The Student

His Text

&

His Tools

**(1 Timothy 4:13-15)**

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

***The Student and His Text***

# Three Key Ingredients for Effective Bible Study

1. **The Right Attitude**
2. **The Right Methods**
3. **The Right Tools**
4. **The Right Attitude**
5. **A Reverent Heart:** To be an effective Bible student you must respect it as authoritative, inspired, and infallible (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).

(Proverbs 1:7) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (NKJV)

1. **A Hungry Heart:** Unless you really desire to know God’s will, you will find Bible study laborious and boring. However, when you passionately desire to discover God’s will, the discipline that it requires will come naturally!!
2. **An Open Heart:** Why are you studying, to find the truth or to prove you are right or someone else is wrong? Discovering the truth requires humility and an open heart, with a willingness to change our own thinking if necessary.

“Don’t go to the Bible to prove your doctrine, but to find your doctrine.”

1. **An Obedient Heart:** Don’t study simply to prepare a sermon. Study for the benefit of your own spiritual development.

(Psalms 25:4-5) Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me…”

(Psalms 143:10) “Teach me to do Your will…”

1. **The Right Methods**
2. Common Approaches
   * + 1. Haphazard Approach—there is no particular purpose to this study approach. This approach involves reading passages at random, thinking about what you have read, and perhaps writing down your thoughts. There is really no logical method to this approach.
       2. Daily Devotional Approach—unlike the Haphazard Approach, this approach involves an organized schedule for reading the Bible. Without any detailed analysis of the passage, you simply think about ways it might be applied to your life. This approach can be helpful, but it limits you to only a surface knowledge.
       3. The Commentary Approach—with this approach a passage from the Bible may or may not be read before a commentary is consulted to discover what to think about the passage. Using a commentary too early in our study can create preconceived ideas. This may hinder us from learning the true meaning of a passage.
       4. Systematic Approach—Using the systematic approach, we follow an orderly and logical pattern as we study a passage.
3. A Systematic Bible Study Involves…
4. Observation
5. Interpretation
6. Application

**#1 Observation**—discovers **what the Scripture SAYS.**

* The first step in observing a passage should be to read it. Think paragraphs, not verses.
* One of the best ways to see a passage in its entirety is to arrange it in a Structural Diagram.

**Structural Diagram**

Psalms 1:1-6 NASV

Separate the passage into s*ignificant clauses* which may range from a single word to an entire phrase.

Arrange the clauses by indenting subordinate ones under primary ones.

This creates a visual picture showing how the thoughts relate to each other.

The thoroughness of our observation will determine the accuracy of our interpretation and the correctness of our applications.

1How blessed is the man

who does not

walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor

stand in the path of sinners, Nor

sit in the seat of scoffers!

2But

His delight is in the law of the LORD, And

in His law he meditates day and night.

3He will be

like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
 which yields its fruit in its season, and  
          its leaf does not wither; and

in whatever he does, he prospers.

4The wicked are not so, but

they are like chaff which the wind drives away.   
5Therefore

the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor

sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6For

the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but

the way of the wicked will perish.

**What should we watch for?**

1. ***Key Words***—Word that are especially important to the meaning of the passage. Words that answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? Key words are often repeated throughout a passage.
2. ***Connectives***—Words that connect ideas and phrases (**but, and, or, because, therefore, with, in order that, if**). These indicate reasons, conditions, comparisons, contrasts, and conclusions.
3. ***Repetition, Progression of Words, Ideas or Phrases***—Watch for repetition of words, ideas, and statements. This will often give you a clue as to the author’s purpose in a passage. Watch for progression of thought.
4. ***Advice, Warnings or Promises***—Watch for the admonitions which a writer gives: the advice, exhortations, warnings, the things which he tells his readers to do or not to do.
5. ***Cause and Effect Relationships***—*“If…then”* *“because of*” or “*for*” which often introduce a reason or result; “*in order that*” which often establishes a purpose; “*therefore*” which often connects doctrine with duty
6. ***Reasons***—An explanation or justification of a decision, command, action.
7. ***Questions***—Note what is being asked, and whether the question is rhetorical. A rhetorical question is when the answer is obvious and is asked to stimulate the reader and challenge a response.
8. ***Contrasts***—The association of opposite things to emphasize or compare differences. Note the presence of the word “but” which usually signifies a contrast.
9. ***Comparisons***—the association of things similar. Note similes indicated by the word “like” and metaphors which provide a more direct and stronger association (i.e. “I am the bread of Life”)
10. ***Emphatic Statements***—statements that reveal emotions and significance. (“verily, verily” or “God forbid”)

