

How Do I  
Study the Bible  
?

# 2016 Barna Poll of 12,187 Americans

"How often, if ever, do you actually read the Bible, not including times when you are at a church service or church event?"

Never: 27%

Less than once a year: 14%

Once or twice a year: 9%

Three or four times a year: 8%

Once a month: 7%

Once a week: 8%

Several times a week: 14%

Every day: 13%

"The following are reasons why someone might read the Bible. Please indicate which is most true for you."

It brings me closer to God: 55%

I need comfort: 16%

I have a problem I need to solve or I need direction: 16%

I know I'm supposed to: 6%

It is part of my studies at school: 3%

Not sure/none: 4%

# Paul Tripp's Eight Blessings of Studying the Bible

1. **God Consciousness:** the constant reminder that God exists
2. **Self-Awareness:** the constant reminder of how I am and my need for God
3. **Knowledge of God's Plan:** "God works to rescue us from the claustrophobic confines of our little kingdoms of self and deliver us to his big Kingdom of glory and grace."
4. **Personal Transformation:** seeing God's grace work to change each one of us
5. **Gospel Worldview:** understanding God, yourself, and your world in order to make decisions.
6. **Street-Level Guidance:** knowing how to respond to everyday issues and conversations
7. **Commitment to Ministry:** reminding us of our call to and defining our methods of redemptive ministry in the lives of others.
8. **A Deeper Love For Jesus:** reminding us of Jesus's presence, plan, power, and promises.

The slide has paraphrases of Tripp's text but I want to give two in their full version:

## "5. Gospel Worldview

I don't know if you've thought about this, but you are a theologian. I don't mean an academic theologian studying biblical history and languages in seminary, but an everyday theologian. Every day, you and I interpret our experiences through the lens of theology. We make assumptions and draw conclusions about God, about ourselves, and about our world.

Dangerously, most of us make these theological conclusions on the fly, without valid biblical reasoning. And perhaps even more dangerously, we don't even know that we're making them! Once more, this is why Bible study is so wonderfully helpful. It gives us an origin-to-destiny perspective on all that was, all that is, and all that will be, so we can correctly understand our world and respond appropriately in it." -Paul Tripp

## "8. A Deeper Love For Jesus

The Bible is not a collection of stories or a catalog of wisdom statements, but rather a single story running from cover the cover. The Bible is the story of Jesus. Every passage looks forward to him, puts hope in him, points to what he alone can fix, or looks back to him with gratitude.

Bible study puts Jesus before you, reminding you again and again of his presence, plan, power, and promises. It will cause you to remember that Jesus is God's greatest

gift to you and the result will be a deeper love for him and a more vibrant celebration of his grace.

Do you want to love Jesus more? Then study your Bible more.” –Paul Tripp

**While doing our devotions, as Brian taught on previously, certainly overlaps with studying our Bible, studying is often a more academic approach.**

**This presentation is to give you a mentality for studying the Bible on your own as well as a framework. There are whole books on just this subject and I will give recommendations at the end.**

# Importance of Knowing God's Word

Scripture forms our worldview by answering our biggest questions:

Who is God?

Who are we?

What is important in life?

How should we live?

Why are we here?

What is wrong with the world?

What does the future hold?

Studying the Bible is not about knowing every fact and story but learning to think biblically. We should form a biblical lens through which to view the world (a worldview).

# Importance of Knowing God's Word

- Through knowing the word we can know God's revealed will.
- THE SCRIPTURE PRESENTS GOD'S STANDARDS
  - IN OUR MORAL CHOICES
  - IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS
  - IN OUR INTERPRETATION OF OTHER SCRIPTURE

"KNOWING THIS FIRST OF ALL, THAT NO PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE COMES FROM SOMEONE'S OWN INTERPRETATION. FOR NO PROPHECY WAS EVER PRODUCED BY THE WILL OF MAN, BUT MEN SPOKE FROM GOD AS THEY WERE CARRIED ALONG BY THE HOLY SPIRIT."

II PETER 1:20-21

We don't go to scripture to find every specific answer to every specific question we have (like a magic eight ball) but to find God's principles rooted in who God truly is.

