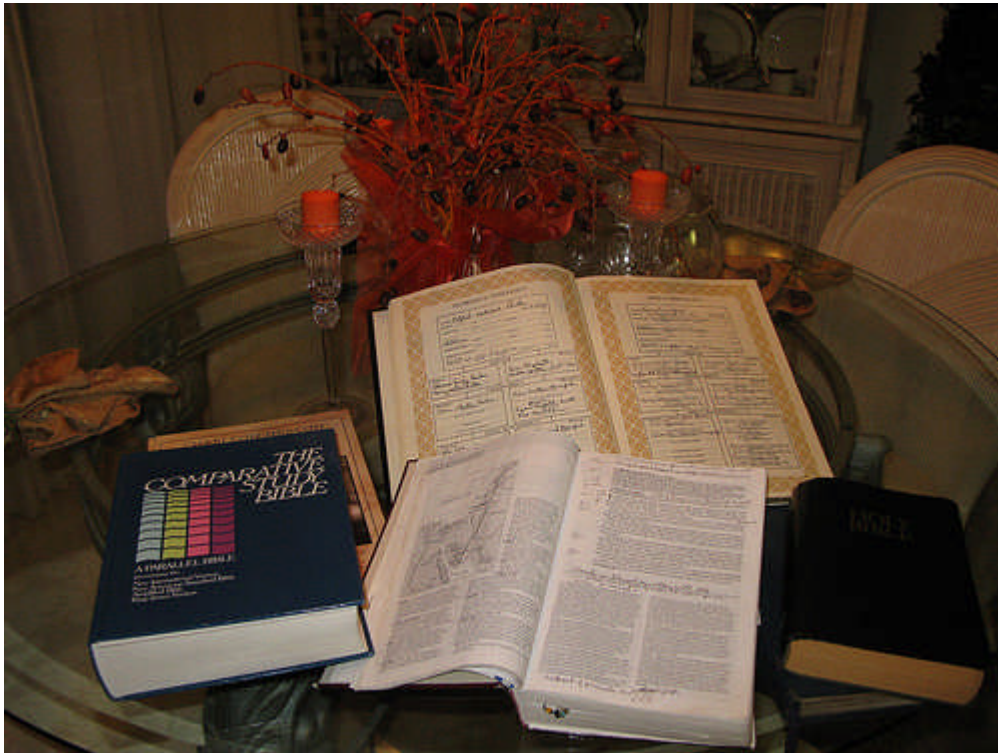


How to Study the Bible

Based on the Writings of

R. A. Torrey



Additional Comments and a

Leader's Study Guide

by

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

How to Study the Bible

R. A. Torrey

Additional Comments and a

Leader's Study Guide

by

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

Part 1
Observation

How to Study the Bible

God Wants you to Study the Bible

Christian, God wants you to study the Bible. The Bible is His final revelation to the world and He wants individuals to know it for without knowledge of the *Word of God* a person cannot be saved. While a person is saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), *“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). It is by hearing God’s *Word* that faith comes. Saving faith must be centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. There must be faith that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God; that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is come in the flesh; and that He died on the cross for sins. It is only through Jesus that a person can gain entrance to heaven. Because there is only one way to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ, Satan will do everything possible to keep a person from knowing their Bible and learning spiritual truth. Knowledge of the Bible will help the believer know how to combat the world, the flesh and the devil. Psalm 119:11 *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”*

A Study of the Bible is not Always Encouraged

Historically many religious structures have not stayed close to the Word of God in preaching or practice. In fact there are many churches that do not encourage their members to bring their Bibles to the services or study them in private. Certainly this has been true of the Catholic Church. But it is true of others as well including the Lutherans. I know. I have conducted Lutheran services. When I asked the people to open their Bibles there was silence. So I opened mine. While the Bible is not always encouraged to be read or studied privately the *Word of God* calls upon every believer to be a student of the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Bible Study

