anyway?” – Part 1**  
***An Overview of the Old Testament***

**Reading “The Message of the Old Testament”**

Read pages 61-89 of Mark Dever’s *What Does God Want of Us Anyway?*

**A Bird’s Eye View**

Ever since I was a young kid I have always tried to get the window seat on a plane. It’s breathtaking when you see the sun setting lighting up the tops of the clouds. There is something awe-inspiring and peaceful when you fly at night and see the stars better because you’re just a bit closer to them. And there is definitely something special about having a bird’s eye view over the city you are departing from or landing in. When landing in LA, I try and look for my neighborhood. I try to identify the different LA freeways. I gaze towards the San Gabriel and Santa Monica mountains. And I ponder at how small the skyscrapers look from a “heavenly” perspective.

Changing your perspective can change your view on things. The same can be said for the Bible. Unfortunately, I only saw the Bible from the ground level for many years of my Christian life. I thought of the Bible as a bunch of stories, famous people, and some good verses to help me in my life, but I never looked at the Bible from a bird’s eye perspective.

This began to change when I was asked a very simple, very challenging question: “If the Bible is one book, what is God’s main message in it?”

How would you answer that question?

Here are some answers by Christians you know well and some Christians you may not know as well.

John Frame: “God glorifies himself in the redemption of sinners.”

Scott Yoshikawa: “To reveal the One True God who is just and kind, holy and forgiving, wrathful and loving who requires those whom He has created to love, serve, and worship Him knowing that they will be incapable of fulfilling these due to sin thereby also revealing His Son the Savior who must be believed in order to be able to truly love, serve, and worship Him.”

R. Kent Hughes: “God is redeeming his creation by bringing it under the lordship of Jesus Christ.”

David Lee: “The Bible is the story of God’s pursuit of his own glory, which he achieves primarily by saving sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Tom Schreiner: “God reigns over all things for his glory, but we will only enjoy his saving reign in the new heavens and the new earth if we repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord and who gave himself on the cross for our salvation.”

Ryan Narasaki: “The Bible is God’s plan of love, mercy, grace and judgment in redeeming the fallen creation for his glory.”

Mark Dever: “God has made promises to bring His people to Himself and He is fulfilling them all through Christ.”

Kevin DeYoung: “A holy God sends his righteous Son to die for unrighteous sinners so we can be holy and live happily with God forever.”

These sentences all point to the cohesiveness of the Bible. Naturally, Christians are inclined to the New Testament that most clearly display the wonders and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but to fully understand the importance of the Savior, one must grasp the glories and challenges of the Old Testament.

I like how Mark Dever puts it: “I am convinced that if we can better understand the Old Testament, it will go a long way toward helping us understand the New Testament, which means we will better understand Christ, Christianity, God, and ourselves” (66). I hope we will gain a bird’s eye view of the whole Bible, Old and New, as we go through this study.

**Questions on “The Message of the Old Testament”**

1. What types of words would you use to describe the Old Testament?  
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2. What makes reading the Old Testament challenging?  
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3. Write down the three ways Mark Dever broke down the Old Testament. Write a sentence of two describing his main point for each of them.
  - a. Point #1 \_\_\_\_\_:  
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  - b. Point #2 \_\_\_\_\_:  
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  - c. Point #3 \_\_\_\_\_:  
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4. God the Father chose the nation of Israel to be His special people. They were to be a nation completely different from those surrounding them. As you look at the list of historical narratives, the writings, and prophecies, what do they say about the nation of Israel? Did they accomplish what God was asking of them?

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5. In the Old Testament, God gave the command to Israel to have animal sacrifices. There are numerous chapters describing these sacrifices. What did these sacrifices symbolize and why were they important? How do these animal sacrifices relate to Jesus? See Heb. 10:1-4.

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6. In the past, what types of “sacrifices” have you brought to God so that your sins would be forgiven? Human nature thinks we can “fix” our sins, but Christians know that only through Christ and His atoning work can we be forgiven.

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7. On page 84, Mark Dever poses a “riddle” from the Old Testament. He cites Exodus 34:6-7a where God provides a self-description. It says, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.” How did Dever resolve this riddle?

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8. Look back at what you wrote for questions 1 and 2. After reading Mark Dever’s chapters, what can you do to get the most out of reading the Old Testament?

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**Spotlight Truth**

Write down the one truth that stood out to you from this study.

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How can your life be changed from this truth?

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**“What Does God Want of Us Anyway?” – Part 2**  
***An Overview of the New Testament***

**Reading “The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept”**

Read pages 95-119 of Mark Dever’s *What Does God Want of Us Anyway?*

**Hope**

Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadriplegic for over four decades and an incredible woman of faith, often shares one of her favorite quotes from the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*: “Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. And no good thing ever dies.” The quote comes from a letter written by the movie’s protagonist, who writes while wrongly imprisoned. He is in danger of losing all hope, but as the quote reveals, he never did. Joni Eareckson Tada has used this quote to point the hopeless to Christ, the source of all hope. She is echoing the desire of Paul who wrote, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

If you were to stop reading the Bible at the end of the Old Testament it would not only leave you with no hope, but pretty depressed. At that point the nation of Israel was in shambles. Though they had returned from the captivity of the Babylonians, they were a shadow of their former self. What was worse than the political and social climate of Israel was the state of all of mankind before God. In short, because of sin, all are condemned and awaiting the judgment and wrath of God. That would be a pretty depressing story. It would make *Romeo and Juliet* look like a romantic comedy and *The Titanic* seem like a feel-good movie. Fortunately for us, the story does not end there.

We have to remember that the Old Testament is about “promises made,” including the promise of hope. The Old Testament always pointed forward to something that would remedy the problem of man’s sin and condemnation. With that we arrive at the New Testament, the continuation of the great biblical epic which reveals how God would keep the promises he made in the Old Testament. Specifically, the New Testament reveals Jesus Christ as the long awaited Savior. He becomes the perfect sacrifice that sinful man needed for the forgiveness of sins. In Christ, the story goes from tragedy to triumph.

The central storyline of the narrative is salvation in Christ, but, as we’re often promised in so many infomercials, “Wait, there’s more!” Jesus didn’t just come to forgive people of their sins and then send them on their way, but he saved them to be his people, the church. At this juncture in history, it is through the church that Christianity is lived out, and it is through the church that we are conformed to the image of Christ.

Of course every good story has a great ending, and the Bible is no different. In the book of Revelation we have a fascinating picture of what happens in the end. Though the imagery can be difficult (even debated), the overall picture is very clear: Jesus wins! In the end Christ returns to judge and make everything right. Revelation, with all its dark pictures and scary imagery, is really a book of hope. There will be a day when sin and problems are no more. And all the saints say, “Amen!”

**Questions on “The Message of the New Testament”**

***Promise Fulfilled: Christ***

1. For God to keep the promises he made in the Old Testament, he had to bring a deliverer, a Savior who would rescue people from their sins. Why was Christ able to be the Savior? (pp. 99-100; 111-112. Hint: this is a gospel question)

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2. Give a one sentence description of each Gospel (pp. 100-101). Why do you think there are blessings in having four accounts of the same story?

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***Promise Fulfilled: A New Covenant People***

3. As God’s New Covenant people, we have been saved, are being saved, and shall be saved. Why is this true? (page 107)

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4. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and Acts are followed by the Pauline and general epistles. Why were these letters written? (page 108)

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***Promise Fulfilled: A New Creation***

5. As we said earlier, every good story has a great ending, and the Bible is no different. Give a 2-3 sentence summary of the end as we find it in the book of Revelation. (pages 109-112)

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6. The message of Revelation is that Jesus wins and will make a new creation. How should that encourage you amidst the difficulties of this life?

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**Application**

7. Now that you have an overview of the whole Bible, how are you encouraged to praise and worship God? How does the story of the Bible encourage your worship of the Author and Savior?

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8. How does a general understanding of the story of the whole Bible help us when we share our faith?

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9. Write down the one truth that stood out to you from this study.

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10. How can your life be changed from this truth?

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## Study #1: Getting Started

### **--Week 1: Getting Started--**

*Week 2: Exploring the Context*

*Week 3: Analyzing the Content*

*Week 4: Putting it Together*

*Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries*

*Week 6: Applying the Word*

### **The Aim and Format**

The purpose of this six week small group series is to help our church family develop a right attitude toward the Bible and to equip you with the tools to read and discover biblical truth on your own. At Lighthouse Community Church we believe that the Bible is God's divine word to his children, and that God has spoken to his people, Christians, intentionally and clearly. So over the next six weeks we'll be looking at **hermeneutics**. Hermeneutics can be defined as **the principles we use in interpreting the Bible**. In light of this, the ultimate end for which we strive to understand Scripture is to better know our God in order to bring him greater glory. Thus, we must work hard to know and accurately handle God's word.