We don't bring in our own agenda, but allow the Bible to set the standard for us to follow.

# Importance of Knowing God's Word

- We have the unchanging message of an unchanging God.
- We see through God's eyes.
- We have a whole cohesive document which interprets itself.
- We can learn on our own as well as with the Church

## **We have the unchanging message of an unchanging God.**

Let's hold tight to the scripture because we have God's promises to us which we can rely on. It's there in black and white for us.

## **We see through God's eyes.**

As we allow the Bible to form our view of who our God is, we see ourselves and our world like He does.

## **We have a whole cohesive document which interprets itself.**

In order to learn the Bible you need to approach it as a complete story and a network of truth rather than as a series of snapshots or separate teachings.

## **We can learn on our own as well as with the Church.**

We learn the Bible well when we learn it together. We also learn well on our own, at our own pace and in our own learning style. We should exercise both of these opportunities.

# When We Approach the Bible

## Preparation

Am I ready to hear from the Lord?

## Observation

What does it say?

## Interpretation

What does it mean?

## Application

How must I respond?

## Preparation: Ask Yourself:

- AM I READY TO HEAR WHATEVER IT HAS TO SAY?
- WILL I LET MY ASSUMPTIONS BE CHALLENGED?
- CAN I REFRAIN FROM MANIPULATING SCRIPTURE FOR MY COMFORT?
- AM I WILLING TO FIND WHERE MY LIFE FITS INTO GOD'S STORY?
- WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?  
WISDOM? A CHECKLIST? GOD'S PERSPECTIVE? ENCOURAGEMENT? AMMUNITION?
- WHAT DO I PLAN TO DO WITH WHAT I FIND?

"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it."

James 1:22-25

GOAL OF READING SCRIPTURE: TO BETTER KNOW GOD AS HE IS DISPLAYED IN THE STORY OF WHAT HE IS DOING IN OUR WORLD.

"GOD CAN ONLY BE LOVED WHEN HE IS KNOWN. THE BIBLE, THEREFORE, IS THE STORY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF TO THE WORLD, ITS NATIONS, AND PEOPLE, IN ORDER TO DRAW TO HIMSELF SINCERE LOVE EXPRESSED IN WORSHIP, HONOR AND OBEDIENCE." -STEVEN C. HAWTHORNE

CALVARY MURRIETA VALUES: INSTRUCTION "EXPERIENCING GOD AS WE BELIEVE, READ, SHARE AND LIVE HIS WORD"

# Observation

## WHO

WROTE THIS?

DID THEY WRITE TO?

## WHAT

WAS GOING ON AT THE TIME?

IS THE SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT?

## WHERE

DID THIS TAKE PLACE?

## WHEN

WAS THIS IN HISTORY?

IS THIS IN THE STORY OF REDEMPTION?

(SAVE **WHY** AND **HOW** FOR LATER)

# Interpretation

Some key ideas:

- **Typology/Foreshadowing:** A person place or thing that is significant on its own but that points to a fuller significance in something later.
- **Representation:** A person can stand in for their nation, descendants, or any group of which they are a part.
- **Already/not-yet:** Like a down-payment or beachhead, something can be established partially but not yet fully. The part is representative of the fully established end.
- **Compilation:** packaged teachings from the Bible are often not found in just one place but are the careful summary of several smaller teachings (e.g. the Trinity).

# Good Ways to Misunderstand Scripture

- Expect to hear only what want to hear
- Expect the God of Scripture to look like you
- Expect everything you read to directly involve you
- Look for secret meanings only you have discovered

# Direct Application Format

BECAUSE     [FACT]    ,     [APPLICATION]    .

What I call “Direct Application” is not wrong but it is limited. The concern here isn’t that you will find heresy but that you will miss the fuller truth.

In direct application we start with an event or saying in the Bible and immediately try to connect it to our lives.

Think of “Mad Libs” and insert any given story or saying and then try to insert an application (what you’ll do as a response). That is direct application.

