

# Bible study skills

## Biblical hermeneutics and exegesis

- The science of interpretation and the explanation of the interpretation
- Hermeneutics is the methodology of interpretation to derive truth (2Peter 1:20)
- Exegesis is the explanation of interpreted Scripture: Nehemiah 8:8
- Exposition is the illustration and communication of interpreted Scripture
- Homiletics is the art of presenting Scripture and moral themes

## Purpose of Bible Study

- 2Timothy 2:15, Application and discernment of truth
- 2Timothy 3:15-17, Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction
- Psalms 119:41-42, To give answers
- Psalm 119:103, For the joy of it

## Preparation for Good Bible Study

- 2Peter 1:20-21, God's inspired word
- Psalms 119:160, Personal application
- Psalms 119:18, Prayer for open eyes to behold wondrous things
- Psalms 119:33, Teachable spirit
- Psalms 119:101, Sanctify yourself and apply

## Types of Bible Study

### Analytical

Word study (includes topical on people, places, things)

Verse study

Survey (often and most useful when combined with analytical)

1. Chapter
2. Book
3. Division (such as Paul's letters, the Gospels)
4. Testaments
5. Canon

## Building your personal library

Tools for study make the difference between digging ditches with a spoon, shovel, or a backhoe. Begin with resources that aid you in your personal study of the Bible rather than tell you what the Bible is about. The goal of Bible study is to learn how to study and understand the Bible itself not learn about the Bible.

1. [KJV](#) study Bible (includes cross references, index, topical references, concordance. Check out the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*)
2. Computer Bible program for KJV. Choose one that has modules for Greek and Hebrew versions, dictionaries and concordances. (Free *Online Bible*: <http://www.onlinebible.net/index.html>)
3. Interlinears: Give word for word English translation next to original text. George Berry's *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament. Hebrew \_\_\_\_\_??*
4. Dictionaries:
  - a. English Dictionaries: Webster's, Oxford, (Internet source: Oxford dictionary at <http://www.oed.com/public/welcome>, for Early English sources ([Early English Dictionaries](#)) [www.chass.utoronto.ca/english/emed/patterweb.html](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/english/emed/patterweb.html), and [www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com).

- b. Lexicons: Specialized dictionaries of words in a particular language. *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*.
  - c. *Vine's Expository Dictionary*: Defines words by translation, usage, and context.
  - d. *Word studies* by A.T. Robertson
5. Concordances:
- a. English Concordances: *Strong's Exhaustive* or *Young's Analytical* concordance. Strong's is numerically indexed to many other reference books and is designed for verse study. Young's is designed for word study and categorizes words by their Hebrew and Greek root words.
  - b. *Nave's Topical Bible*: Lists cross references to topics with and without a specific word in the verse.
  - c. Greek and Hebrew Concordances. Cross reference listing of verses for Greek and Hebrew words in the Bible. *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* and *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*.
6. Survey, background, and context:
- a. *What the Bible is All About*, H.C. Mears
  - b. *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter
  - c. Unger's Bible handbook
  - d. Bible Customs and Manners
  - e. Davis' Bible Dictionary, Eerdmans' Bible Dictionary (Encyclopedias)
7. A note on commentaries and reference books: Books are a resource to help you study. However, these resources are only as reliable as the men who write them. Use the resources as an aid to personal study, not as a final authority. I recommend the following approach: 1) personal study and conclusion, 2) compare your findings and information with others, 3) critically evaluate the reliability of the information, 4) synthesize your study and conclusion.

## Hermeneutics

Verse analysis is an essential skill for correctly interpreting Scripture at any level from chapter to book to survey of the whole Bible. Correctly interpreting the Bible in larger units requires collating and interpreting correctly understood basic units of Scriptures. If verses of Scripture are not interpreted correctly, then interpretation of the larger whole is resting on a faulty foundation.

Hermeneutics is the science of Bible study. It is a method of study to rightly divide the Word of God, to determine God's meaning in Bible passages. The approach of hermeneutics is straight forward science: 1) observation, 2) interpretation, and 3) experimentation.

Observation is collecting facts and background about a passage (definitions, etc.). Interpretation is giving the meaning of the passage. Experimentation is testing the interpretation. This involves testing it for harmony with other passages, doctrines, and critiques. If there is conflict or problem with the interpretation, it needs to be modified by more observation, interpretation, and experimentation.

## Observation

1. Word Meaning comes from translation, definition, and usage.
  - Translation: (Interlinear and concordance).
  - Definition: (Dictionaries and lexicons).
  - Analysis: usage and form (Lexicon's, Word study books, Vine's Expository Dictionary, concordances).
2. Grammar gives meaning from word relationships in sentences.
  - Syntax: relationship of words in sentence (noun, verb, predicate)
  - Conjunctions: therefore and wherefore, etc.
  - Punctuation
3. Context gives meaning from its surroundings of thought before and after, in the book, historical, geographical, etc.
  - Determine who, what, when, where, why, and how? [Apostle Paul writing to Timothy/ his son in the faith/ a charge to preach on all occasions/ while people will still listen.]
  - Begin to determine relationship to chapter, book, and Bible. [We know that the end days will be as the days of Noah.]

