

# MODULE 7: SESSION 1

## APPLIED THEOLOGY

### HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

#### Introduction to Bible Study Methods

[NOTE: Everything I talk about will be on a handout]

1. Hermeneutics: The methodology of interpretation, particularly of the Scriptures.  
From Greek  $\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\eta\epsilon\upsilon\omega$  (*hermeneuo*) = “translate; interpret”
2. Purpose of “How to Study the Bible” – to give those without training in original languages a solid grasp of good Bible study methodology.
3. Starting Assumptions
  - a. Inspiration-- The Scriptures are *theopneustos* (God-breathed) as stated in 2 Tim 3:16 (see also 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Corinthians 1 - 2; 1 Peter 1:10 - 12; 2 Peter 1:19-21). God superintended men whose writings were then inspired.
    - i. Plenary inspiration – extending to all parts alike
    - ii. Verbal inspiration –including the actual language form
  - b. Inerrancy – Scripture will not prove false or mistaken
    - i. The nature of God implies inerrancy:
      1. God is true; God’s words are true
      2. God is trustworthy; God’s words are trustworthy
      3. God is without error; God’s words are without error
    - ii. Basis for inerrancy
      1. Scripture is true because God said it
      2. The authority of Christ Himself
      3. The integrity and self-witness of Scripture
    - iii. Extent of inerrancy
      1. Doesn’t exclude symbols
      2. Doesn’t imply technical vocabulary – e.g. sun going down
      3. Recognition of the historical setting
      4. Recognition of the whole message
      5. Recognition of the imperfections of the biblical authors yet the perfection of their writing
  - c. Authority
    - i. Inspiration and Inerrancy automatically imply authority
    - ii. Scripture is superior to traditions of men (Matthew 15:3 (ESV) – 3 He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”
  - d. Infallibility – incapable of teaching deception
  - e. Progressive Revelation – God reveals more truths as the revelation of Scripture proceeds. The truths revealed earlier do not become any less true,

only more clarified. Later revelation does not change the meaning of earlier revelation.

- f. Scripture Interprets Scripture (cross-reference)
    - i. One or more Scripture passages help interpret the right meaning in another text.
    - ii. Example: John 3:5 is ambiguous when it refers to being “born of water and of the Spirit.” Ezekiel 36:25-27 helps us understand that water is indicative of spiritual cleansing. This is not a symbolic meaning we made up; it is already found in Scripture.
  - g. Analogy of Faith
    - i. There is one unified, consistent, harmonious system of faith (belief) in the Bible. No point when correctly understood will contradict another.
  - h. Singularity of Meaning
    - i. Any one text has precisely one basic proper meaning or interpretation, not two or three. After proper interpretation, multiple applications may be made
    - ii. EXAMPLE: David’s five stones with Goliath do not mean five actual stones PLUS the deeper meaning of purity, integrity, wisdom, courage, and righteousness. This is solely from the imagination of the interpreter.
  - i. Historical-Grammatical Assumption:
    - i. History of Scripture is real and meaningful in interpretation.
    - ii. Grammar is real and meaningful in interpretation.
    - iii. Jesus demonstrated both these beliefs. He never reinterpreted historical biblical events and proclaimed that the smallest letter of Scripture is inspired by God.
    - iv. He did add revelation, but only God can do this.
      - 1. Matthew 5:27-28 (ESV) – 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
4. Why Study the Bible?
- a. It is the necessary complement to Bible reading
  - b. Bible reading alone will not advance your knowledge and maturity as deeply as in-depth study
  - c. All the reasons of Psalm 119
  - d. Be able to present a good, solid, basic Bible lesson to children or to adults.
    - i. Ladies: there is a void of women who can accurately and interestingly teach the Scriptures to children and other women
    - ii. Men: There is a void of men who can rightly handle God’s Word and do so with detail and interest.