# Example of Direct Application

CONTENTS: CALL OF ABRAHAM. HIS WORSHIP AND TESTING. THE ERROR IN EGYPT.

CHARACTERS: ABRAHAM, SARAI, LOT, PHARAOH.

CONCLUSION: THE PATH INTO WHICH GOD CALLS THE BELIEVER MAY OFTEN BE TRYING TO THE FLESH, BUT THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE THAT HE IS OUT OF GOD'S WILL.

KEY WORD: SOJOURNERS, v. 10.

STRONG VERSES: 3, 8.

STRIKING FACTS: GOD'S BIDDINGS ARE HIS ENABLINGS. BETTER SUFFER IN CANAAN IN GOD'S PATH THAN LIVE IN LUXURY IN EGYPT IN THE DEVIL'S PATH.

THE ALTAR MARKS ABRAHAM AS A WORSHIPPER. THE TENT MARKS HIM AS A PILGRIM. THESE ARE DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

In this example text from a published Bible Study guide, the author is jumping from Characters to Conclusion. There is no connector in between. The author's conclusion is biblically true but really does not need any of Abraham's particular story to get to that conclusion.

Ask yourself: if the conclusion is only a life lesson, why is all the extra information in the Bible story included? I really don't think it is because those details are unnecessary fluff, but when we carve out a conclusion that misses most of the story, we treat the story of the scripture as though it were largely unnecessary. The life lesson is all that really matters.

## Example: David and Goliath

BECAUSE       [FACT]      , I       [APPLICATION]      .

BECAUSE DAVID DEFEATED GOLIATH, I CAN OVERCOME DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN MY LIFE.

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David and Goliath are a good experiment. We typically look at the David and Goliath story through this framework. The details of the story are ignored because we found our conclusion already. Actually, we don't really need the whole story this way, just the life lesson.

Also, notice who is the central actor: I am. The conclusion is what I should or can do. I put myself at the center of the scripture.

## Example: David and Goliath

BECAUSE [FACT], I [APPLICATION].

BECAUSE DAVID DEFEATED GOLIATH, I CAN OVERCOME DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN MY LIFE.

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[FACT] BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], I [APPLICATION].

DAVID DEFEATED GOLIATH, BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], I [APPLICATION].

If we try a different framework, by starting with the fact ("David defeated Goliath because...") and then put God as the central actor, rather than myself, we have a much different approach to studying.

If we ask what this is saying about God we are learning who God is first rather than what I must do first. God is in His rightful place as the focus.

I still apply what I found here in my life. But I do so as a response to what I saw about God's character rather than what I saw people doing in the story. After all, we are children of God and disciples of Christ, not merely imitators of Biblical characters who are only human.

## Example: David and Goliath

\_\_\_[FACT]\_\_\_ BECAUSE **GOD** \_\_\_[THEOLOGY]\_\_\_. BECAUSE **GOD** \_\_\_[THEOLOGY]\_\_\_, I \_\_\_[APPLICATION]\_\_\_.

DAVID DEFEATED GOLIATH, BECAUSE **GOD** \_\_\_[THEOLOGY]\_\_\_, I \_\_\_[APPLICATION]\_\_\_.

In the David and Goliath story, we see an historical practice of having two representatives battle on behalf of their armies. This reduced bloodshed by allowing an entire army to win or lose without fighting. David walks past the Israelite army to fight their battle for them and they all gain victory because he is victorious. David's motive was to defend God's name among the nations who were mocking it. David here (and elsewhere) is a foreshadowing of Christ who would come to gain victory by being defeated in order to call the nations to the true God. Knowing that (which comes through the hard work of studying the cultural context of a passage) changes our application from being victorious over life's problems to living in the light of the victory Christ won for us.

How would that information help you insert a theology statement (a statement about what you see of God's character and nature) into your "equation"?

## Example: Jonah

BECAUSE [FACT], I [APPLICATION].

BECAUSE JONAH WAS SENT TO NINEVEH AND CALLED THEM TO REPENT EVEN THOUGH HE HATED THEM, I SHOULD NOT RESENT THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW GOD AND SHARE MY FAITH WITH THEM MORE, RATHER THAN RESIST OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

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Another good example is the story of Jonah. We would, left to our own devices, read the story of Jonah this way.