Many people have a difficult time reading or understanding the Bible, so they hesitate to obey the known will of the Lord in this matter of personal Bible study. Such souls must be challenged to make sure they are truly born again for then there will be a natural love for the Word of God. Listen to the Psalmist as he says, *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. 106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments”* (Psa. 119:103-106). A converted heart is a heart that will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. A greater reliance on the Holy Spirit is to be encouraged in personal Bible study for Jesus promised that if anyone desires to know the will of the Father it can be known. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit individuals wrote the Bible. 2 Tim 3:16-17 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Bible can be understood. Jesus gave this promise in John 16:13-

14. *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

There is to be humility and an utter dependency upon the Holy Spirit for understanding of the Word of God so that the prayer of Jesus can be honored. *Matthew 11:25 “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”* God’s people are to be instructed that knowledge of the Scriptures does not depend upon human intelligence but upon a humble heart that is Spirit taught. Even a child can know that which is able to make him wise unto salvation. In 2 Timothy 3:15 Paul commends Timothy for knowing the Scriptures from childhood. *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

The Bible Commands Every Believer

While every believer is to be encouraged to start a personal Bible study and should be commended in the effort, the point must be pressed that the Bible actually commands the faithful to hear and study the *Word of God*. In every generation the command has gone forth to remember or hear or receive God’s Word. Joshua cried out, *“Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land” (Josh 1:13).* The prophet Isaiah commanded, *“Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:10).* Jeremiah declared, *“Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel” (Jer. 10:1).* The apostle James instructs the church *“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).*

The Bible can be Trusted

The religious and holy duty to study the Bible on a personal level can become a delight when it is remembered how unique the Bible is. What a marvelous *Book* is the *Word of God*! Just a few facts.

- The Scriptures were written by about 39 authors, dating from about 1900 BC to about 90 AD, yet they harmonize perfectly. There is not one contradiction or mistake.
- Prophetic statements made have been fulfilled. *2 Peter 1:20-21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 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.*
- In AD 1228 the Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton. There are 39 books in the *Old Testament* and 27 books in the *New Testament* for a total of 66 books. There are 929 chapters in the *Old Testament* and 260 chapters in the *New Testament* for a total of 1,189 chapters.

- In 1448 AD the *Old Testament* was divided into verses by R. Nathan. There are 23, 213 verses in the *Old Testament*.
- In 1551 AD, the *New Testament* was divided into verses by Robert Stephanus. There are 7, 959 verses in the *New Testament* for a total of 31,173 verses.

A Matter to be Pressed upon the People

Though the Bible is to be studied because it is the *Word of God*, because it shows the way of salvation, because it has been neglected, and because it is commanded the objective is to have a *profitable* time in the Word. It will not do much good to study the Scriptures unless a person finds value and personal application. Duty is commendable but it is not enough. In discussing this matter of having a profitable Bible study I would like to introduce you to a man named Rueben A. Torrey who lived from 1856-1928. I have found his thoughts on this particular matter very instructive as he notes nine conditions to be met in order to have a profitable Bible study. Many a person who is eagerly asking, "*What method shall I pursue in my Bible study?*" needs something that goes far deeper than a new and better method. Individuals need to meet some basic conditions.

The first of the fundamental conditions of having a profitable Bible study is that the student be born again. The Bible is a spiritual book, it "*expresses spiritual truths in spiritual words*" (1 Corinthians 2:13), and only a spiritual man can understand its deepest and most characteristic and most precious teachings. "*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Spiritual discernment can be obtained in but one way, by being born again. "*No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again*" (John 3:3).

No mere knowledge of the human languages, in which the Bible was written, however extensive and accurate it may be, will qualify one to understand and appreciate it. One must understand the divine language in which it was written as well, the language of the Holy Spirit. A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, will get more out of the Bible than one who knows all about Greek and Hebrew and cognate languages, but is not born again, and, consequently, does not understand the language of the Holy Spirit. It is a well-demonstrated fact that many common men and women who are entirely ignorant of any knowledge of the original tongues in which the Bible was written have a knowledge of the real contents of the Bible, its actual teaching, in its depth and fullness and beauty, that surpasses that of many learned professors in theological faculties. Unregenerate men should not be forbidden to study the Bible, for the *Word of God* is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses in the New Birth. This truth is taught in 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18.

