



## **HOW TO READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE**

Study and do your best to present yourself to God  
as someone who accurately handles and skillfully teaches  
the Word of Truth. — 2 Timothy 2:15



Over the next few weeks we will take a journey in learning to better read and interpret God's Word. We must be diligent, especially if we preach or teach God's Word, to research it as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11). We must do our best to present the message He was communicating to hearers in that day and how that timeless Word applies to us today. Paul told Timothy that we are to study and do our best to present ourselves to God as ministers who accurately handle and skillfully teach the Word of Truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

As servant leaders in the Body of Christ our task is to assist God's people (Ephesians 4:11-16) in developing Godly character, becoming students of the Word themselves, and to partner with God in fulfilling Christ's Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

This is a three-part activity where faith becomes action:

1. **ACADEMICS** • Through an academic, Spirit led approach, we come to see God's heart and His purposes through correct Biblical understanding and interpretation.
  - 2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
2. **SERVICE** • A submitted servant's heart is the basis for leadership in the Church. This is accomplished by participating in the vision of the church and accomplishing the goals given to the leadership by the Holy Spirit.
  - John 13:3-17 *"...If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you..."* (Ephesians 4:16)
3. **MISSIONS** • The mandate for disciples is to develop God's passion for the lost and to be involved in the Lord's Harvest on a local and global level.
  - Matthew 9:37-38 *Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."* (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)



## A FEW VERSES ABOUT GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE

- Deuteronomy 8:3** *And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*
- Psalm 19:7** *The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;...*
- Psalm 119:11** *Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*
- Psalms 119:105** *Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
- Psalms 119:130** *The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*
- Joshua 1:8** *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.*
- Isaiah 40:8** *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.*
- Isaiah 55:11** *My Word... shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*
- Matthew 24:35** *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*
- John 1:1-2** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

- **John 5:39** *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*
- **Romans 10:17** *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*
- **Ephesians 6:17** *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word (Rhema) of God*
- **2 Timothy 2:15** *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.*
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
- **Hebrews 4:12** *For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
- **1 Peter 1:23** *...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;...*

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## A FEW RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* by Guy Duffield and N. M. Van Cleave
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and its companion, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Exploring the Old Testament* by Samuel J. Schultz and Gary V. Smith
- *Learn the Bible in 24 Hours* by Chuck Missler
- *Grounds for Living* by Jack Hayford
- *God's Final Answer, Studies in Hebrews* by Harold Helms
- *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien
- *The Bible From 30,000 Feet* by Skip Heitzig

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

1. The Bible was written in different lands over a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years by more than \_\_\_\_\_ authors from all walks of life: shepherds, farmers, tentmakers, physician, fishermen, philosophers, tax collector and kings.
2. The Bible is the unfolding story of how God acted in human history to establish His Kingdom, to save man and glorify Himself. Jesus Christ is the Center of that activity (John 5:39) and the Promised Redeemer (Genesis 3:15; John 3:3).
3. Books are not all in chronological order but are grouped by \_\_\_\_\_ of writing.
  - A. There are \_\_\_\_\_ books in the Old Testament
    - Pentateuch (The law) — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
    - Historical Books — Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
    - Books of Poetry — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
    - Major Prophets (Longer) — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel
    - Minor Prophets (Shorter) — Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
  - B. There are \_\_\_\_\_ books in the New Testament
    - Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
    - Historical Book — Acts
    - Epistles (Letters, mostly by Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles) — Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
    - Prophecy or Apocalyptic Book — Revelation
4. There are two major types of Bible translations.
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ translations are done by groups of scholars, specialists in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic, who work on certain books or sections of the Bible. They are extremely knowledgeable about the history, culture and the book they are translating.
    - King James Version, The New King James Version, New International Version, New American Standard, Revised Standard Version, etc.
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ translations are basically produced by one person who is skilled in a literary style and often have scholars advising them. These translations are paraphrased and are easier to read but often reflect the doctrinal framework of

the translator.

- The Living Bible, Good News for Modern Man, J.B. Philips' New Testament, etc.

## **A BRIEF OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT EVENTS**

Many have difficulty seeing the major Bible events in chronological order simply because the books are grouped in the type of writing not in chronological order. Below is a very brief chronological order of Old Testament events.

1. The Beginnings (Genesis 1 - 11:26).
  - A. The Creation account.
  - B. The fall of man and the consequences.
  - C. The flood: God's judgment upon a corrupted mankind.
  - D. New beginnings for the human race and the dispersion.
2. The Patriarchal Era (Genesis 11:27 - 50:26)
  - A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
  - B. Joseph's life.
  - C. Israel in Egypt.
3. The Exodus From Egypt (Exodus)
  - A. Moses, the plagues of Egypt and Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.
  - B. The Covenant at Mount Sinai.
  - C. Establishing the Priesthood and the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.
4. The Wilderness Years (Numbers 10:11 - 25:18; Numbers 33)
  - A. Twelve spies sent into the Land of Canaan; the evil report of the ten.
  - B. God's judgment and Israel's forty year wanderings in the wilderness.
5. Possessing the Promised Land (Numbers 26:1 - 36:13; Joshua 1 - 24)
  - A. After Moses dies, Joshua crosses the Jordan, brings Israel into the Promised Land and begins the conquest.
6. The Judges (Judges, 1 Samuel)
  - A. Israel's seasons of revival, apostasy, servitude and deliverance by Judges.
7. The Monarchy (1 Samuel 8:1 - 15:35; 1 Kings 1 - 11; 2 Chronicles 1- 9)
  - A. Samuel anoints Saul, Israel's first King.
  - B. Samuel anoints David; David's years fleeing from Saul; David becomes King in Judah, then Israel.