Starting next week, we're going to learn five key steps to hermeneutics. These simple steps are going to be the foundation from which we can read and interpret the Bible, and they will help us understand the correct meaning of Scripture. Though it might be difficult at first, these steps will become like second nature and your knowledge of things such as historical context and grammatical structure will build up and become natural for you in your times of devotion.

Now remember, the main goal of this study is *not* to establish a rigid method that you woodenly implement every time you read the Bible. Rather, these steps will hopefully instill habits that change how you understand the Bible. **In the end, we're pushing towards the goal of determining the main meaning of Bible passages.**

Also, this small group series is separate from the Lighthouse's current B120X Bible reading program. While B120X is focused on gaining a general overview of major themes in the Bible, this small group series will be focused on reading the Bible more closely with the hopes of greater depth in understanding.

### **Key Idea: Hermeneutics are important for interpreting the Bible and glorifying God**

Here is some information about the format of this series:

- There is no book, but the study is contained within each week's Study Guide.
- Each lesson is designed to take approximately 30 minutes and will cover different aspects of Bible interpretation
- Each lesson will build on the previous week's lesson – please don't skip them!

- We will be working through *2 Timothy 2:1-13* together to practice each week’s lesson.
- Exercises and lesson questions should be done prior to each small group meeting and will be discussed at the next small group meeting.

Because the topic of hermeneutics is so expansive, this six week small group series will merely be adequate enough to touch on the basics of Bible interpretation.

How much time do you spend reading the Bible? How much time do you spend watching TV or on your computer?

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### Heart Check

So you finally have some time to read. Errands and chores have occupied the entire day, but now you finally have ten minutes of free time to read your Bible. You crack open your Bible, trying to remember what book you were in the last time you sat down to read. You flip to a vaguely familiar passage and begin to read. Before you know it you’ve read an entire chapter, you made it through, you put in your time. Maybe if you’re feeling really motivated, you try to read it again hoping that you’ll understand it better the second time through; if not, you sit and ponder for a while before you move on with the rest of your day. You try to apply what you’ve just read by thinking, *What is God trying to tell me? How does this passage apply to me?* You come to some general conclusion, pray, and head for the next thing on your list of things to do.

Unfortunately, this describes a lot Christians and their time in the Bible. Many people regard the Bible similarly: it is a message from God, written mainly in words you know, but with a meaning that is generally not clear. We know we should “study” the Bible, but what does that even mean? And sometimes reading the Bible just seems too hard or too boring—thinking about how to accurately interpret Scripture is the last thing we want to do. *I’ve had a long enough day, and I’m too tired to think about what I’ve just read. Isn’t it enough that I read? Or we simply justify our lack of motivation to study by putting the responsibility on our pastor. I’m not supposed to know everything about the Bible, that’s why we have pastors who study this stuff.* This demeanor towards the Bible can permeate and plague our spiritual life and sometimes we fail to see the lasting effects that this kind of attitude has on our faith. If we have such a faulty way of viewing the Bible, chance are we will not study it.

The Bible is God’s written revelation to man. It is verbally inspired in every word, and absolutely inerrant in the original documents. In the Scriptures are contained the very mind and thoughts of God, as well as the will of God for your life. As you continue to grow as a true worshipper of God, you will need to become familiar with what he has left as the divinely inspired guide for your life, and as the source of absolute authority.

As you begin this study, you need to take a spiritual inventory of your heart's attitude towards Scripture. Knowing what the Bible affirms about itself (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12), we know that the problem with Bible study is not with the Bible but it often has to do with the state of our heart. If you come before God's Word with an arrogant or prideful heart, you will undoubtedly be hindered in your understanding of Scripture. Instead we need to come before God's Word with a teachable heart that recognizes the Bible as the independent source of truth in our life: with this attitude, you will be sanctified by Scripture (John 17:17). The Word of God will never cease to give up riches to the one who faithfully pursues the knowledge of it, coupled with obedience to it.

1a. What is your current attitude toward reading the Bible? Why or why aren't you willing and eager to learn?

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What makes Bible reading difficult for? Spend some time in prayer over your attitude.

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### **How People Often View the Bible**

Our society struggles with how to handle the Bible, and Christians are consequently pulled into incorrect views of Scripture. Here are just a few examples of how Christians might wrongly view Scripture:

#### Genie in a Bottle

*My life is getting out of control and I need help. I'll just turn to the Bible because it's supposed to solve all of those problems.* These people turn to Scripture only when life's difficulties overwhelm or challenge them. This view says that when the status quo is threatened, the Bible should solve our problems.

#### Religious Roulette

*My pastor said to spend 5-minutes in the Bible a day, so I'll just read...Isaiah? Chapter 3?* These people lack consistency in their Bible reading and see personal devotion more as an obligation than a time of personal growth. Thus, they flip to random parts of Scripture looking to apply whatever passage they happen to come across to their lives. This is done mainly to fulfill their quota of daily Bible reading.

#### Mission: Impossible

*The Bible is impossible to understand, so I'm not even going to try.* These people see the Bible as convoluted and impossible to properly understand. This is the result of a society that is so used to

instant gratification that we are unwilling to work towards things even when they are worth it. People who view the Bible this way might try to read the Bible, but would rather an expert try to explain it to them.

### **What the Bible Says About Itself**

As you can see, there are many different views of the Bible that can have a devastating effect on your spiritual life. The best way of determining a correct view of Scripture is to see what the Bible says about itself:

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

*“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”  
(Hebrews 4:12)*

From these verses we see that *all* of Scripture is divinely inspired by our great God and it is meant to be instrumental in our daily lives, covering *all* areas of life. It is the authority in our life. It is sufficient for all our daily troubles and praises. It is meant to teach us. It is meant to benefit us. It is meant to spur us on to good works. And it is meant to transform our thoughts and intentions.

*“Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*“He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.”  
(Psalm 1:1-3)*

According to Psalm 1:1-3, those who meditate on the Word of God will be blessed. Much like a tree planted by streams of water, we will prosper as a result of our reliance on Scripture. There is immense hope and encouragement that we can gain from Scripture. God promises that we will not wither in our daily lives, instead we will flourish. The Word is refreshing for the mother who is struggling with the daily chores of family life. The Word is encouraging for the college student who is swamped with schoolwork. And for the husband, it is a reminder of the Lord’s faithfulness to provide and bless. In the Word of God we find our ultimate joy and encouragement.

1b. How have you viewed the Bible in the past? After evaluating the different wrong views of the Bible and what the Bible says about itself, how has your view changed?

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### **Hermeneutics: Having Correct Principles for Bible Interpretation**

Unfortunately, though the Bible can be understood by those who are willing, correct Bible interpretation is neither automatic nor always easy. Take for example the verse below.

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”  
(Matthew 6:33).*

Though the words themselves aren’t very confusing, this verse is commonly misplaced, misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misused. What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God”? How do we seek God’s righteousness? What are “all these things” that God will add to us? Obviously Bible interpretation isn’t always as easy as reading the sports section of the newspaper.

There are great dangers in not having correct principles for interpreting Scripture. In fact, many people are led astray without the type of discernment that comes only from continual time in the Word. False gospels—like the “health-and-wealth” or “prosperity” gospel—stem from misinterpretations of Scripture, from a skewing of biblical principles. Our lives are heavily affected by what we understand about God from Scripture, and our entire lives can be misled with a corrupt interpretation of Scripture. Even our prayer times can be focused on the wrong things without right principles!

This is why we need hermeneutics. Hermeneutics refers to the set of principles through which we interpret the Bible, and to interpret the Bible correctly we must use correct principles of interpretation. We do not have the right to make up our own or use any ones we like. For example, we cannot decide that the word *house* means *toy* and maintain that whenever someone talks about a house he is talking about a toy. No, in order to properly interpret Scripture we need to look at the context and content of a passage or verse to see what Scripture is saying of itself, rather than what we say about Scripture. Having correct principles becomes essential to our lives as Christians because it determines what we understand about the God we worship. We hope that as we delve into hermeneutics these next weeks as a church we’ll find greater joy and confidence as we approach God’s word to know what he has said.

What are your biggest influences in life?

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What are some of sources that you look to for truth? (i.e. Wikipedia, newspaper, yelp.com)

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### Conclusion

It is important to have an accurate view of Scripture, but in order to have that we need to set aside any presuppositions that might go against what the Bible says about itself. God is gracious in showing us what Scripture is supposed to be in our lives through verses like 2 Timothy 3:16 and Hebrews 4:12. Scripture is *the* objective truth, the authority in our lives and we must prepare our hearts to treat it as such. Thus our goal is to check our attitudes in the crucible of Scripture and to have the right mindset when we study the Bible.