- *1 Peter 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

- *James 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

It should be distinctly understood that, while there are teachings in the Bible that the natural man can understand, and beauties which he can see, its most distinctive and characteristic teachings are beyond his grasp, and its highest beauties belong to a world in which the unregenerate has no vision. The first fundamental condition of the most profitable Bible study is, then, "*You must be born again.*" You cannot study the Bible to the greatest profit if you have not been born again. Its best treasures are sealed to you.

The second condition of the most profitable study is a love for the Bible. A man who eats with an appetite will get far more good out of his meal than one who eats from a sense of duty. It is good when a student of the Bible can say with Job, "*I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread*" (*Job 23:12*), or with Jeremiah, "*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty*" (*Jeremiah 15:16*). Many come to the table God has spread in His Word with no appetite for spiritual food, and go here and there and grumbling about everything. Spiritual indigestion lies at the bottom of much modern criticism of the Bible. But how can one get a love for the Bible?

First of all, by being born again. Where there is life there is likely to be appetite. A dead man never hungers. This brings us back to the first condition. But going beyond this, the more there is of vitality, the more there is of hunger. Abounding life means abounding hunger for the Word. Study of the Word stimulates love for the Word. It is possible to have more of an appetite for books about the Bible than for the Bible itself, but with increasing study there can come increasing love for the Book. Bearing in mind who the Author of the Book is, what its purpose is, what its power is, what the riches of its contents are, will go far toward stimulating love and appetite for the Book.

The third condition is willingness to do hard work. Solomon has given a graphic picture of the Bible student who gets the most profit out of his study, "*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God*" (*Proverbs 2:1-5*). Seeking for silver and searching for hidden treasure means hard work, and he who wishes to get not only the silver but the gold as well out of the Bible, and find its "hidden treasure," must make up his mind to dig. It is not glancing at the Word, or reading the Word, but studying the Word, meditating on the Word, pondering the Word, that brings the richest yields.

The reason why many get so little out of their Bible reading is simply because they are not willing to think. Intellectual laziness lies at the bottom of a large percent of fruitless Bible reading. People are constantly crying for new methods of Bible study, but what many of them wish is simply some method of Bible study by which they can get all the good out of the Bible without work. If someone could tell lazy Christians some method of Bible study whereby they could put the sleepest ten minutes of the day, just before they go to bed, into Bible study, and

get the profit out of it that God intends His children shall get out of the study of His Word, that would be just what they desire. But it can not be done. Men must be willing to work, and work hard, if they wish to dig out the treasures of infinite wisdom and knowledge and blessing which God has stored up in His Word.

A business friend once asked Dr. Torrey in a hurried call to tell him "*in a word*" how to study his Bible. He replied, "*Think.*" The Psalmist pronounces that man "*blessed*" whose "*delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night*" (Psalm 1:2). The Lord commanded Joshua to meditate on it day and night, and assured him that as a result of this meditation, "*you will be prosperous and successful*" (Joshua 1:8).

Of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we read, "*Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart*" (Luke 2:19). In this way alone can one study the Bible to the greatest profit. One pound of beef well chewed and digested and assimilated will give more strength than tons of beef merely glanced at; and one verse of Scripture chewed and digested and assimilated will give more strength than whole chapters simply skimmed. Weigh every word you read in the Bible. Look at it. Turn it over and over.

The most familiar passages get a new meaning in this way. Spend fifteen minutes on each word in Psalms 23:1. "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*". Or *Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

The fourth condition is a will wholly surrendered to God. Jesus said, "*If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own*" (John 7:17). A surrendered will gives that clearness of spiritual vision which is necessary to understand God's Book. Many of the difficulties and obscurities of the Bible rise wholly from the fact that the will of the student is not surrendered to the will of the author of the Book.

It is remarkable how clear and simple and beautiful passages that once puzzled us become when we are brought to that place where we say to God, "*I surrender my will unconditionally to You. I have no will but Yours. Teach me Your will.*" A surrendered will shall do more to make the Bible an open book than a university education. It is simply impossible to get the largest profit out of your Bible study until you do surrender your will to God. You must be very definite about this.