- C. Solomon anointed as King and greatly enlarges Israel in every way.
8. The Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12 - 22; 2 Kings 1 - 17; 2 Chronicles 10 - 27)
    - A. After the death of Solomon the northern ten tribes created the Northern Kingdom of Israel and ruled under Jeroboam with Samaria as the capital and religious center.
    - B. The Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 tribes)
    - C. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, retained only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and continued to use Jerusalem as the capital. The Kings of Southern Kingdom, also known as Judah, maintained Jerusalem as the religious center.
  9. The Fall, Captivity and Exile of the Northern and then the Southern Kingdoms
    - A. The fall of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:7- 23).
    - B. The fall of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, in 597 BC (2 Chronicles 36:15 - 23).
  10. The Restoration of Israel (Ezra and Nehemiah)
    - A. The Hebrew remnant returned home in three groups between 536 and 423 BC to rebuild the Temple under Zerubbabel, to establish the priesthood under Ezra, and to rebuild the wall under Nehemiah.

The period that begins when the book of Malachi was completed (397 B.C.) until the angel's announcement of the birth of John the Baptist is commonly referred to as the "400 silent years." During this time there were no prophets and no inspired writers of Divine revelation.

### **THE ENTIRE BIBLE IS AN INTEGRATED STORY**

1. The Old and New Testaments are an integrated story of the coming Messiah and the growth of God's Kingdom in the earth. "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed." (Chuck Missler)
2. There are dozens of examples where the Old and New Testament messages are linked. A classic example can be found in Numbers 21:4-9 and John 3:14-17.
  - A. In Numbers 21:4-9, when Israel grumbled insistently against God, He sent fiery serpents (venomous snakes) who bit the people. A large number of people died. Because of this, Moses was instructed to raise a brass serpent and everyone who looked upon it would be healed.
    - Serpent is the Hebrew word, Nachash, meaning a hissing creature, serpent, snake, Satan in the garden (Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9).
    - Brass (bronze) was the Levitical symbol for judgment. Brass was the metal that

was associated with fire and judgment (the brazen altar, etc.). Unpolished brass was the only metal allowed to make contact with the ground in the design of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

- Eventually Israel worshipped the pole with the serpent (2 Kings 18:4). How can this be similar to Christian and other religions today?

B. John 3:14-17 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,...*

3. The message of the Bible focuses entirely on the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ, God's Son, sent in fulfillment to a large number of prophetic passages.

A. John 5:39-40 *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*

B. Luke 24:13-35 *...Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

## **BIBLE STUDY HELPS**

1. Good study Bibles include the Spirit Filled Life Bible; Thompson Chain Reference; Life Application Bible in the New King James, New International, Amplified, New American Standard versions.
2. Bible Handbooks — Hayford's Bible Handbook; Halley's Bible Handbook; Eerdman's Handbook.
3. Cultural and social context — Bible History: Old Testament and Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah by Alfred Edersheim; Bible Atlas.
4. Concordances — Strong's Concordance.
5. Bible Dictionaries — The New Unger's Bible Dictionary; Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary.
6. Word Study Books — The Complete Word Study of the Old and New Testaments (Zodhiates); Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Nave's Topical Bible.

7. Theology — Foundations of Pentecostal Theology (Guy Duffield and N.M Van Cleave).
8. Commentaries — Matthew Henry; The Expositor's Bible Commentary

### HOW TO USE A STRONG'S CONCORDANCE

1. The Strong's Concordance is a practical tool for studying Scripture because: It helps us to locate any verse in Scripture and gives us a brief understanding of the Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic meaning behind any word in Scripture.
  - A. In-depth word studies such as The Complete Word Study of the Old and New Testaments by Zodhiates are keyed to the KJV Strong's Concordance.
2. The main sections of the concordance are the Scriptural reference for the words, the Hebrew Dictionary (Old Testament), and the Greek Dictionary (New Testament).
3. Suppose you want to find the passage in Scripture about putting on the armor of God. You would then look up the word "armor" in the second half of the main section (Greek). You will notice the code number is 3833.
  - A. Under number 3833, you will find the Greek word "panoplia." Next you will find the phrase: "from 3956 and 3696." These other codes will lead you to other words from which the Greek word "panoplia" was derived (its root meaning). By reading Ephesians 6:11 ("Put on the full armor of God..."), you will discover that in its context the word "panoplia" means full, complete, every piece of the armor. One of the words it is derived from is "hoplon," meaning an *offensive* weapon or instrument of war.