As we go through this study you may find that doing the exercises takes a bit of time. Don't be discouraged! Keep in mind throughout this series that each lesson is a step towards a larger goal and things will get easier as we progress. It's much like driving a car. The first time you try to drive, things are new and you walk through a mental checklist in the order that you were taught to: *put on your seatbelt, turn on the car, adjust the mirrors, step on the brake, release the hand brake*, etc. Each step is essential for a smooth car ride! But as you continued to practice driving, things became easier and easier until is second nature to drive from one place to another. Similarly, as you learn and become familiar with the principles of correct Bible interpretation things won't take you quite as long. In time, you will find yourself naturally using these steps without even thinking about them. This method of interpretation be natural as you use the tools you've acquired in this study to delve deeper into God's word.

### Time in the Word

Ezra Reads the Law – Read Nehemiah 8:4-8

1c. What does their treatment of God's word show about how they felt about Scripture?

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1d. What does verse 8 say about the clarity and understandability of Scripture?

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Prepare Your Heart – 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Read this passage once a day this week so that you're constantly thinking about it.

## Study #2: Exploring the Context

*Please read this lesson and answer the questions included prior to your small group meeting this week*

*Week 1: Getting Started*

***--Week 2: Exploring the Context--***

*Week 3: Analyzing the Content*

*Week 4: Putting it Together*

*Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries*

*Week 6: Applying the Word*

### **Context is King!**

Have you ever felt like your words have been taken out of context?

I remember once when I was interviewed by a school newspaper only to have a very small portion of what I had said printed. Needless to say, I felt that the newspaper writer hadn't fairly portrayed my meaning by leaving out the context of what I had said. Perhaps you've experienced a child claiming a promise you made without mentioning the stipulations that came with it, or a coworker who claimed you said something inappropriate when you were actually quoting another. Whatever the case may be, we all instinctively know that the words we say need to be understood in their context.

In fact, everything that happens in this world and everything that occurs in communication does so in its own context. Context is the facts, circumstances, or discourse that surrounds a writing or event.

Imagine that you came across the following statement:

*Duncan replied, "Theresa, of course we all know you're the cream of the crop."*

Taken at face value, this statement might mean that a colonial American farmer named Duncan has found some cream in a bucket after harvest time and named it Theresa. If we understood that Duncan was talking to Theresa in 20<sup>th</sup> century America and that "cream of the crop" was an idiomatic way of saying "the best" during that time, we might understand that Duncan was telling Theresa that she was the best woman around. If we then found out Duncan was a salesman and this took place in a sales team meeting, we could guess that Duncan was probably saying that Theresa was the best salesperson at their company. And if we understood that this statement actually took place after Theresa had criticized Duncan even though he had outperformed her that quarter, we would see that Duncan's comment was actually sarcastic and was not a compliment at all.

Understanding what happened and what was said around a statement is essential to getting the right interpretation, and this is what we mean when we say we are exploring the context of a passage. In the example of Duncan and Theresa above, we had four different interpretations of the same sentence based upon increasing levels of understanding about the context of the statement.

Hopefully you can see that context can always add meaning, and in many cases can change the meaning of a passage completely! That's why when it comes to interpretation we use the phrase *context is king*.

**Key Idea: Get to know the historical and literary context of the passage you are studying**

One should never interpret a Bible passage without knowing its context. Proper exploration of context will keep you from misinterpreting a passage, and can often shed light on things that seem unclear at first. In this lesson we'll be looking at two types of context that must be explored when we want to find the meaning of a passage of the Bible – its historical context and its literary context.

**Exploring the Historical Context of a Passage**

In the example of Duncan and Theresa above, it was important to our understanding of the statement made that we know *when* and *where* the statement took place. Exploring historical context is basically finding out *what happened* before, during, and after a communication took place, and understanding *where* a communication took place as well. Because the Bible was written in a historical time and place with a historical purpose, understanding Bible history is necessary to understanding the Bible. We need to do what we can to bridge this “historical gap.”

*The Need for Biblical “Time-Travel”*

Bridging the historical gap means doing our best to engage in a sort of time-travel and get our minds out of our current situation and into the situation of the Bible’s original readers. In fact, our interpretation of a passage can be misguided when we fail to take into account the need for biblical “time-travel.”

Political cartoons can help show the importance of historical context. Without knowing the historical background of the political cartoon below, can you figure out what the cartoonist was trying to say?



Unless you are an American history buff, the meaning of this cartoon may have escaped you. Here's the context of this particular cartoon: in the 1884 presidential election, reform-minded Republicans had flocked to Democratic Grover Cleveland as a candidate of ideals and morals. This anti-Grover Cleveland political cartoon of 1884 references the story that Cleveland had had an illegitimate child which gave rise to the infamous campaign chant "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?" by Cleveland opponents.

Similarly, Bible passages can sometimes be just as confusing as old political cartoons when we don't understand context. Let's look at Jeremiah 3:6-8:

*"The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore."*

As with the cartoon above, if you don't have a good grasp of Israelite history the meaning of this passage of scripture may have escaped you. Here's the historical context of this passage: Following the reign of King Solomon the nation of Israel had split into a northern kingdom called "Israel" and a southern kingdom called "Judah." In the days of King Josiah of Judah the northern kingdom (Israel) had been conquered by Assyria as punishment for unfaithfulness to the Lord. Judah was now in danger of following in the northern kingdom's steps.

Hopefully you aren't discouraged by this exercise, but instead see that even understanding just a little bit of history can make something that was once confusing become very clear! Exploring even a basic overview of Bible history can sometimes drastically help our understanding of a passage.

For our purposes, exploring historical context of a book can be done by reading the historical background information provided by a good study bible in the study notes and the book introduction. In this study, we are suggesting the ESV Study Bible and MacArthur Study Bible as trusted resources for our church family. Many Bibles will give an overview of the events surrounding a book's writing, and some provide time lines as well.

### **Practice with Scripture**

Read just the text of 2 Timothy 2:1-13 and answer the following questions as much as possible:

2a. Who is the author in this passage and who is being addressed? From what situation is the author writing?

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2b. Why might Timothy be encouraged to “share” in suffering in verse 3?

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Now that you’ve answered these questions, take a moment to read the introduction to the book of 2 Timothy and look at the notes to this section in your study Bible. Then go over the questions you answered previously once again and fill in any more information that you can.

### *Cultural Considerations*

Historical context is not just concerned with the events and dates surrounding the writing of a book, but also includes the culture of the writer and original recipients of the book as well. Because the Bible was written in a culture that is different from any modern cultures, we have to do our best to bridge a “cultural gap” as well. The best interpreter is one who has lived in the culture of the original communication. Since this is impossible, learning as much as we can about the culture of the Bible’s original recipients is the next best thing.

Take for example the cultural implications of an athlete. In 2 Timothy 2:5 we see that Paul uses an image from the culture of the time to make his point about competing according to the rules. In our current culture, athletes are given rings, trophies, or gold medals when they win a race or are the champions at the end of a season. But in the Roman culture of Paul’s time an athlete who won a competition would receive a crown. Understanding this image with respect to its cultural context helps us understand that Paul is not saying we should compete as somebody who wants to be king, but that we must live our lives according to God’s rules so that we can end our lives well.

### **Literary Context**

Now we’ll turn our attention from where or when a Bible passage took place in history to where it takes place in the actual pages of Scripture themselves. Every Bible passage is written as part of a larger literary unit, whether that is a paragraph, chapter, section of a book, or whole Bible book. Therefore, just as historical context refers to what *happened* before, during, and after a written communication, literary context refers to what is *written* before, after, and around a particular Bible passage. It also refers to the literary structures and patterns that give meaning to the words used beyond their simple definitions.

To simplify things in your mind, we might say that *historical context refers to the world events surrounding a passage*, while *literary context refers to how a passage fits into the larger story of the Bible*.

The purpose of exploring literary context is to answer the question:

***Why does this passage exist in the place it does and in the way it does?***

If this question cannot be answered about a passage, then further study of the literary context and features of the passage is required.

The point of looking at literary context is to find the purpose of the passage being studied. Knowing how a passage contributes as one part of a larger whole means seeing how the passage supports the purpose of the book, where it fits in to the author's flow of thought, and what the particular reason was behind including this passage where the author included it.

Let's look at an example from Matthew 18:20 to see how misunderstanding a passage's literary context can affect our interpretation of a passage.

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*

This verse is often taken as an encouragement that God will be in our presence when we gather with just one or more believers for worship and prayer. However, the verses prior to this verse are talking about a very specific point: disciplining a brother who is in sin with the authority of heaven. So while this passage is a nice encouragement about God's presence in prayer, what Jesus is really emphasizing is that God promises to be present in the dealings of his church with those who have been found at fault and in need of correction.<sup>1</sup>

The literary context of a passage also includes the genre of the passage and/or book the passage is found in. *Genre* basically refers to the category of literature a passage falls in. Genres found in the Bible include wisdom literature, historical narrative, poetry, epistle (letter), and law, among others. The genre that a passage falls in will affect how you read it. For example, historical narrative generally contains facts and literal descriptions of what happened, while poetry might use figurative language and colorful imagery to convey emotion.