## Example: Jonah

BECAUSE [FACT], I [APPLICATION].

BECAUSE JONAH WAS SENT TO NINEVEH AND CALLED THEM TO REPENT EVEN THOUGH HE HATED THEM, I SHOULD NOT RESENT THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW GOD AND SHARE MY FAITH WITH THEM MORE, RATHER THAN RESIST OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

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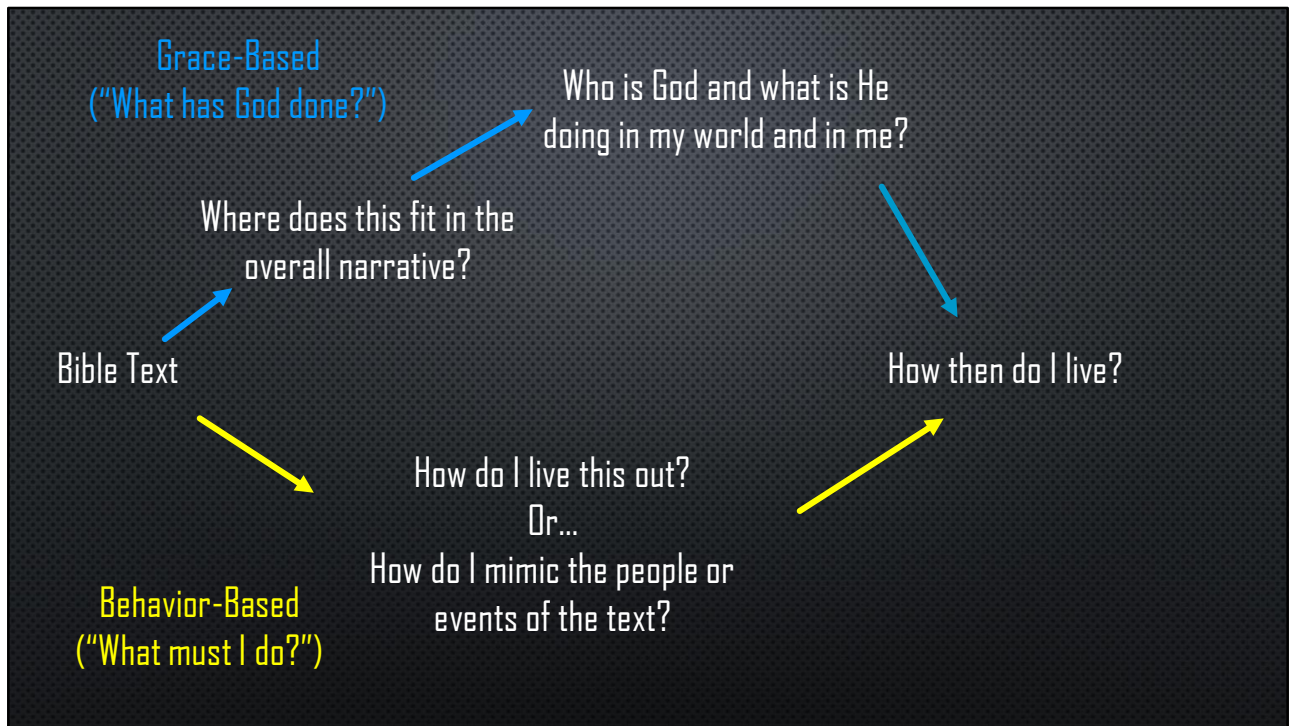
[FACT] BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], I [APPLICATION].

JONAH WAS SENT TO NINEVEH AND CALLED THEM TO REPENT EVEN THOUGH HE HATED THEM,  
BECAUSE **GOD** [THEOLOGY], I [APPLICATION].

Asking why the Jonah story played out as it did and what it shows about God would give us a much fuller picture and explain the other parts of the story we thought we didn't need as long as we had our simple conclusion.