### USING YOUR CONCORDANCE

Give the the exact chapters and verses to the following stories and Scriptures.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The call of Abram
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The story of Joseph
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The Ten Commandments (Two OT places)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The Beatitudes
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The parable of the ten virgins
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The prodigal son

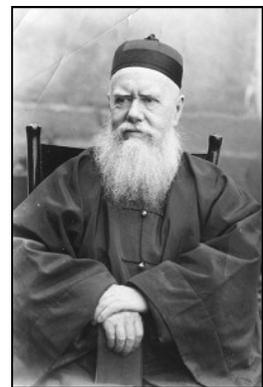
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The two greatest commandments (NT)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ “...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”
9. \_\_\_\_\_ “...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”
10. \_\_\_\_\_ “And without faith it is impossible to please God,...”
11. \_\_\_\_\_ “If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today,... All these blessings will come upon you...”
12. \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word is food for the soul.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word the power of God to save.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word is a life producing seed.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word is a consuming fire.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word is a sword.

### A BRIEF WORD ABOUT CONTEXT

We can easily forget that Scripture is a “foreign land” and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. To open the Word of God is to step into a world where things are very unlike our own. Because we believe that the Bible is God’s Word to us we tend to read Scripture our way so that it that makes sense to us. (Adapted from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by Brandon J. O’Brien, E. Randolph Richards)

#### Hudson Taylor

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was an English missionary to China and recognized the need to immerse himself in the Chinese culture in order to relate the gospel to the people in ways that made sense to them. He learned their language and lived as close to their lifestyle as possible. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) According to some of his European colleagues, this was extremely inappropriate.



*Because the Bible had been in the European culture for centuries, they believed that their cultural values and norms were the true expressions of Christian life and universal for all cultures.* Hudson Taylor disagreed and brought Christ to the Chinese people in their “context.” He later founded the China Inland Mission which included 205 mission stations with over 800 missionaries, and 125,000 Chinese Christians!

The Bible was written to the first hearers or readers with a specific intent on God’s heart. God wanted *them* to understand what He was saying and therefore needed to put it into the language and life situations that they would be able to understand. The words, phrases, or passages that come before and after a particular word or passage in a speech or piece of writing and help to explain its full meaning. The circumstances or events that form the environment within which something exists or takes place also color the interpretation.

We will be confronted with our own understanding and interpretation when we are learning to read the Bible in context. Our own paradigm can easily get in the way. The word paradigm means, “a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline.”

### Three definitions

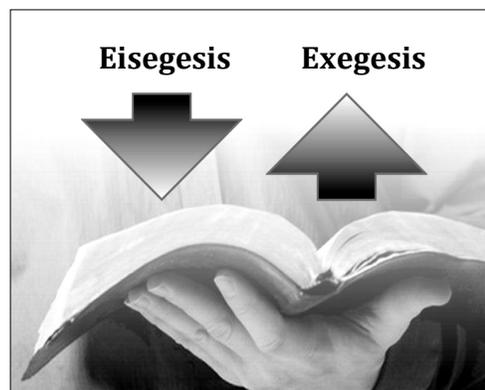
Before we address the two correct practices of interpretation, we need to reveal a very common but erroneous practice of reading our own interpretation into Biblical text.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The erroneous but common practice of forcing our own meaning *into* Scripture. Here are a few examples...

A. A distortion of the original meaning. In John 5:31-47, the Jewish leaders had a pre-determined notion about Jesus that did not allow them to see Christ for who He was: the Promised Messiah!

B. Exaggerated interpretation. In John 13:1-17 John records the washing of the disciples feet. However, people have missed Jesus’ point and interpreted this to be a *religious* act of worship.

C. Satan is a master in the practice of eisegesis! Read Matthew 4:3-11 and in your own words describe how he twisted Scripture to suit his own purposes.



2. \_\_\_\_\_ The careful, systematic study of God’s Word to discover the writer’s original and intended meaning, taking into consideration the historical and

literary contents, and the society of the time of writing. We have already covered several areas of proper exegesis in this section such as the various types of contexts. Later we will actually apply these practices to several scriptures using the Bible Study Sheets.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ This is the entire field of Biblical interpretation. In a narrower sense, it is bringing contemporary relevance to ancient texts, the Bible's meaning for today. Remember, a Bible text can never mean to us what it did not mean to the original hearers and readers.
  - A. The proper practice for hermeneutics is found in FIRST understanding the original intent of a Bible text (exegesis). Then finding it's meaning for today without destroying it's initial meaning.
  - B. Whenever we share comparable particulars (similar life situations) with the readers of the original text, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them.

### **LET'S BEGIN...**

The purpose of our journey through the book, "Understanding Scripture," is to fulfill 2 Timothy 2:15, *Study and do your best to present yourself to God as someone who accurately handles and skillfully teaches the Word of Truth.* As His followers and disciples we do not have the luxury of interpreting His Word through understanding only. Our highest task is to discover His message to people in Biblical times and then determine how God is bringing contemporary relevance to ancient texts.