There are many who say, "*Oh, yes, my will, I think, is surrendered to God,*" and yet it is not. They have never gotten alone with God and said intelligently and definitely to him, "*O God, I here and now give myself up to You, for You to command me, and lead me, and shape me, and send me, and do with me, absolutely as You will.*" Such an act is a wonderful key to unlock the treasure house of God's Word. The Bible becomes a new book when a man does that. Doing that brought a complete transformation in the author's theology and life and ministry.

The fifth condition is very closely related to the fourth. The student of the Bible who would get the greatest profit out of his studies must be obedient to its teachings as soon as he sees them. It was good advice James gave to early Christians, and to us. *James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* There are a good many that

consider themselves Bible students who are deceiving themselves in this way today. They see what the Bible teaches, but they do not follow it, and they soon lose their power to see it. Truth obeyed leads to more truth. Truth disobeyed destroys the capacity for discovering truth. There must be not only a general surrender of the will, but also specific, practical obedience to each new Word of God discovered. There is no place where the law, "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him," is more gloriously certain on the one hand and more sternly unavoidable on the other than in the matter of using or refusing the truth revealed in the Bible.

Use, and you get more; refuse, and you lose all. Do not study the Bible for the mere gratification of intellectual curiosity, but to find out how to live and please God. Whatever duty you find commanded in the Bible, do it at once. Whatever good you see in any Bible character, imitate it immediately. Whatever mistake you note in the actions of Bible men and women, scrutinize your own life to see if you are making the same mistake, and if you find you are, correct it immediately. James compares the Bible to a mirror (James 1:23, 24). The chief good of a mirror is to show you if there is anything out of order about you; if you find there is, you can set it right. Use the Bible in that way. Obeying the truth you already see will solve the mysteries in the verses you do not yet understand. Disobeying the truth you see darkens the whole world of truth. This is the secret of much of the skepticism and error of the day. Men see the truth, but do not follow it—then it is gone.

Dr. Torrey tells the story of a bright and promising young minister. He made rapid advancement in the truth. He took very advanced ground on one point especially, and the storm came. One day he said to his wife, "*It is very nice to believe this, but we need not speak too much about it.*" They began, or he, at least, to hide their testimony. The wife died and he drifted. The Bible became to him a sealed book. Faith reeled. He publicly renounced his faith in some of the fundamental truths of the Bible. He seemed to lose his grip even on the doctrine of immortality. What was the cause of it all? Truth not lived and stood for flees.

The sixth condition is a childlike mind. God reveals His deepest truths to babes. No age needs more than our own to lay to heart the words of Jesus. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes (Matthew 11:25).* We must be babes if God is to reveal His truth to us, and we are to understand His Word. A child is not full of its own wisdom. It recognizes its ignorance and is ready to be taught. It does not oppose the ideas of its teachers to those of its own. It is in that spirit we should come to the Bible if we are to get the most profit out of our study. Do not come to the Bible full of your own ideas, and seeking from it a confirmation of them. Come rather to find out what are God's ideas as He has revealed them there. Come not to find a confirmation of your own opinion, but to be taught what God may be pleased to teach. If a man comes to the Bible just to find his ideas taught there, he will find them; but if he comes recognizing his own ignorance, just as a little child to be taught, he will find something infinitely better than his own ideas, even the mind of God. We see why it is that many persons cannot see things which are plainly taught in the Bible. The doctrine taught is not their idea, of which they are so full that there is no room left for that which the Bible actually teaches.

We have an illustration of this in the apostles themselves at one stage in their training. In Mark 9:31, we read, *“For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day”*.

Now, that is as plain and definite as language can make it, but it was utterly contrary to the ideas of the apostles as to what was to happen to the Christ. So we read in the next verse, *“But they did not understand what he meant.”* Isn't that amazing? But is it any more amazing than our own inability to comprehend plain statements in the Bible when they run counter to our preconceived ideas? Problems many Christians find with portions of the Sermon on the Mount would be plain enough if we just came to Christ like a child to be taught what to believe and do, rather than coming as full-grown men who already know it all, and who must find some interpretations of Christ's words that will fit into our mature and infallible philosophy. Many a man is so full of an unbiblical theology he has been taught that it takes him a lifetime to get rid of it and understand the clear teaching of the Bible.