Let's look at an example of a beloved American poet, Shel Silverstein. The following is from his poem "Where the Sidewalk Ends":

There is a place where the sidewalk ends  
And before the street begins,  
And there the grass grows soft and white,  
And there the sun burns crimson bright,  
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight  
To cool in the peppermint wind.

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<sup>1</sup> For a further explanation of this passage and its context, please see the discussion of Matthew 18 in Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010)

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black  
And the dark street winds and bends.  
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow  
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,  
And watch where the chalk-white arrows go  
To the place where the sidewalk ends.

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,  
And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,  
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know  
The place where the sidewalk ends.

Imagine trying to read this little rhyme (poetry genre) as if it were a section of a state legislation (legal genre)! We might be inclined to believe that the state is mandating we get out of any smoky places and search with all our might for a place with soft white grass and wind that tastes like gum! Instead, Shel Silverstein is using his imagery to help you visualize a charming place for childlike fun and innocence to blossom. Understanding a passage's genre will help you avoid making interpretation errors because you don't know how the author wanted to be understood.

For our purposes, determining literary context can be done by reading the entire book of the Bible you are studying and trying to write down the main purpose of the book as well as any recurring themes and where they appear in the book. After doing this, check the introduction to the book of the Bible and take a look at the genre of the book, as well as any major themes and purposes the study Bible editors explained. It can also be helpful to take a look at the book outline to understand the overall flow of thought in the book. Knowing the literary structures, themes, and genre of a book of the Bible will help you know how to approach the passage you are studying.

### **Practice with Scripture**

Let's practice exploring literary context with the passage you looked at this past week in 2 Timothy 2:1-13. Read your study Bible notes regarding the purpose and literary features of 2 Timothy, as well as the book outline before answering the questions below.

2c. Based on 2 Timothy 1:13, what does Paul want Timothy to entrust to faithful men in 2 Timothy 2:2?

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2d. What is Paul encouraging Timothy to do by his use of the three illustrations in verses 3 through 6?

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2e. How does this encouragement fit with the overall purpose of the book?

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Hopefully reading and understanding the literary context of this passage helped shed some light on Paul's meaning.

**Conclusion**

Understanding the Bible, like understanding any communication, always requires a good understanding of context. Exploring the historical and literary context of a Bible passage means knowing what happened surrounding the writing of a book, being familiar with the culture of the time, and understanding how the passage fits into the purpose and flow of thought of the larger portion of scripture it is a part of. With a proper understanding of context, what was once unclear and boring can become lucid and exciting as light is shed on God's truth.

2f. Why do you think we use the phrase, "context is king," when it comes to Bible interpretation?

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2g. How did an understanding of the historical and literary contexts help you in your interpretation of the 2 Timothy 2:1-13 passage this week?

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2h. What tools can you use to get a better understanding of a passage's context?

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**Challenge of the Week (optional, but highly recommended)**

Take time to read through the introduction in your study bible to the book of 2 Timothy this week and then read through the whole book twice. Prayerfully ask that God would give you a better understanding of the meaning of this book for your life in light of its historical and literary context before delving into the next lesson!

### Study #3: Analyzing the Content

*Please read this lesson and answer the questions included prior to your small group meeting this week*

*Week 1: Getting Started*

*Week 2: Exploring the Context*

**--Week 3: Analyzing the Content--**

*Week 4: Putting it Together*

*Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries*

*Week 6: Applying the Word*

#### Say What?

The average person in America speaks 30,000 words a day in ordinary conversation. That's a lot of talk! Though we don't think about it, we intuitively know what words mean and how they are used. Our daily lives are full of this hermeneutical principle: we are constantly interpreting the meaning of words in our everyday conversations and reading, or in other words, *we are always analyzing the content of human communication*. In fact, *miscommunication* is often the result of words or phrases being *misunderstood* by the listener. This principle also applies to how we read Scripture. Since the Bible is a written human book, these communication skills are also essential in how we understand the Bible.

Imagine this scene:

*Duncan screamed, "Theresa! Those clowns look so sick!"*

At face value, we automatically assume that "sick" essentially means "unwell" or "ailing"—*the clowns are unwell*. However, the actual meaning of "sick" is ambiguous due to modern idiomatic phrase "that's so sick!" (which means something is "cool" or "fashionable"). Essentially, the word could mean that either the clowns look *unwell* or that the clowns look cool beyond belief. So Duncan's screaming is either out of fear because the clowns are clearly diseased, or he's screaming out of excitement because he loves clowns and especially how they look (maybe he hopes to be a clown one day, who knows). The way we interpret the word "sick" greatly affects our understanding of the situation.

Though we could arbitrarily decide what we think Duncan meant, we instead want to know exactly what he meant. Thus we have to focus our attention on defining the word "sick". Maybe Duncan's next sentence gives us an idea of what he really means:

*Duncan screamed, "Theresa! The clowns look so sick!  
And look how cool their funny car is!"*

Clearly, Duncan means to say that the clowns are "sick" as in "fashionable," that the clowns are wearing an amazingly trendy outfit and have a cool car to match. However, we could have easily made the mistake of forcing another meaning of the word "sick" on this dialogue.

In other words, *we cannot be the ones determining the meanings of words or phrases, but we need to allow the speaker or author to be the one who determines the meaning*. We should be diligent in trying to understand what the speaker meant by certain words, not infuse our own meaning into a word.

In studying the Bible we can sometimes skip over words that seem ambiguous or phrases that are difficult to discern, but in doing so we lose out on a wealth of meaning and we risk gleaning the wrong interpretation of Scripture. But because God has spoken to us through our human language, we must understand the function of our own language in studying God's Word. Our task in Bible study is to discover as precisely as possible what God meant by each of the words and sentences He included in the Scriptures so that we can know *what* the divine and human authors were really saying.

Roy Zuck put it this way: "Thoughts are expressed through words, and words are the building blocks of sentences. Therefore to determine God's thoughts we need to study His words and how they are associated in sentences. If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct."

**Key Idea: Understand the meaning of key words and phrases  
in the passage you are studying.**

### **Analyze the Text: Words and Phrases**

The passage that you study will contain clues that aid in your overall understanding of the verses. These clues are found in the specific words and phrases of the passage, which must be examined in order to gain a solid grasp on the passage as a whole.

We're going to examine five important grammatical elements to identify when you read a passage of Scripture:

1. *Key words*
2. *Synonyms/antonyms*
3. *Key phrases*
4. *Imperatives*
5. *Repeated terms*

Here are a couple tools you can use to find some of these grammatical elements:

- *ESV Study Bible*: Most times, a Study Bible will include definitions of specific words that it anticipates people will have difficulty with. So, check the commentary in your Study Bible first.

- *Bible Dictionary*: You can either buy a Bible dictionary—like the "New Bible Dictionary" by I. Howard Marshall—or you can check out Bible study dictionaries online—like <http://www.Biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary>.

## Key Words

A *key word* is a word that is important to understand if you're going to understand the main point of the verse or passage. Understanding the meaning of these key words thus becomes essential to understanding the Bible.

Here are some good questions to ask in finding *key words*:

- What words do I not fully understand?
- What words are repeated? Are there words that are synonyms?
- If I remove this word from the verse, will it still have the same meaning? ("Rule of Removal")
- What are the main verbs of the verse?
- What are the proper nouns/nouns used in the verse?

### Examples

*"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people."*  
(Hebrews 2:17)

In this verse, the word "propitiation" clearly stands out in the reader's mind as a key word. It is also a crucial noun found in the verse. For many, this is a word that we don't fully understand, so defining it becomes essential to our understanding of what the verse is saying.

The ESV Study Bible helps us with the definition of this particular word. It reads, "**Propitiation** (Gk. *hilaskomai*) conveys the sense of an atoning sacrifice that puts away sin and satisfies God's wrath (cf. Deut. 21:8; Ps. 25:11; 65:3; 78:38; 79:9; Luke 18:13; see note on Rom. 3:25)." The ESV not only gives us a clear definition of the word, but also gives cross-references for the word: that is, examples that might give us a clearer picture of what the word means, and where else it shows up in Scripture.

*"You then, my child, be **strengthened** by the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus"*  
(2 Timothy 2:1)

Here's another example. If "strengthened" or "grace" were removed from this verse, the entire meaning and subsequent interpretation would be changed or lacking ("Rule of Removal"). This is why we need to be diligent in identifying key words and understanding the author's intended meaning of that specific word.

3a. What are some key words found in 2 Timothy 2:1-2?

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## Synonyms and Antonyms

*Synonyms* are different words that have the same basic meaning or are intended to further the same point (like “large” and “big”). *Antonyms* are words whose meanings are opposites of one another (like “big” and “small”).

### Examples

*“But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be **sinners**, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a **transgressor**.”*  
(Galatians 2:17-18)

In these verses, “sinners” and “transgressor” are synonyms. Seeing this helps us understand that the Paul’s emphasis in using two different synonymous words was to show that though Jews regarded Gentiles as “sinners” they too were “transgressors”.