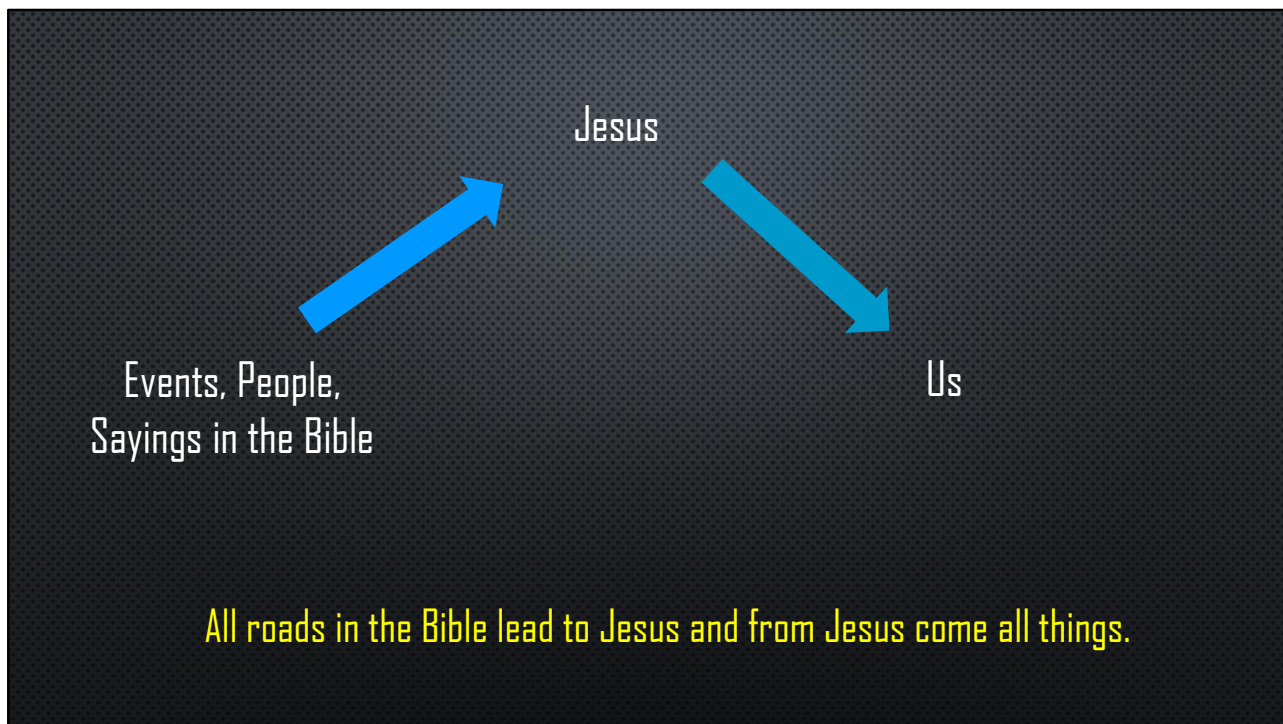
Some historical study would tell us that Nineveh was the capital of the violent Assyrian empire that would take Israel (Jonah's people) captive as God's punishment on them. Israel should have been the ones to repent but didn't. Assyria did but it didn't stick. But one day Christ would come who would preach repentance out of genuine love for His people Israel and the nations would come in repentance to the same Christ because God is loving, patient, and has a greater plan.

Your application could be the same as at first, but look what a fuller picture you got of God and the Story He has written!