- iii. Helps us avoid complete dependence on curriculum (which is often written by poorly trained authors who may or may not use sound hermeneutics)
- iv. Helps you be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, “examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”
- v. Accelerates your maturity, love for Christ, and obedience.

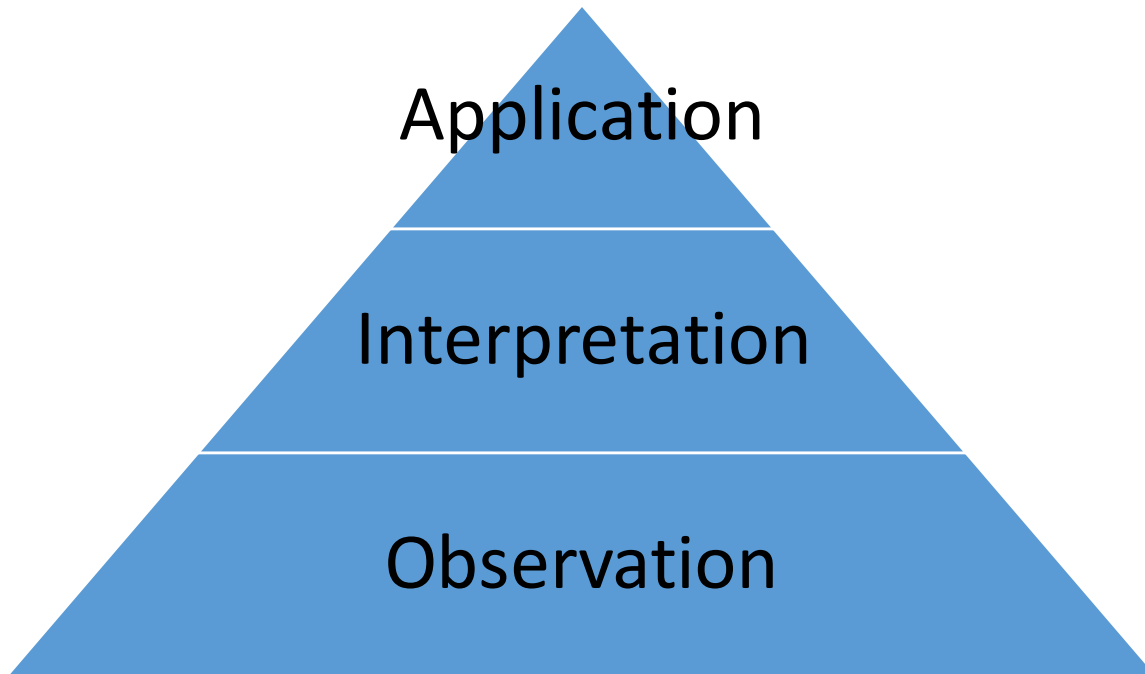
## 5. Preparation

- a. Establish a place and time to study. Larger chunks of time less frequently are better than smaller chunks more frequently. Your mind needs to get “in the groove.”
- b. Gather basic materials:
  - i. Free web-based: biblegateway.com studylight.org
  - ii. Study Bible – all-in-one source
  - iii. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* ed. Walvoord and Zuck
  - iv. Bible Atlas to gain geographical knowledge
  - v. Bible Dictionary – catch-all explanations for many things from word meaning to biographical information
  - vi. Bible Handbook – to help with cultural information
  - vii. Commentaries – presents one scholar’s study of the book
  - viii. Interlinear texts – helps with language barriers
  - ix. [www.tms.edu](http://www.tms.edu) “50 Books for Every Christian” for great resource ideas
  - x. MUST HAVES:
    - 1. Study Bible
    - 2. TBKC (Walvoord and Zuck)
    - 3. I will go through a comprehensive list of commentaries later in the semester. Don’t use them yet!! We observe the text first!
  - xi. For further info on Bible Study Methods:
    - 1. *Basic Bible Interpretation* by Roy Zuck
    - 2. *Living by the Book* by Howard and William Hendricks
    - 3. *Journey into God’s Word* by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays

## 6. BTI Bible Study Assignments:

- a. Choose from:
  - i. John 11:1-4
  - ii. Acts 19:17-20
  - iii. Galatians 1:6-9
  - iv. 2 Cor 4:1-4
  - v. 1 Peter 4:8-11
  - vi. Some recommended commentaries for each – but don’t look at the passage itself yet!!!! (THESE ARE OPTIONAL) – buy them used!
    - 1. Commentary divisions:
      - a. Exegetical (need to know languages to navigate well)
      - b. English Interpretation (Interpretive without technical language discussions)

- c. Expository (e.g, MacArthur NTC)
  - 2. For now, I recommend not making the MacArthur NT Commentaries your first “go-to.” Interact with others to start with.
  - 3. REMEMBER: Once you open the commentary, you are in many ways robbed of your observational abilities! Think for yourself!!
  - 4. John
    - a. *The Gospel According to John* by Barrett
    - b. *John* by Burge
  - 5. Acts
    - a. *The Acts of the Apostles* by Peterson
    - b. *The Book of Acts* by Bruce
  - 6. Galatians
    - a. *The Epistle to the Galatians* by Fung
    - b. *Galatians* by George
  - 7. 2 Corinthians
    - a. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* by Barnett
    - b. *2 Corinthians* by Garland
  - 8. 1 Peter
    - a. *The Epistle of 1 Peter* by Hiebert
    - b. *1, 2, Peter, Jude* by Schreiner
  - vii. NOTE: I will give you a comprehensive list later.
  - b. You will do an assignment (not every week) based on the topic we’ve done the previous session.
  - c. I will be doing an example of each topic each week.
7. Basic Hermeneutic Pyramid:



8. Our plan:

- a. Spring II BTI:
  - i. TODAY: Establishing Context
  - ii. **Observation** (three weeks)
  - iii. **Interpretation** (three weeks)
- b. SUMMER II BTI:
  - i. **Application** and Bible Study Lesson Preparation for Children to Adults (two weeks)
  - ii. Principles of Bible Lesson Presentation

9. ESTABLISHING CONTEXT:

“A Text without a Context is a Pretext” – Dr. James Rosscup

- a. BOOK CONTEXT:
  - i. Author
  - ii. Date
  - iii. Recipients/Situation
  - iv. Purpose – different commentators will have different views, generally complementary. Read a few opinions and form your own.
  - v. Location/Geography
  - vi. Cultural Context
  - vii. Religious Context
  - viii. Where do you get this information?

- b. Context of OT or NT? How is this book contributing to the message of the Mosaic Covenant or New Covenant? (HINT: The purpose of the book helps understand this). This is important because if an OT book, first you establish the purpose of the book to the OT reader and then after your study you build the bridge applicationally to your life, but ALWAYS keeping the correct covenant in view.
- i. E.g.: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8)
  - ii. WRONG: “This means we shouldn’t mow the lawn on Sunday and the NFL is the child of Satan.”
  - iii. RIGHT:
    1. Context is the Mosaic Covenant.
    2. We are not under Law (Rom 6:14)
    3. Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant and a faithful Jew kept Sabbath out of love for God.
    4. Since the Mosaic Covenant has been fulfilled by and in Christ completely and is now expired, Sabbath is no longer binding.
    5. BRIDGE: However, the faithful Jew loved the Lord and loved Sabbath because this was God’s prescribed means of expressing “You shall love the Lord your God.” Jesus said in John 14:15 – “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” which is now for the Christian defined as “the law of Christ” as found in the NT (Gal 6:2).
- c. Thematic Context –
- i. What are the major theological themes of the book and how might my passage fit into this at first glance?
  - ii. Get this through your own multiple readings of the book and themes highlighted in introductions to the book.
- d. Structural Context
- i. Look at an outline of the whole book – What place in the outline does your passage come? Look at multiple outlines if possible from different authors
  - ii. If possible, read the entire book multiple times. If it is longer, then scan it.
- e. Section Context
- i. What comes broadly before and after your passage?
- f. Immediate Context
- i. What comes immediately before or after?
  - ii. This can include one part of the verse with the other parts of a verse, but now you are venturing into observation.
10. Example of Questions to Ask for Book, Section, and Immediate Context:
- a. [One of your passages] = Acts 19:17 – 20
    - i. Acts 19:17-20 (ESV) – 17 And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the

name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. 18 Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