*“No **soldier** gets entangled in **civilian** pursuits”*  
(2 Timothy 2:4a)

From this verse, we can clearly see that “soldier” and “civilian” are antonyms. Thus we can use this in our understanding of the verse to determine what characteristics are encouraged (of the soldier) and what characteristics are contrary to what Paul is telling us to be like (of the civilian).

3b. What examples operate as synonyms (to further the same point) in 2 Timothy 2:5-6?

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## Key Phrases

Key phrases are phrases that appear repeatedly or are significant to the meaning of the verse overall. Often times these phrases present a main idea or explain a main idea that is presented in the verse or passage.

Here are some good questions to ask for finding *key phrases*:

- What phrases do I not fully understand?
- What phrases explain something? Are there phrases that are synonyms?
- If I remove this phrase from the verse, will it still have the same meaning? (“Rule of Removal”)

### Examples

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, **so that no one may boast**.”*  
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

This passage actually has many key phrases, but for purposes of this example we will focus on the key phrase “so that no one may boast.” This phrase operates as an explanatory phrase that expands on the main idea of being “saved through faith.” In fact, this phrase lends significant meaning to the verse overall: it explains the reason why Christians are saved through faith as opposed to being saved through works. We were saved through faith *so that no one may boast* about their own efforts in earning or attaining salvation for themselves.

***“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel”***  
*(2 Timothy 2:8)*

We can assume from this passage that the affirmation of the person of Jesus Christ is an important concept. Jesus is described repeatedly, in different ways, throughout this verse which should draw our attention to the significance of what Paul is trying to say.

In this verse the phrase “Remember Jesus Christ” is significant because of how Paul actively *reminds us* about Jesus Christ after that phrase. The following phrases after this one seem to work to emphasize the point of “remembering” Christ (as *risen from the dead, as the offspring of David, and as the one preached in my (Paul’s) gospel*).

3c. What is the key phrase from 2 Timothy 2:10? Why does Paul “endure everything”?

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### ***Imperatives***

Imperatives are words or phrases that give a distinct and authoritative command. This is particularly helpful in identifying the meaning because it often tells the reader to do something either as a reaction to the main point, or the imperative itself could be the main point. Identify the command.

*Examples*

***“Rejoice always”***  
*(1 Thessalonians 5:16)*

Probably the clearest example of an imperative, 1 Thessalonians 5:16 gives the command to “rejoice”. It is God’s command through Paul to his readers that rejoicing is what Christians are to do at all times. This is not an optional request, for the Christian, rejoicing is an imperative.

***“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel”***  
*(2 Timothy 2:8)*

As in the previous section, “Remember Jesus Christ” is both a key phrase and an imperative. The phrase is without condition and commands the reader to do something—in this case, we are commanded to “remember.”

3d. What is the imperative in 2 Timothy 2:1? What is it telling Paul to do?

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### ***Repeated Terms***

*Repeated terms* are a signal of possible significance. If there is a repeated term or phrase, there is a good possibility that the author intended to emphasize that specific idea.

#### Examples

*“And you were **dead** in the trespasses and sins... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were **dead** in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...”*  
*(Ephesians 2:1,4-5)*

Here, the repeated term is “dead” which is an important idea in this passage of Ephesians. It emphasizes the fact that before God’s mercy reached us, we were without hope or a future. This also shows us what we were saved from.

*“for which I am suffering, **bound with chains** as a criminal. But the word of God is not **bound!**”*  
*(2 Timothy 2:9)*

The repeated use of the word “bound” shows an emphasis on the idea that God’s word is free from chains. Thus, the understood meaning of “bound” becomes essential to our understanding of this verse in general.

3e. What are some repeated terms found in 2 Timothy 2:11-13?

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After looking at these key grammatical elements, we understand more about 2 Timothy 2:1-13. We see in verse 1-2 how Paul exhorts Timothy to “be strengthened” by the grace that he has in Christ and by the faithful men the surround him. Furthermore, Paul’s main point to Timothy is to “share in suffering” (v. 3). How? Like a “good soldier” who “aims to please the one who enlisted him” (and not getting caught up in “civilian pursuits”). He emphasizes this message by pointing to the athlete and the hardworking farmer (v. 5-6). Then Paul’s attention is drawn back to Jesus Christ, and the suffering he is going through for the sake of the gospel (context!). He uses this example to show how *he* is being “strengthened” by the grace of Christ.

From all this we have a clear understanding of what Paul intended Timothy to gain from his words. We have a clear idea of the intention (to be “strengthened”) as well as an emphasis (on “suffering” for Christ). Examining these key elements in any passage helps us to understand *how* the author is using the words he chose, and it allows us to know *what* the author is saying more clearly.

## Conclusion

An essential part of understanding the Bible lies in our understanding of the meaning of key words and phrases as meant by the original author. By looking at how divinely inspired words are used in the content of a passage we can develop a greater understanding of the meaning and interpretation of what we read. This coupled with our understanding of context and the author's original intent already give us much greater insight in how to properly interpret Scripture. As we develop a right understanding of such key words and phrases the Bible becomes more and more clear and helps us apply the Word directly to our lives.

## Time in the Word

Look up the following verses and determine the meaning of the given words or phrases. Feel free to use your Study Bible or commentaries.

3f. In Philippians 3:15, what does Paul mean when he uses the word "mature?"

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3g. In 2 Corinthians 5:9, what is meant by the phrase "home or away?"

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## Study #4: Putting it Together

*Please read this lesson and answer the questions prior to your small group meeting this week*

*Week 1: Getting Started*

*Week 2: Exploring the Context*

*Week 3: Analyzing the Content*

**--Week 4: Putting It Together--**

*Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries*

*Week 6: Applying the Word*

### **You Are Already an Interpreter**

Every single day you are required to interpret a diverse group of messages. For example, suppose you are asked to “pick up some milk at the store on the way home from work.” You know exactly what this means because you have already interpreted it in your head. What just happened?

Well, an idea was encoded into words, you decoded the words, and then you arrived at a conclusion (and if this were real, you probably would have dropped by Ralph’s to buy some 2%).

Let’s do some role reversal: imagine you are a Greek Christian living in the first century. Now imagine that as you are minding your first century business, a scrap of 21<sup>st</sup> century paper drops down out of the sky and lands right at your feet. You pick it up—it has strange letters that you do not recognize.

Now imagine that somehow, someone helps you to translate the message into Greek. Now you can actually read the message. However, there are still some problems. You read the text in Greek and the translation says, “Pick up some milk at the store on the way home from work.”

You think to yourself, okay, the language is familiar. I am fluent in this language. However, I still don’t quite understand it. I still don’t actually know what to do. How do I pick up some milk? Does this mean that I pick up a cow or a goat? What kind of store has milk that I can ‘pick up?’ There are many questions that you still need to answer even though you can understand the language.



You can see the problem. This is where hermeneutics comes in. **Remember, hermeneutics is not so much a method or a process, but is a set of principles that gives you parameters so that you can arrive at a correct interpretation.** As people who use language all of the time, we know how to interpret language. But, as you well know, even with people today we have miscues in communication. Sometimes we mishear people or we misunderstand. Since the Bible is such an important book, in fact the very Word of God, we do not want to misinterpret or misunderstand at all. Therefore we employ hermeneutics to make sure that we understand the message the author wanted us to receive.

What we instantly recognize now would have been unintelligible then.

Have you begun to see how the context and specific content determines meaning? Exploring the context and analyzing the content help us to know with confidence that we are getting the correct interpretation—what God wants us to know from his Word. We want to receive the intended meaning.

The studies of the past three weeks were designed to equip you with the rules you need to interpret the Bible correctly. This week we will look at how we can synthesize the rules of the past two lessons to grow as interpreters.

**Key Idea: Learn to ask questions of the text,  
to discover the intended meaning of the text**

**Read the text → Ask questions of the text regarding context and content → Answer your questions  
→ Interpret the text**

Interpretation is like breathing—we constantly engage in it often without even having to think about it. Normally breathing is effortless and unconscious. However, think about when you are put into a different environment such as the high altitude of Big Bear or when you go swimming. In those environments, you actually have to put some mental effort into breathing!

You might be wondering why interpreting the Bible takes some work. You see, the Bible is like a different environment. It is not 21<sup>st</sup> Century Southern California communication. When we enter into the world of the Bible, we have to put some effort into it. We have to think about it, especially at first. But it gets easier.

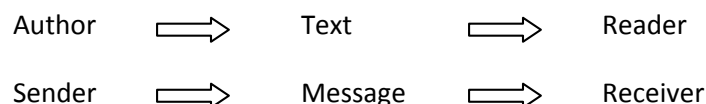
### **The Bible is Meant to be Understood**

God did not have to let us know anything about him. However, he chose to give us his Word, the Bible. The Bible is God’s revelation to us—he is letting us know who he is, what he is like, what he desires of us, how we can know him. The Bible is meant to be understood.