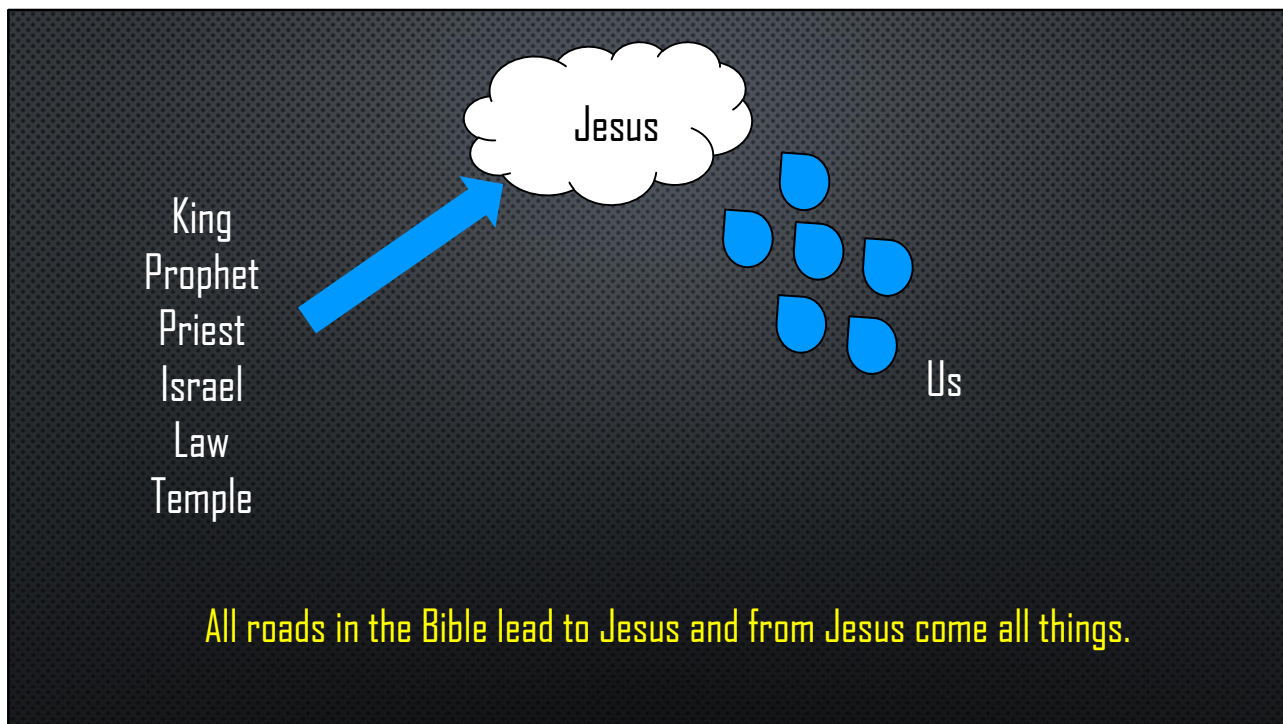


Direct application takes the lower path in this chart. What I call "Theological Application" takes the upper path. They will both come to a necessary response to what you learned in scripture but one gives you a greater knowledge of the Bible's overall story, God's nature, and what God is doing.

Theologian Bryan Chappell asks two core questions of a text: "How is the Holy Spirit revealing in this text the nature of God that provides redemption? And how is the Holy Spirit revealing in this text the nature of humanity that requires redemption?"



As you study, look for ways the passage points you to Jesus. Only then will you be able to find what it truly means for you.



Think of this like the earth's water cycle. We don't go directly to the ocean to drink. The water must first evaporate into a cloud and come to us as rain. Similarly, we look in the Bible (this will make the Old Testament come alive for you) for how things are fulfilled in Jesus. Then we see Him give us all things.

For example:

- Jesus is the truest king, therefore we are subjects of His Kingdom and exercise authority.
- Jesus is the truest prophet, therefore we know God's voice and speak His truth.
- Jesus is the truest priest, therefore we represent Him to the world and pray on their behalf.
- Jesus is the truest Israel, therefore we are grafted into His people.
- Jesus is the truest temple, therefore we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

By taking ourselves out of the central position of scripture, we may feel like we are insignificant. However, we find our fullest significance in Christ. He is the culmination of the Bible's story and we are its outcome. You will find that putting Him in His rightful place at the center of scripture puts you in yours, and it makes you more significant than you ever thought you'd be.

In order to spend more time on this, I recommend attending the Unfolding Gospel Bible Survey in April and May.