- Classification of Scripture: Historical, poetical, philosophical, prophetic (Each class of writing requires taking into account their differences)
  - What questions or issues are being answered?
  - Recommended books for context
    - *What the Bible is All About*, H.C. Mears
    - *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter
    - Bible handbook, Customs, background books
    - Bible dictionary
    - *Nave's Topical Bible*
4. Facts and answers: write questions that are answered from the passage you are studying.

## Interpretation

The goal of interpretation is to determine what God meant to say. Second Peter 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

1. Read, pray, and meditate for understanding.
2. Determine the big idea.
  - Question = What is the topic being discussed? Ask in the form of a question. [Why should we be instant in season and out to preach the Gospel?]
  - Answer = 1) we will face judgment and 2) later people will not listen.
  - Big Idea = (combine into one sentence). We must preach the Gospel now while people will listen.
3. Write down the possible interpretations, and identify the evidence to support each interpretation.

## Experimentation

1. First Thessalonians 5:21, *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*
2. The correct interpretation will harmonize all contexts whether passage, book, testament, or canon.
3. Write down the evidence that refutes each of the interpretations: contradictions, conflict with context or other doctrines, etc.
4. Ask many questions to test the correctness of your interpretation.
5. Outline the development of the big idea from the context. Build on the context of the Bible.
  - State the context of the book
  - State the context of the passage

## Application

Choose one of the texts listed below, and write down your observations, interpretations, and experimentations. Summarize your final big idea of the text, and prepare to share how you derived this conclusion.

### First Week Assignment:

- |                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Matthew 1:1         | 6. Hosea 3:4     |
| 2. Matthew 1:17        | 7. Isaiah 63:1   |
| 3. 2 Thessalonians 2:7 | 8. Hebrews 4:12  |
| 4. Proverbs 17:14      | 9. Genesis 1:1-2 |
| 5. Matthew 16:18       |                  |

## Bible study and lesson guide

The “[Bible Study and Lesson Guide](#)” handout will help organize your study approach as well as result in a study guide handout for your students with an answer guide, outline, notes, and written lesson. If you do this for every book of the Bible, you will have lesson plans with handouts for the whole Bible.

### 1. Prepare your answer guide for teachers

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Book, Chapter, or Verse:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Answer Guide</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Theme of lesson:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter or verse #:</b></p> <p><b>Words to know</b> (define) List important words from text that students should know.</p> <p><b>Questions</b> (from the text) List about six questions that can be easily answered from the text to help students' familiarity with important ideas of the lesson.</p> <p><b>For discussion</b> (ideas to think through) List several questions that will challenge students to think more deeply about the lesson.</p>
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### 2. Prepare your study guide for students

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Book, Chapter, or Verse:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Theme of lesson:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chapter or verse #:</b></p> <p><b>Words to know</b> (define) List words used in the answer guide without the definitions.</p> <p><b>Questions</b> (from the text) List the questions from the answer guide without the answers.</p> <p><b>For discussion</b> (ideas to think through) List the questions from the answer guide without comments.</p>
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**3. Write down miscellaneous thoughts and interpretations to experiment with**

**Notes** (thoughts to remember & study. List interpretation and experimental possibilities)

**4. Write your lesson outline.**

**Outline**

- Title or theme idea
- Points and subpoints

**5. Write your lesson**

**Lesson**

- Title
- Introduction: Capture the listener and show the way.
- Body: Development of points
- Conclusion: Summarize and apply

**Application**

**First week**

Choose a passage that you find challenging, apply your hermeneutical skills, prepare your study guides, and present your findings.

**Second week**

Develop an answer guide, study guide, and lesson on 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Philemon, or Obadiah.

**Exercise: Second Timothy 4:1**

**Choose and read verse**

- What are the thoughts in the verse?
- What is the unit of context?
- What difficulties are present or questions to be asked?
- Who is writing?
- Who is being written to?
- Who or what is being written about?
- What is the relationship between the writer and the recipients?
- What is the mood? (rebuke, praise, encouragement, etc.)
- When was this letter written?
- Where was this letter written?
- Where was it sent?

- What is the noun?
- What is the verb?
- What is the predicate?
- What is expected? (command, change, etc.)
- Why was this subject mentioned?
- How should you respond?
- What words need to be defined?
- Determine their meaning
- What is the subject?
- What is the complement?
- What is the big idea?
- State the idea in context.
- What is the application?

## Topical Studies

### *Word Study*

**Word:** No. of times word is found in Bible

**Definition(s)** (Lexicon and Bible dictionaries. Cite reference used):

**Translation(s):** English words and frequency of times words are translated from Hebrew or Greek. List all similar words separately.

**Categorization:** Categorize the verses using the word according to how the word is used.

**Meaning by usage/context:** What meanings does the word have by usage? Write out definition and illustrate.

**Write a summary statement of what you have learned about the word. Be sure to use examples and cite references.**

**Notes:** Write down thoughts and questions to be considered.

**Outline a lesson on the word**

#### **Study Guide**

- Ask questions that can be answered directly by reading a verse.
- Use representative verses.