The Bible is a book written in human language for normal people. Though we must engage in “time travel” to place ourselves in the historical and cultural context of when it was written, and though we must study certain words and make sure that we keep the literary context in mind, the Bible is accessible to. Again and again in the Gospel accounts Jesus asks, “Have you not read?” before he explains something from the Scriptures. The Bible is meant to be read and meant to be understood.

### **The Structure of Thoughts**

Writers use certain words and sentences to explain *certain ideas*. Writing is a tool that enables the communication of thoughts.



Therefore we want to pay careful attention to the author's thought process. Is he giving a reason for something else he said earlier? Is he supporting his main point with examples?

What we want to do is handle his words accurately so that we get to the ideas that he wanted to communicate. We need to understand the context and content enough where we can say that we understand not only why an author wrote something but also what he wanted to get across. What idea was he trying to communicate?

### **Asking Questions and Finding Answers**

We live in our current context. If I mention "internet" you know what I am talking about. Now, if I mentioned internet in the 1980s, only a few people might know what I meant. If I mentioned "internet" in the middle ages, no one would have any idea what I'm talking about.

Therefore we need to ask questions of the text, both in regards to context and content, before we can say that we understand the idea of the author with accuracy.

Let's walk through an example together:

*"Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear,  
and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."  
(Luke 11:46)*

What questions do you need to ask?

First, you might want to ask some questions regarding the *literary context*:

1. Who is speaking?
2. What is going on in the verses around Luke 11:46?

Along with this you need to ask certain questions directly related to the *historical and cultural context*:

1. What are the differences between lawyers then and lawyers now?
2. What does the phrase "Woe to you" mean? It is not commonly used in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America—what did it mean back then?
3. When is "back then?" (when was this written?)

Then you can ask some questions regarding *content*.

1. Now that you know that when Luke says "lawyer" he means something else than a man in a suit saying "I object!" you can ask, okay, what was a lawyer like? What did he do?
2. What "burdens" is Jesus talking about?

As you find out these answers the meaning will begin to unfold for you. The lawyers of that day were not attorneys of the law of the United States, but were the scribes of the law of Israel. Who were the scribes of the law of Israel? Look at Matthew 15 and you will see that they were some of the religious

leaders, who had added to the law of God (the Scriptures) their own rules and traditions, making it hard to bear and totally unlike what God had intended. Jesus is pronouncing “woe” on them—in the Old Testament, the prophets of God would pronounce God’s judgment with this same expression.

### **The Structure of Ideas: Propositions and Conjunctions**

The previous example was just one verse. When it comes to looking at bigger chunks of text, it helps to have a basic understanding of how written language is formatted. Biblical writers did not write out their thoughts in bullet-point format or create a power-point presentation. They wrote in large chunks of text. This is why it is helpful to look at **propositions and conjunctions** which help us see the flow of thought through a book. Let’s break down each term:

#### *Propositions*

First of all, what is a proposition? *A proposition is a statement or assertion that generally contains one specific thought.* “I am hungry” is a proposition. “It is not dinner time, yet” is a proposition. We use propositions all of the time to communicate our thoughts and so do the Biblical writers. Let’s look at an example:

Matthew 5:44 – “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

Do you see any propositions? Let’s stick with the two that jump out:

1. Love your enemies
2. Pray for those who persecute you

Both of these propositions are statements about something. And they each include a subject and a verb, and perhaps an object. **For a quick grammar refresher, the subject is who or what is performing the action. The verb is the action. The object is whom or what is being acted upon.** Because these are both commands, the subject is “you”—it is implied.

The important thing to see here is that each proposition **communicates an idea**. We now know that the first proposition is stating one idea. What is that idea? It is that you need to love your enemies. However, before you declare your interpretation, what questions do you need to ask?

Who is speaking here? Who are the “enemies” that Jesus is referring to? Is everyone included in this command?

#### *The Benefit of Thinking About Propositions*

Thinking about propositions helps us to focus on one idea at a time. Have you ever really thought hard about what it means to love your enemies? Though we are going to deal more specifically with application later, looking at each separate proposition in the text helps us to think deeply about each idea presented in the Bible.

Now, here's another question. How does "love your enemies" relate to the rest of what Jesus was saying? How does one proposition build on another? Sometimes the relationship between propositions is not so clear at first. There is where having a basic understanding of conjunctions can really help.

### *Conjunctions*

By themselves, propositions can appear as a random assortment of ideas. How are they *connected*?—this is where conjunctions come in. Conjunctions are common in language (you'll be familiar with most of them). **Conjunctions are the logical glue that relates propositions to one another.**

For example, a few common conjunctions are:

But - Indicates a contrast. This conjunction lets us know that the flow of ideas is taking a sharp turn in a different direction.

Ephesians 2:4 contains one of the most important conjunctions in the Bible. Verses 1-5 say this:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **But** God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

- What two main ideas is Paul contrasting here with this "but?"

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Here are a few other common conjunctions:

For - Indicates a reason or a cause of the preceding proposition.

In order that - Indicates the purpose of the preceding proposition. This clarifies the order of thought.

Therefore - Indicates the conclusion or inference drawn from the preceding proposition(s). This often lets you know that this is the end of an author's flow of ideas.

### **Putting It All Together**

Interpretation is doable, though correct interpretation does take a little bit of work. What we hope is that you feel equipped to come before the Bible now with a mental framework in place—you know what to look for. Let's take a look at one final example and work through it together.

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

Sound familiar? Now, clear your mind of all your preconceptions of this verse. Try to approach this verse as if you were coming to it for the first time. What questions do you need to ask of the text? Write down a few questions you need to ask before interpreting the text:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Now that you’ve written down some questions, let’s think through the process step by step. Perhaps you have already thought about all of these issues. That’s great! If not, let’s first take a look at the context.

4a. Take a look at John 20:31 and write down what John has to say about the purpose of his book.

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So the purpose of the Gospel of John is to show that Jesus is the Son of God.

Let’s consider the content now. Who is God? What could the word “world” mean here? When John says, “Son” who does he mean? What does “perish” mean? This verse is so familiar that we might not even have to think about the answers to these questions. But stop and think about it. Could “world” mean more than one thing? What about “perish?”

4b. Write down what you think these keywords mean:

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4c. Now let's take a look at the propositions, looking for subjects and their verbs. Write down each proposition that you can find:

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4d. Now identify the conjunctions. How do they function within this verse?

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Okay, let's take a look at your answers to 4c and 4d. So the three propositions are: "God so loved the world" and "he gave his only Son" and "whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The conjunctions are "for", "that", "that", and "but." "For" indicates reason and connects John 3:16 with the previous parts of John 3. "That" indicates the result of God so loving the world. The second "that" functions much in the same way as the first "that." "But" indicates contrast.

4e. Now that you have analyzed this passage, in your words, what does John mean in John 3:16?

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Putting it all together, John 3:16 means:

God loves people so much that out of his love he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to the world as the Savior. The implication here is that the world needs a Savior—this includes all people. The world does not need saving from something physical, however, but something spiritual. God's Son came to the world to save everyone who puts their trust in him, so that they will not suffer eternal punishment but will have instead eternal life.

John was communicating to the readers of his book the greatness of God's love (God *so* loved the world) and the hope they could find in his Son ("have" not "maybe have"). John was communicating Jesus' unique role as Savior (if you believe in *him* you will not perish).

## Practice with Scripture

Let's turn to our passage in 2 Timothy 2 and apply what we have learned to verses 1 and 2. You may already have answered many of the questions we need to ask regarding context and content. If not, think about the questions that you need to ask before you interpret. Write them down.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

4f. Identify the proposition(s). Identify what the subject, verb, and object are in each proposition.

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4g. Okay, so there are two propositions here. "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus" and "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." There might seem like more than two propositions, but a lot of what Paul says is description. The skeleton of the propositions are: "You be strengthened by [the] grace" and "what you have heard entrust to men." So how do the propositions relate to one another?

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This might throw you for a loop, but both propositions here are equally important—Paul is giving Timothy two instructions. He is saying "Be strengthened, Timothy" and "Teach what I taught you, Timothy." Now the final step: what do these two verses mean? Remember what you are trying to find is the meaning of the passage, not necessarily how it relates to you yet. Keep these questions in mind: Who is writing? Who is he writing to? What main thought is he trying to get across?

4h. Explain what your understanding of what Paul meant in 2 Timothy 2:1-2 in one or two sentences.

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What 2 Timothy 2:1-2 means is that the one who does ministry [specifically Timothy here] should seek strength in the grace of Jesus and should disciple others in the sound words of the faith learned from Paul, with the purpose that they might pass on the sound words to others, too. Do you see how this comes from the text?

### **Conclusion**

There are steps you can take to accurately understand the text of the Word of God. And ultimately, that is what we want to do—we want to understand what God has revealed to us through the authors of his divinely inspired Word.