All of your observations must come directly and only from Scripture. Be careful to see everything that is there, but beware of seeing something that isn’t there!

**#2 Interpretation**—discovers what the Scripture **MEANS.**

The science of Bible interpretation and the study of the principles it involves is called **Hermeneutics**. Using these principles in our study of the Bible to interpret its true meaning is called **Exegesis**. Exegesis means “to lead out.” Our task as Bible students is not to “read into” (*eisegesis*) the Scriptures what we want it to say, but to draw out what the original author meant when he wrote it (*exegesis*). Teaching others the interpretation we have arrived at is called **Exposition**. Bible teachers use hermeneutics to interpret Scripture in order to present expository lessons.

***Some Principles of Interpretation***

***Interpret Scripture in Light of Its Context:***

We must always interpret a passage in relation to the verses before and after it. The word “context” means with (*con*) the text. The context makes a big difference in coming up with the correct interpretation.

***Interpret Scripture by Scripture:***

The Bible does not contradict itself. All interpretations must agree with the teaching of the Bible as a whole. It also means that whenever Scripture interprets another Scripture, that interpretation is correct. If you interpret one passage in a way that clearly contradicts another passage, your interpretation is wrong.

***Interpret According to the Proper Definition of the Word:***

A correct understanding of a passage begins with a correct understanding of the words that make up that passage.

By consulting a Bible dictionary and a concordance we can learn the precise meaning of the words in a verse and how they are used elsewhere. (See ***The Teacher and His Tools***)

***Interpret According to the Normal Meaning of the Words:***

(Unless That Meaning is Clearly Inadequate).

It is possible to misunderstand the idea of the author if we do not understand the difference between words that are used literally or figuratively.

It is tempting to seek hidden meaning in a passage, but a good rule of thumb is to understand a word according to its literal meaning unless the context demands the terms be understood figuratively.

***Interpret According to Correct Grammar:***

Interpretations must conform to grammatical rules. Train yourself to recognize the subject and the related verbs of a sentence—the direct object, adjectives and adverbs. Make sure you are able to correctly identify pronouns and their antecedents.

***Questions?***

Questions are the bridge between the observation and interpretation phase.

By asking questions, you will force yourself to think seriously about the meaning of the words and statements found in the passage.

Questions To Ask:

**Determine Key Words,** Which words, verses or ideas express the purpose of the

**Verses or Ideas** author?

**Determine Meaning** What is the meaning of this word or phrase? Should this word or phrase be interpreted literally or figuratively?

**Determine Significance** What is the significance of a key word or phrase? What is its importance to the message? What is the significance of the comparisons, contrasts, illustrations, repetitions, etc…

**Determine Implications** What is implied by the use of this word or phrase?

***#3 Application***—discovers what the Scripture **MEANS TO US.**

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is the obtaining of facts through study. Wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge appropriately to real situations.

**(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. (NKJV)

Although these are Paul’s instructions to Timothy regarding his duty as a teacher of God’s word, all students of the Bible must carefully apply the word of truth appropriately.

William Hendriksen says:

The man who handles the word of the truth properly does not change, pervert, mutilate, or distort it, neither does he use it with a wrong purpose in mind. On the contrary, he prayerfully interprets Scripture in the light of Scripture. He courageously, yet lovingly, applies its glorious meaning to concrete conditions and circumstances, doing this for the glory of God, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers1.

*1New Testament Commentary, 2 Timothy. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986, pg. 263.*

**Notes:**