# Interpretation: Some Crucial Questions

- WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT GOD?
  - WHAT AREAS OF HIS CHARACTER ARE DISPLAYED?
  - DOES THE PASSAGE POINT TO JESUS'S COMING, REDEEMING, OR REDEFINING THINGS?
- WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT THE WORLD?
  - WHAT DOES IT SHOW ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?
  - WHAT DOES IT SHOW ABOUT THE WORLD'S VALUE SYSTEM?
  - WHAT WOULD THE FIRST READERS HAVE SEEN HERE?
  - HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE SPEAK TO OUR CULTURAL VALUES?
- WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT ME?
  - WHO WOULD I BE IN THE STORY?
  - WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT WHO I AM AND WHAT I HAVE IN JESUS?
- WHY IS THIS INCLUDED IN THE BIGGER MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE?
  - ARE THERE KEY TEACHINGS OR MAJOR THEMES YOU SEE HERE?
  - HOW DOES THIS FIT INTO THE STORY OF REDEMPTION?
  - WHAT PRINCIPLES ARE TAUGHT HERE?
- WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE PASSAGE?

You will be able to answer some of these more easily than others. Jump in and do your best, get help from outside resources (e.g. commentaries), and be patient with yourself as you learn over time.

# Application

IF THIS PASSAGE REVEALS THAT GOD \_\_\_\_\_ I SHOULD RESPOND BY \_\_\_\_\_.

THIS PASSAGE SHOWS THAT GOD COMMANDS \_\_\_\_\_ SO \_\_\_\_\_ NEEDS TO CHANGE IN MY LIFE.

I CAN DO \_\_\_\_\_ AND WILL ASK GOD TO \_\_\_\_\_ IN MY LIFE.

Remember Apply the Bible to yourself first.

**Matthew 7:5**

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

**1 Corinthians 10:6,12**

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did...Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

After Preparation, Observation, and Interpretation, you can move to Application. Find a way the passage relates to you.

Remember, not all passages directly relate to you but all should matter to you. For example, a passage about God's wrath for sinners has no application to those with grace in Christ through faith. However, it still matters very much because we can both thank and praise God for His salvation of us and be concerned for prayer and evangelism for those who are still in rebellion against God.

There is no need to force the scriptures to say something they aren't saying to you in order to try to "apply it in your life". It may relate more to your world than you but will still always call you to respond to the truth you found there.

## What About Passages that Don't Seem to Apply to Me?

Does this describe my current experience?

What does this tell you about the bigger picture/story?

Will I experience this in the future?

Is this passage actually not telling me to do anything?

Is someone else experiencing this?

Am I trying to apply a principle or a practice?

How does this passage speak to my culture?

Is this speaking about a group of which I am not a part?

Who would you be in the story?

We all face passages that just don't seem to apply to us. Ask yourself these questions and look for a meaning larger than you.

## Some Next Options

- Choose an area you feel you don't understand and start looking for what the Bible says about it.
- Read through the entire Bible (or listen to an audio version) for a sense of the story
- Read a book to help expand your understanding
- Study slowly through one book of the Bible (try starting with a shorter book)
- Take the Unfolding Gospel Bible Survey in May
- Take Foundations Class in the fall.

## APPROACHING THE BIBLE

*30 DAYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE*,  
MAX ANDERS

*KNOWABLE WORD*, PETER KROL

*LEARN TO STUDY THE BIBLE*, ANDY DEANE

*READING THE BIBLE FOR ALL IT'S WORTH*,  
FEE AND STEWART

*MISREADING SCRIPTURE WITH WESTERN  
EYES*, RICHARDS AND O'BRIEN

## Commentaries

*THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE  
COMMENTARY*

*THE BIBLE EXPOSITION  
COMMENTARY* (ONLY A NT  
COMMENTARY), WARREN WEIRSBEE

[Logos.com](http://Logos.com)

[BLUELETTERBIBLE.ORG](http://BLUELETTERBIBLE.ORG)

## Other

*Talk Through the Bible*,  
Wilkinson and Boa

*Search the Scriptures*,  
Stibbs

*The Ultimate Bible Guide*

*Biblical Theology*, Zuck