Our hope is that you are encouraged to dig deep to find the meaning of the Bible. Next week we're going to take a look at how to best use commentaries and other resources to help us get into the Word.

### **Activity for the Week (optional, but highly recommended)**

Interpret the rest of 2 Timothy 2. Ask questions, identify the propositions, break them down, see how they relate, and then write a sentence or two that sums up the meaning of 2 Timothy 2:1-7 (text is attached on the next page).

## **2 Timothy 2:1-7**

[2:1] You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, [2] and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. [3] Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. [5] An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. [6] It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. [7] Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

## **Study #5: Considering Cross-References and Consulting Commentaries**

*Please read this lesson and answer the questions prior to your small group meeting this week*

*Week 1: Getting Started*

*Week 2: Exploring the Context*

*Week 3: Analyzing the Content*

*Week 4: Putting it Together*

**--Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries--**

*Week 6: Applying the Word*

### **How Do I Know If I'm Right?**

We have spent the past four weeks together learning hermeneutics. Hopefully you have begun to see your role in Bible reading as less of an inventor and more of an explorer—you are not trying to create your own interpretations but trying to discover what the passage means in its context. You might be left with this question, though—if it is of the utmost importance that I get the meaning right, how can I be sure that I've actually, you know, got it right?

**Key idea: Cross-references and commentaries are very useful tools  
*after you study to check the accuracy of your interpretation***

We've purposefully focused on interpreting the text for ourselves, trying to use other resources as minimally as possible. So now that we've put it all together and started digging into the Bible, and now that we have a grasp of the essentials of hermeneutics, we are ready to take advantage of the other resources we have available. There is where cross-references and commentaries come in.

### **Two Authors, One Book: Why Cross-Referencing Is Essential**

Each book of the Bible is written by two authors. One was a human author, the other is God (2 Peter 1:21). The human aspect of Biblical authorship is the reason for our heavy emphasis on context and content—a certain person wrote to communicate certain ideas to certain people—we need to get into his world to understand his message.

*However*, the fact that the Bible was written by God is equally important in our interpretation. Because God is perfect (and therefore a perfect author) he does not contradict himself; therefore the book he has written cannot contradict itself either. Therefore, if you study a passage and you get an interpretation that does not seem right—e.g. you arrive at the interpretation that Jesus is not God—you can check it against the rest of Scripture.

Even if you do not reach such an obviously heretical interpretation, you still want to check the theology of your interpretation with the rest of the Bible. Cross-referencing is an important step in checking your interpretation of the Bible and the conclusions that you reach.

## What is a Cross-Reference?

Grace Community Church's *Cutting it Straight*<sup>2</sup> defines a cross reference as: "another passage of Scripture that gives added information about the issue in the passage being studied." In other words, it is another passage that is related to the passage you are studying in terms of the topic it addresses. It also can be a passage that uses similar terminology or covers the same historical event—it is ANY passage that gives you more direct information on what you are studying.

## How do I know where to find cross-references?

First, look in your Bibles! Many Bibles include cross-references in footnotes or in the page's margin. Study Bibles provide many cross-references.

## DANGER: Cross-Referencing Can Be Abused

At seminary one of our professors cautioned us strongly against the abuse of cross-referencing. He said that we must not let our understanding of one passage of the Bible skew our understanding of every other passage. We need to let each passage speak for itself and only use cross-referencing as a check.

Here are three helpful guidelines when cross-referencing:

- 1) Make sure you are using cross-references that are relevant to the issues being studied in the passage you are studying. A helpful tool to use might be a Bible Concordance that lists many different topics and the verses that address those topics. BibleGateway.com has a useful tool to help here.
- 2) Make sure you are correctly interpreting the cross-references, taking into account their context and content. Cross-references must be understood rightly as well if they are to be of any use.
- 3) Make sure you start with the closest cross-references possible—that is, look first in the book that your passage is in, then look to books by the same author, then to the same testament, then to the rest of the Bible. Move outwards.

Let's consider our passage in 2 Timothy 2. In verses 1 and 2 Paul says "my child" and "what you have heard from me." Now look back to 2 Timothy 1—are there any verses that use similar language?

5a. What do these verses help tell us about 2 Timothy 2?

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<sup>2</sup> <http://aster.nowsprouing.com/gracecommunitychurch8/#/resources/downloads>

Perhaps you had already picked up this information, but verses 1:2 and 1:13 tell us who “my child” is and inform us more to the nature of what Paul is writing when he says “what you have heard from me.”

Cross-referencing is VERY helpful when it comes to furthering our understanding of the prophetic books. Many of the Prophets reference back to events in 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. Many of the Prophets say at the beginning when they were written. Use ESV Online’s search feature or use BibleGateway.com to aid you.

### **Combining Cross-References: A Systematic Approach to Theology**

Perhaps most useful of all, cross-references help us to develop systematic theology. What is systematic theology? Theology is generally the study of God. But when we speak of the theology of a specific subject—for example, the theology of the salvation, we look to every passage and verse that teaches on the salvation. Then we study each of those passages and try to put all of what we have learned into a system that contains and unifies all of the Bible’s teachings on that subject. This is systematic theology.

A book of systematic theology attempts to organize together all of the information in the Bible about many topics. What are all the passages and verses that talk about salvation? Or marriage? Or angels? Or the Holy Spirit? Each passage needs to be studied with correct hermeneutical principles and guidelines, but every cross-reference is considered to find out what the whole Bible says.

### **What About Commentaries?**

Commentaries are great, but they can never take the place of your own personal study into God’s Word. One of the most common temptations of those newer to Bible study is to give up easily and flee to commentaries whenever interpretation gets a little more difficult. Before you give in to this temptation, know these three dangers of using commentaries:

- 1) They can become a crutch, leaving us permanently crippled as people unable to interpret God’s Word at all! This is not right when we have such easy access to the Bible and information on how to better study it for ourselves.
- 2) They can be wrong! Not all commentaries get each issue right. It is easy to want to defer to whatever this author says or whatever that scholar says, but remember that no one is infallible. We need to study the text diligently for ourselves and trust in the Holy Spirit’s guidance. If we do check commentaries we need to check multiple different ones to make sure that we are getting the right interpretation. **Remember that commentaries are NOT the Word of God.** Though there are men we can trust, their words are never on par with God’s. They are not 100% protected from error.
- 3) They are not exhaustive. They don’t always speak to all of the questions we have on every text.

Having a working knowledge of hermeneutics helps us to intelligently approach commentaries. Some commentators do not follow correct hermeneutical principles or they do not take into account certain things they should. If we know our hermeneutics, we can watch out for this.

### **A Common Objection: Why Should I Study If the Commentator Knows More?**

You still might be wondering—“why does it matter that we find the right interpretation for ourselves as long as we find the right interpretation?” First, remember that there are dangers to relying too heavily on commentaries. Second, let me answer your question with another question: Is it important to spend time with your wife yourself, learning everything about her, finding out what she likes and dislikes, what she fears, what brings her joy, et cetera, or is just important that in the end you have all those facts on hand? Maybe a professional interviewer can learn everything there is to know about your spouse and can just give you a briefing later. But is that really the same? You know the answer.

Don't lose sight of why we study the Bible. It is not just to find the right answer or to build up our knowledge for the sake of knowing. **It is to grow in our understanding of God so that we can grow in our relationship with him.** Our personal study is the pursuit of relationship. Our study is for the far greater purpose of love and worship.

That being said, as long as you have this end goal in mind and you aren't skipping to commentaries out of sheer laziness, you can look to commentaries to aid you in any stage of the Bible study process. Pastor Kim will not pop out and rebuke you if you check a commentary before you follow all the steps yourself. Just remember that they are not a crutch to rely on, but tools to help you in your *own* study of God's Word.

In fact, knowing hermeneutics helps us to use commentaries more responsibly. Now we have a better idea of how to evaluate if a commentator is correct. Did he take the context into account? Did he correctly define keywords? Did he read modern meanings into words that might have changed meanings? These are all valid questions to ask—sometimes commentators make these mistakes out of a desire to be innovative or out of laziness.

### **Good Uses for Commentaries**

Commentaries have several benefits:

- 1) They supplement our study, allowing us to profit from the in-depth study of faithful believers who may have more knowledge and experience than ourselves.
- 2) They help us see beyond our limited perspective, allowing us to see the text from a different viewpoint in case we missed anything.
- 3) They serve as a safeguard, allowing us to check to see if we made mistakes in our interpretation.

## What Commentaries Should I Use?

There are dozens upon dozens of volumes out there—how do you choose which commentaries to look at? Well, there are different types of commentaries. There are commentaries that cover the whole Bible and commentaries that are devoted to a single book.

Also, there are different levels of specificity when it comes to commentaries. There are *exegetical commentaries* which are the most in-depth and deal with interpretation in the original language, there are *expositional commentaries* which stay in English and give a little bit more of the bigger picture, and then there are *devotional commentaries* which don't deal with any technical work and are designed to aid you in your devotions.