“Oh, what can this verse mean?” many a bewildered man cries. Why, it means what it plainly says; but what you are after is not the meaning God has manifestly put into it, but the meaning you can by some ingenious trick of exegesis twist out of it and make it fit into your scheme. Do not come to the Bible to find out what you can make it mean, but to find out what God intended it to mean.

Individuals often miss the real truth of a verse by saying, *“But that can be interpreted this way.”* Oh, yes, so it can, but is that the way God intended it to be interpreted? We all need to pray often if we would get the most profit out of our Bible study, *“Oh, God, make me a little child. Empty me of my own ideas. Teach me Your own mind. Make me ready like a little child to receive all that You have to say, no matter how contrary it is to what I have thought before.”* How the Bible opens up to one who approaches it in that way! How it closes up to the wise fool, who thinks he knows everything, and imagines he can give points to Peter and Paul, and even to Jesus Christ and to God Himself! Someone has well said the best method of Bible study is *“the baby method.”*

Dr. Torrey was once talking with a minister friend about what seemed to be the clear teaching of a certain passage. *“Yes,”* he replied, *“but that does not agree with my philosophy.”* This man was sincere, yet he did not have the childlike spirit, which is an essential condition of the most profitable Bible study. But there are many who approach the Bible in the same way. It is a great point gained in Bible study when we are brought to realize that an infinite God knows more than we, that, indeed, our highest wisdom is less than the knowledge of the most ignorant babe compared with His. But we so easily and so constantly forget this that every time we open our Bibles we would do well to get down humbly before God and say, *“Father, I am but a child, teach me.”*

The seventh condition of studying the Bible to the greatest profit is that we study it as the Word of God. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Church of the Thessalonians, thanked God without ceasing that when they received the Word of God they *“received it not as the word of men,*

as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Well might he thank God for that, and well may we thank God when we get to the place where we receive the Word of God as the Word of God. Not that one who does not believe the Bible is the Word of God should be discouraged from studying it. Indeed, one of the best things that one who does not believe that the Bible is the Word of God can do, if he is honest, is to study it.

Dr. Torrey confessed that he once doubted utterly that the Bible was the Word of God. But a firm confidence that the Bible is the Word of God came more from the study of the Book itself than from anything else. Those who doubt the Bible are more usually those who study about the Book, than those who dig into the actual teachings of the Book itself. But while the best book of Christian evidences is the Bible, and while the most utter skeptic should be encouraged to study it, no one will not get the largest measure of profit out of that study until the heart reaches the point where it is convinced that the Bible is God's Word, and when the Scriptures are studied as such. There is a great difference between believing theoretically that the Bible is God's Word and studying it as God's Word. Thousands would tell you that they believe the Bible is God's Word who do not study it as God's Word. Studying the Bible as the Word of God involves four things.

First, it involves the unquestioning acceptance of its teachings when definitely understood, even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible. Reason demands that we submit our judgment and reasonings to the statements of infinite wisdom. There is nothing more irrational than rationalism, which makes the finite wisdom the test of infinite wisdom, and submits the teachings of God's omniscience to the approval of man's judgment. It is the sublimest and absurdest conceit that says, *“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” Romans 9:20.*

Real human wisdom, when it finds infinite wisdom, bows before it and says, *“Speak what You will and I will believe.”* When we have once become convinced that the Bible is God's Word its teachings must be the end of all controversy and discussion. A *“thus says the Lord”* will settle every question. Yet there are many who profess to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and if you show them what the Bible clearly teaches on some disputed point, they will shake their heads and say, *“Yes, but I think so and so,” or “Doctor —, or Professor this, our church doesn't teach that way.”* There is little profit in that sort of Bible study.

Second, studying the Bible as the Word of God involves absolute reliance on all its promises in all their length and breadth. He who studies the Bible as the Word of God will not discount any one of its promises one iota. He who studies the Bible as the Word of God will say, *“God, who cannot lie, has promised,”* and will not attempt to make God a liar by trying to make one of His promises mean less than it says. He who studies the Bible as the Word of God will be on the lookout for promises, and as soon as he finds one he will seek to ascertain just what it means, and as soon as he discovers what it means, he will step right out on that promise and risk everything on its full meaning. That is one of the secrets of profitable Bible study.