- b. In the overall outline of Acts, where does this event fall? (Book context)
- c. What is happening generally before and after this event? (Section context)
- d. “And this became known” (v17) – What is “this?” (Immediate context before)
- e. “And so the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily” (v20) – What shows this? How is this demonstrated in Acts? (Immediate context after)

#### 11. OUR EXAMPLE:

- a. Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV) – 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- b. BOOK CONTEXT:
  - i. Author – Apostle Paul, as identified in Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1.
  - ii. Date – There is little debate on the date of writing. Most agree on AD 62
  - iii. Recipients/Situation
    - 1. Paul was a prisoner when he wrote Ephesians (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). This was most likely his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30 – 31)
    - 2. It was likely written about the same time as Colossians since Tychicus carried both letters (Col 4:7 – 8; Eph 6:21 – 22)
    - 3. Interestingly, some ancient manuscripts do not have the designation “in Ephesus” in 1:1. The tradition for Ephesus as the recipient church goes back to within 70 years of the writing.
      - a. Three major proposed solutions to this:
        - i. Ephesians written to Gentile Christians in general
        - ii. Intended as a circular letter around the region of Ephesus
        - iii. Strictly for and to Ephesus
      - b. Best likely solution: Written to Ephesus to address specific issues (which it does) but also suitable for any church. This is most likely since this fits all NT books as being suitable to any church.
    - 4. Situation is not outlined unlike most of Paul’s letters. However, the great emphasis on the theme of unity in Ephesians gives a clue that there may be a corrective element concerning unity.

- iv. Purpose: Gentile Christians were shown their place in the purpose of God for the Church and urged to show the outworking of their call in their conduct.
- v. Location/Geography
  - 1. Ephesus is located on the western shore of Asia Minor, at the mouth of the River Cayster, 300 miles east of Corinth.
- vi. Cultural Context
  - 1. Ephesus became part of the Roman province of Asia in 133 B.C.
  - 2. In more ancient times, Ephesus was a coastal city, but silt slowly filled the Cayster and by Paul's day had a single channel to the sea which had to constantly be dredged.
  - 3. Ephesus was a spectacular city with marble roads, temples, fountains, a town hall, monuments, private homes, baths, latrines, an auditorium (possibly the lecture hall of Tyrannus), a library, a theater, a stadium, and numerous other civic structures. The main boulevard ran in picturesque fashion right between Mount Koressos and Mount Pion. Ephesus was populated in Paul's day by around 200,000 people. An inscription found in the city described it as "a most illustrious city."
  - 4. One of the three top centers of trade in the eastern Mediterranean (along with Antioch and Alexandria).
  - 5. The great theater of Ephesus was the largest Greek theater in Asia Minor, seating between 25,000 and 50,000 people depending on the source.
    - a. This is the theater in which Demetrius, the silversmith, made a protest against Paul's preaching (Acts 19:23 - 41).
  - 6. By far the greatest attraction and glory of Ephesus was the temple of Artemis (Greek name) or Diana (Roman name). One of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
    - a. It was the largest structure in the Greek world, by some reports as large as 425 x 240 feet.
    - b. Made of marble with cypress wood paneling and cedar roof beams.
    - c. 100 columns 60 feet high, 36 of them adorned with ornate carvings
    - d. Temple also served as the national bank of Asia Minor, keeping money for surrounding citizens and businesses.
    - e. This is important because the Artemis cult was closely related to business.
    - f. The temple was destroyed in 262 AD by the Goths and never rebuilt.
- vii. Religious Context