Here are some recommendations:

Whole Bible:

- 1) *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (\$26.39 on Amazon.com)
- 2) *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible* (free online)
- 3) *The ESV Study Bible*
- 4) *The MacArthur Study Bible*

Exegetical Commentaries:

- 1) *Pillar New Testament Commentary Series* (PNTC) - by multiple authors, not every volume is out yet
- 2) *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (EBC) – by multiple authors, not every book is as good as the others

Expositional Commentaries:

- 1) *MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series*
- 2) James Montgomery Boice Series (More devotional but classified as expositional)

Devotional Commentaries:

- 1) *Preaching the Word Series* (R. Kent Hughes)

Lighthouse has some commentaries available for church use. If you are looking for help in selecting a specific commentary for a book in the Bible, check out *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors* by Dr. Jim Rosscup which lists out the best commentaries available for each book, as well as the website [bestcommentaries.com](http://bestcommentaries.com) which ranks commentaries based on reviews.

Look up 2 Timothy 2:1-13 in a commentary you have access to.

5b. What insights does the commentator have that you might not have thought of? Are there any questions that you had about the text that he doesn't bring up?

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5c. How does the commentator approach the text? Does he give only big picture stuff? Or does he give information about specific details? Both? Try to see through the commentator's eyes—what does he focus on? What does he think is important?

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### **Conclusion**

Cross-references and commentaries are useful tools to help you AFTER you study for yourself. Good commentaries are a gift from God and can greatly enrich your knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Again, the church has some commentaries that are available for use and there are some good ones online! There are also great search functions for online Bibles that really help in cross-referencing. Take advantage of every resource that we have today so that you can better understand the Word of God (so you can better know the God of the Word).

Next week we're going to be talking about application—once you know you have reached a faithful and correct interpretation of the Bible, how can you begin to apply its truths to your life?

## Study #6: Applying the Word

Please read this lesson and answer the questions included prior to your small group meeting this week

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Exploring the Context

Week 3: Analyzing the Content

Week 4: Putting it Together

Week 5: Considering Cross References and Consulting Commentaries

**--Week 6: Applying the Word--**

### What's the Point?

Over the past five weeks we have been looking at the idea of proper Bible interpretation by using good principles of hermeneutics. But this isn't where any study of the Bible should end. As Christians, God has given us the Bible for a purpose. After we come to faith in Christ, the Bible is what teaches us how to live. It's been said that the Bible stands for basic instructions before leaving earth. While the Bible is more than just instructions, we need to understand it is meant to have an effect on the way we as Christians live!

### Key Idea: God's word is supposed to be applied to our lives!

Look at James 1:21-25. In this passage, James is speaking to Christians and reminding them that not only does God bring forth Christians by the "word of truth," but that he also changes Christian's lives by that same word.

6a. What does James say a person does to himself when he/she is only a hearer but not a doer of God's word?

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6b. In what way is the word of God like a mirror?

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6c. What are the benefits, according to James, of receiving and acting upon the word of God?

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Clearly, God has given us the Bible because he wants us to act upon it. In this study we'll be looking at how we can get from interpretation to application. As Christians we want to not only discover the meaning of God's word, but wholeheartedly believe it and then allow it to change our lives. We'll see that there are two general steps we need to take to apply God's word rightly – find the universal truth of a passage and then ask the right questions in light of that truth.

## Finding a Universal Truth

What exactly is the “meaning” of a passage? This can be a difficult question, but when it comes to the meaning that God wants us get from reading the Bible it really comes down to what some people call a universal truth. Because God is absolutely true, his word teaches us absolute, unchanging truth.

Yet while the truth in the Bible is unchanging, it was communicated in a world of changing cultures, circumstances, and events. While it’s true that every passage of scripture has a single meaning when we have finished applying proper hermeneutics to it, that meaning is often tied to a particular circumstance the Bible author was addressing. When the circumstance that a “meaning” speaks to is one that not every believer can relate to, then we are dealing with a situation-specific truth.

However, if the circumstance that a passage’s “meaning” speaks to is a universal situation that all believers can relate to, then we have probably come upon the passage’s universal truth.

*How do I get the universal truth from  
the situation-specific truth?*

In order to get from the situation specific truth to the universal truth of a passage, we must broaden the meaning of a passage to a situation that is universal in nature. This might sound difficult, but it is more intuitive than you might think. Take for example the idea of God commanding the Israelites to love him with all their hearts in Deuteronomy.

The situation-specific truth here is that God wanted the Israelites in the wilderness to love him with their whole hearts. Notice the initial difficulty in applying this situation-specific truth. Because the truth is specific to a particular time and place and circumstance, if you are not an Israelite you cannot apply the meaning above. However, if you broaden the wording of the principle that is presented by this situation-specific truth you will find a universal truth that appeals to people no matter what circumstance they are in.

For example, we might rephrase the truth above with this universal truth: God wants his people to love him with their whole hearts. Notice that in this case the truth is universally applicable to all of God’s people regardless of their specific dilemma, where they live, or when in history they existed.

## Practice with Scripture

Look at the work you did at the end of study #4 regarding the meaning of 2 Timothy 2:1-13. If you haven’t already done this the meaning of this passage could be summarized like this: Paul is encouraging Timothy to persevere in the faith as a minister of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

6d. Try to rephrase the situation-specific truth (meaning) of 2 Timothy 2:1-13 as a universal truth that is relevant to all believers at all times.

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## Answering the Right Questions

After discovering the meaning of a passage and coming to a universal truth, the last step of hermeneutics is applying that universal truth to your life. While there is no one formula that one must follow in applying the Word of God to life, answering some specific questions in light of the universal truth you have discovered can be a great practical way to get this started.

Here are just seven questions to consider as you seek to be a doer of the word:

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. How must I correct a way of thinking I have held before in light of the meaning of this passage?
4. How must I correct a way of living I have been accustomed to in light of the meaning of this passage?
5. Does this passage challenge me to begin living in a way I have not been living before?
6. Is there any sin I am being convicted of that I must confess and repent of?
7. Is there any truth found in the meaning of this passage that I must now accept and believe?

Answering these questions will help you examine your heart in the mirror of God's word, do something about it, and be blessed in your doing.

Let's take another look at our passage in 2 Timothy. Thinking about the application questions above, we might note that verse 4 tells us that we ought to persevere in the face of hardships because we only want to please the one who "enlisted" us to his service – Jesus. We might note that while suffering is too difficult for us to handle on our own, the grace of Jesus Christ is necessary for me to be strengthened when living for Christ becomes hard at work, school, or with the family (v.1).

Practically, you may begin to see how this passage can be a blessing to your own life and to the lives of others. Perhaps you've been challenged by this study to determine whether there are "civilian pursuits" in your life that are not necessarily sinful, but are hindering you from living your life completely for Jesus. Perhaps you realize that you've coasted along in your "spiritual development" avoiding suffering at all costs, but now see that Christ calls us to be like the hard-working farmer in order to receive a prize at the end of our lives. Maybe the call to share the faith and teach younger men has resounded with you and you want to get involved in a discipleship relationship with a younger man or woman in the church. Whatever the particular answers you supply, making these changes on account of your understanding of God's word is how we become doers of the word and make a universal truth part of our lives.

Perhaps after looking at these questions you posed your own question, "Why can't I simply read the Bible and answer these questions immediately without using hermeneutics?" Our hope is that by going through this study you now realize the great importance of learning how to interpret the Bible before you jump to applying it. Only by being able to accurately determine the meaning of a Bible passage will you be able to confidently know that the way you apply the Bible to your life is the way that God intended, and that as you apply it you are living in God's will.

## Conclusion

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

The Bible is the Christian's manual for learning, being corrected, growing in godliness, and being equipped by the Holy Spirit for every good work God has set before us. Hermeneutics lets us read and understand that manual. Realize that when you as a believer put in the work to understand the Bible and apply it to your life, you are gaining everything you need to live a gospel-centered, Christ-honoring, and God-glorifying life.

### **Challenge for the Week**

Let's look back at 2 Timothy 2:1-13. As you consider the ways you've interacted with this text over the past weeks, now take time to pray and answer the questions given above so that these verses can affect your life. Journal your thoughts and insights, as well as any resolutions, prior to small group this week.

### **Challenge for the Week for Families**

One of the greatest blessings of studying and interpreting God's word is growing together as a family. Think about some creative ways with your spouse to teach the truth of 2 Timothy 2:1-13 during a family devotion time. This might be by making use of one or more of the illustrations Paul provides or by talking to your children about the difficulty of enduring when things get hard. Do your best to show your family how the Bible teaches the truth you are exploring.

Don't forget to also take time to consider how to apply the truth of 2 Timothy 2:1-13 to your family life as you persevere and focus on the things that matter to God even in difficulties. Share your thoughts with your spouse and pray for God's grace.