**Lesson**

## Preparing a Bible Lesson (Exegesis)

As a Bible study student, your approach follows a sequence of steps leading to an understanding of the passage: 1) observation, 2) interpretation, and 3) experimentation. However, as a teacher, you must organize your study into a presentation that communicates the thoughts learned from a passage: 1) introduction, 2) body, and 3) conclusion.

### Introduction

The introduction is developed after you understand the meaning of your passage.

1. Determine the purpose of the lesson (develop from the theme or big idea)
  - Why do you want to teach this lesson?
  - Determine what the lesson should mean to you
  - What is the goal and application of the lesson?
  - What makes the lesson meaningful and personal?
2. Relate the lesson to people and current events
  - What difference does this lesson make in your life?
  - State the central idea in an exact, personal, memorable statement.
  - What do you want your students to remember? (application)
  - This will give your lesson direction and purpose.

### Body

3. Outline the lesson
  - Use full sentences
  - Use clear and full points
  - Prepare transitions from one idea to another
4. Fill in the outline
  - use support material to explain, clarify, prove
  - restate: “in other words, ....”
  - explain and define
  - use quotes
  - use illustrations

### Conclusion

5. Review introduction and summarize in your conclusion
  - state clearly what is being said and what has been said
  - show the flow or thought, context, and reason for interpretation
  - state the application plainly
  - summarize

**Application: Outline and write lessons for 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Philemon, or Obadiah**

## **Presenting Bible Lessons - Homiletics**

Homiletics: presentation of a Bible lesson with a moral theme and application

Exegesis: To explain. Nehemiah 8:8, “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

Exposition is the illustration and communication of interpreted Scripture

1. Personal interest, conviction, enthusiasm
2. Keep it in simple ideas
3. Look at those you are talking to
4. Talk to your students and interact
5. Relax and be yourself, be personal
6. Be alert, friendly, interesting
7. Capture attention in first 30 seconds. Get their attention with an idea, puzzle, problem
8. Be confident, deliberate, and unhurried

**Application: Present lessons for 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Philemon, and Obadiah**



## **Topical studies**

### **Procedure**

1. Research (study skills)
2. Lesson
3. Presentation (Homiletics)

### **Developing the topic study**

Choose the topic

- Choose topic from Obadiah: vision, pride, Edom, etc.
- You can pursue a lot about a little or a little about a lot: deep or surface roots
- Either way the entire Bible can be taught.

Identify and define key words

1. Dictionary for definitions
2. Concordance for translation and usage meaning
  - a. Categorize usages of the word (watch context)
  - b. Write definition or definitions of word
3. Topical Bible for cross references
4. Greek/Hebrew concordances identify references for the original word.

First assignment: report on your research of topic.

### **Preparing your topic lesson (refer to previous lesson on preparing a Bible lesson)**

1. Introduction: state the scope of your lesson (context, direction, relevance)
2. Body: develop your theme (main point)
3. Conclusion (review and give application)

Second assignment: present written lesson and outline.

### **Presentation (refer to previous lesson on homiletics)**

Connect with people

State the purpose and theme of lesson

Be natural and respond to an audience

Third lesson: present five minute lesson on topic

### **Application**

1. Soul
2. Church
3. Salvation

## Challenging Verses

### Assignment:

1. Prepare final lesson with intro, body, and conclusion.
2. Explain how you arrived at finding the answer.
3. Example of some questions to answer:
  - a. Why did God create us?
  - b. What is the soul?
  - c. Is it wrong to drink wine?
  - d. Why is salvation by grace and not works?

### Finding true meaning in twisted Scriptures

Second Peter 3:16, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

1. The goal is to determine the true meaning of difficult verses that are hard to be understood.
2. Difficulty is due to apparent contradiction to 1) other verses, 2) science, and 3) personal/contemporary experiences.
3. Resolving difficulties requires careful observation, modifying interpretation, and serious critique.
4. Some examples of difficult verses.
  - a. Acts 2:38, Baptism for salvation
  - b. 1 Samuel 16:14, Lose your salvation, God and evil
  - c. Mark 16:16, Baptism for salvation
  - d. Philippians 2:12, Works for salvation
  - e. 1 Peter 3:20, Baptism for salvation
  - f. 1 Timothy 4:16, Works for salvation
  - g. Matthew 12:31, Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
  - h. Matthew 7:1, Do not judge others
5. Presentation: a) state the verse, b) state the wrong meaning, c) state the right meaning, d) present evidence for the correct meaning.

## **Parables and Illustrations**

### Types of illustrations

1. Contemporary and personal experiences
2. Bible stories: Jesus and Peter, Elijah and the good woman, Joshua at Jericho
3. Parables: Matthew 13

### Use of illustrations

1. Develop a lesson from illustration
2. Clarify a point
3. Reinforce a thought
4. Emphasize an application
5. Make application and transition clearly understood

### Tell the story

1. Refer to the passage of the story and bring it alive by living it.
2. Use dialogue and vivid descriptions

### Application

1. Choose a story
2. Read and tell the story. Emphasize the story rather than the lesson.
3. Refer to homiletics lesson
4. Critique with video