

Core Classes

Unit 1 - Foundations

Course 2: How to Read the Bible

Week 2: Introductory Concepts

I. Why should I study the Bible on my own?

A. To experience the joy of personal discovery (Jeremiah 15:16).

Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I bear your name, Lord God of Armies

B. To become able to think for myself (Acts 17:11).

The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

C. To be able to evaluate the claims of others (Acts 17:11).

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D. To grow spiritually (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

E. To become able to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

II. Why do I need to learn and use “Methods?”

Bible study methods should be flexible and normally require some creativity. They are not fixed, rigid rules, but principles or reference points that can enrich our personal Bible study. We are called to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 - NIV). One way we do this is by learning to use sound methods in our study of Scripture.

A. To understand the Bible in its proper context:

1. Recognizing who is speaking, to whom, and in what situation (1 Corinthians 10:32)

Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or the church of God.

2. Distinguishing between different audiences and purposes within Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or the church of God.

3. Avoiding reading modern assumptions into ancient texts (John 19:17)

Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

B. To discover the author's intended meaning:

1. Seeking what the text meant to its original audience (Nehemiah 8:8)

They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read.

2. Letting the text speak for itself rather than imposing our ideas on it
3. Paying attention to words, structure, and flow of thought

C. To move from reading to meaningful application:

1. Identifying truths that are actually present in the text (James 1:22–25)

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

2. Avoiding vague or subjective applications
3. Applying Scripture in a way that is faithful, specific, and personal

D. To avoid some common errors in Bible study:

1. Taking verses out of context (Philippians 4:13)

I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

2. Making a passage say what it does not say (Matthew 18:19)

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

3. Giving exaggerated emphasis to secondary issues (1 Corinthians 15:29)

Otherwise what will they do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are people baptized for them?

4. Studying the Bible to obtain “information” rather than to discover its “application” (James 1:22–25)

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someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

III. Essential Ingredients for a Profitable Bible Study

- A. It must always begin with the biblical text (Acts 17:11).
- B. It must be accompanied by a written record of your discoveries.
- C. It must be consistent and systematic (Acts 17:11).
- D. It must be “transferable” (2 Timothy 2:2).
- E. It must always aim at application (James 1:22).

IV. The Bible is a Book in Two Dimensions: The Word of God Written in Human Words and Within the Context of Human History

A. The Bible is a natural (human) book

It must be read, studied, and interpreted like any other form of human communication — that is, considering elements such as grammar, structure, and literary form of the biblical text.

B. The Bible is a supernatural (divine) book

It must be read, studied, and interpreted as God’s communication or revelation to humanity, considering three dynamics that distinguish Scripture from all other known literary works:

1. **Revelation:** God’s act of making Himself and His truth known to humanity, culminating in the message recorded in Scripture. The Bible exists because God has chosen to reveal what we could never discover on our own—His character, His will, and His plan of redemption.
2. **Inspiration:** Inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit by which God ensured that the human authors of Scripture wrote exactly what He intended, so that the Bible is the very Word of God. Therefore, what is written in Scripture is not merely human reflection about God—it is God’s authoritative Word given through human authors.
3. **Illumination:** Illumination is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit by which believers are enabled to understand, embrace, and apply the truth of Scripture. The same God who revealed and inspired the Scriptures must also help us understand them.

V. Two Basic Perspectives in Bible Study

A. Deductive Study

Begins with a proposition and seeks to demonstrate its validity using one or another biblical text. It moves from the general to the particular, from the proposition to the biblical text. Consulting Scripture merely aims to confirm our positions or preconceived ideas. (Example: “Money is evil” – Acts 5; 1 Timothy 5:10)

B. Inductive Study

It begins with a fact (the biblical text) and, only after careful study, arrives at a conclusion. Since the Bible is the Word of God and our supreme authority, we must study it without prejudice or preconceived ideas, seeking to discover what God wants to tell us.

VI. Three Basic Steps in Inductive Bible Study

A. OBSERVATION – “What does the text say?”

It is the careful and thorough examination of the text, giving proper attention to everything found in it, seeking to become saturated with the entire content of the passage. Careful and systematic observation of the biblical text is the foundation of inductive study, because the more we saturate ourselves with the text (like a sponge), the better and more profitable the study will be.

B. INTERPRETATION – “What does the text mean?”

Interpretation seeks to discern the meaning of the studied text, based on and consistent with the observations already made. It is an effort to understand the original meaning of the biblical author when writing to the people of his time. In interpretation, we seek to bridge the barriers imposed by time and distance between the biblical author and the contemporary reader (linguistic, literary, cultural, social, and historical barriers).

C. APPLICATION – “What does the text mean for me?”

Application is putting into practice what has been studied. It is the goal of Bible study. Once we study the text, we must allow the text to study us. Without application, we have an unfinished task. However, we will not reach a correct application without a correct interpretation, and we will not have a correct interpretation without a deep observation of the text.

Week 2 Assignment

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE – REQUIREMENTS AND BENEFITS

Text	Requirements	Benefits
Deuteronomy 6:6–9		
Deuteronomy 17:17–20		
Joshua 1:8		
Ezra 7:9–10		
Psalms 1:1–3		
Psalms 9:9–11		
Proverbs 4:20–23		
Jeremiah 15:16		
Matthew 4:1–11		
Matthew 7:24–27		
John 8:31–32		
John 15:7		
Acts 20:32		
Colossians 3:16		
1 Timothy 2:15		
2 Timothy 3:16–17		
Titus 1:9		
Hebrews 4:12		
Hebrews 5:13–14		
James 1:22–25		
1 Peter 2:1–2		
1 John 5:13		