1. Major center of polytheism – featured the worship of up to 50 gods and goddesses.
2. By far most pervasive was Artemis worship.
  - a. A month of the year named after her; Olympic-like games called the “Artemisia” were held in her honor.
  - b. Sale of silver items related to Artemis as major part of the local economy.
  - c. Artemis was thought to be the mother goddess who nourished heaven and earth. It is possible that Paul was countering this notion in Ephesians 3:14-15, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.
  - d. According to some sources, the temple had numerous priestesses who contributed to the rampant sexual immorality of the city – again, Paul deals with this topic in chapters 2, 4, 5.
3. Closely connected to Artemis worship – the use of magic
  - a. Magical charms with the names of six powerful beings on them were manufactured and sold.
  - b. These magic words were to be repeated to rid people of evil spirits and even worn by athletes to give success.
  - c. Included the practice of astrology, magic spells, and casting away of evil spirits.
  - d. Acts 19:17-20 reports that many new believers in Christ gathers to burn their magic books.
4. The Church in Ephesus
  - a. We don’t know how the gospel first came to Ephesus.
  - b. Paul visited briefly, leaving Aquila and Priscilla there in anticipation of a longer return later (Acts 18:18-21).
  - c. Before Paul came back, Apollos preached an incomplete gospel and was corrected by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24-26).
  - d. So there were likely already believers in Ephesus when Paul began his ministry there, but he brought cohesion and organization to the church (Acts 19:9).
  - e. Made up mostly of Gentile converts, but with some believing Jews as well.
  - f. When left after his three-year ministry, he left the church in the care of the elders (Acts 20:17).
  - g. After his release from his first Roman imprisonment, Paul visited once again to deal with problems in the church and left Timothy in charge of the overhaul (1 Tim 1:18-20).

- h. Early church fathers testify that the apostle John came to Ephesus late in life and spent the final years of his ministry there. Ephesus is the first recipient of the letters to the churches of Revelation 2 -3 and was apparently the lead church in the area.
    - i. The church eventually declined along with the city and the lampstand of Revelation 2:5 was taken.
  - viii. Why is this important? It puts you there! Put you in the place of the recipients which adds clarity to the text you are examining!
    - 1. Do as much background work as you can. Doesn't have to be this extensive, but the more the merrier!
- c. Context of OT or NT?
  - i. New Testament epistle written in the context of the church age.
  - ii. All commands are directly related to my life now.
  - iii. The last three chapters are the outworking of my faith in action.
- d. Thematic Context
  - i. The church as the body of Christ
  - ii. Unity in the body of Christ
  - iii. Love –used in verb or noun form 20 times
  - iv. By grace you have been saved
  - v. Household instructions
  - vi. Sovereign purpose of God in establishing the church
  - vii. “Walk” speak of conduct of the believer compared to his pre-salvation life (7x)
  - viii. Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV) – 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
    - 1. Ties into church, unity, love, grace, and “walk.”
- e. Structural Context
  - i. Outline:
    - 1. Call of the Church – Chpts 1-3
    - 2. Conduct of the Church – Chpt 4-6
  - ii. Eph 4:31-32 fits into the conduct section
- f. Section Context
  - i. This section begins with Paul’s command to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” (4:1)
  - ii. Paul has given instructions to the church as a whole (4:11-16), the church members in particular (4:22-32) which my passage fits into.
  - iii. The next chapter continues with individual conduct and works into conduct within the family.
- g. Immediate Context

- i. V30 (Immediately before) “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit” – So there are implications in vv31-32 about grieving the Holy Spirit by being bitter, wrathful, angry, and not forgiving, etc.
- ii. 5:1-2a (Immediately following) – “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love.”

12. SO: To establish CONTEXT for your passage:

- a. Use all the materials you have.
- b. Use online Bible Dictionary
- c. Don't try to write a 20-page paper – I was giving you an example of what you COULD do. Just get used to getting the contextual information.