Search for promises and appropriate them as fast as you find them, which is done by meeting the conditions and risking all on them. That is the way to make your own all the fullness of blessing God has for you. This is the key to all the treasures of God's grace. Happy is the man who has so

learned to study the Bible as God's Word that he is ready to claim for himself every new promise as it appears, and to risk everything on it.

In the third place, studying the Bible as the *Word of God* involves obedience—prompt, exact obedience, without asking any questions to its every precept. Obedience may seem hard, it may seem impossible, but God has commanded it and I have nothing to do but to obey and leave the results with God. If you would get the very most profit out of your Bible study resolve that from this time you will claim every clear promise and obey every plain command, and that as to the promises and commands whose intent is not yet clear you will try to get their meaning made clear.

In the fourth place studying the Bible as the *Word of God* involves studying it in God's presence. When you read a verse of Scripture hear the voice of the living God speaking directly to you in these written words. There is new power and attractiveness in the Bible when you have learned to hear a living, present Person, God our Father, Himself talking directly to you in these words. One of the most fascinating and inspiring statements in the Bible is, "*Enoch walked with God*" (Genesis 5:24). We can have God's glorious companionship any moment we please by simply opening His Word and letting the living and ever-present God speak to us through it. With what holy awe and strange and unutterable joy one studies the Bible if he studies it in this way! It is heaven come down to earth.

The eighth and last condition of the most profitable Bible study is prayerfulness. The Psalmist prayed, "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*" (*Psalms 119:18*). Every one who desires to get the greatest profit out of his Bible study needs to offer that or a similar prayer every time he undertakes the study of the Word.

Few keys open so many strong boxes that contain hidden treasure as prayer.

Few clues unravel so many difficulties.

Few microscopes will disclose so many beauties hidden from the eye of the ordinary observer.

What new light often shines from an old familiar text as you bend over it in prayer! Dr. Torrey says that he believed in studying the Bible a good deal on your knees. When one reads an entire book through on his knees—and this is easily done—that book has a new meaning and becomes a new book. One ought never to open the Bible to read it without at least lifting the heart to God in silent prayer that He will interpret it, illumine its pages by the light of His Spirit.

It is a rare privilege to study any book under the immediate guidance and instruction of its author, and this is the privilege of us all in studying the Bible. When one comes to a passage that is difficult to understand or difficult to interpret, instead of giving it up, or rushing to some learned friend, or to some commentary, he should lay that passage before God, and ask Him to explain it to him, pleading God's promise, *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering (James 1:5-6).*

It is simply wonderful how the seemingly most difficult passages become plain by this treatment.

Harry Morehouse was a remarkable Bible scholar among unlearned men in America. He used to say that whenever he came to a passage in the Bible which he could not understand, he would search through the Bible for some other passage that threw light on it, and lay it before God in prayer, and that he had never found a passage that did not yield to this treatment.

Dr. Torrey tells of a similar experience as he was making a tour of Franconian Switzerland, and visiting some of the more famous caves with ancient carvings. One day a rural letter carrier stopped us and asked if we would like to see a cave of rare beauty and interest, away from the beaten tracks of travel. Of course, yes. He led Dr. Torrey and his friend through the woods and underbrush to the mouth of the cave, and they entered. All was dark and uncanny. He discussed greatly on the beauty of the cave, telling us of altars and fantastic formations, but Dr. Torrey could see absolutely nothing.

Now and then the guide uttered for everyone to be careful for nearby was a chasm in the cave the bottom of which had never been discovered. Dr. Torrey began to fear that he might be the first discoverer of the bottom. There was nothing pleasant about the whole affair.

But then something happened in the cave. A light was found and everything became different. There were stalagmites rising from the floor to meet the stalactites as they came down from the ceiling. There were beautiful and fantastic formations on every hand, and all glistening in fairy like beauty in the brilliant light.

So it is with many a passage of Scripture. Others tell you of its beauty, but you cannot see it. It looks dark and intricate and forbidding and dangerous, but when God's own light is kindled there by prayer how different all becomes in an instant. You see a beauty that language cannot express, and that only those can appreciate who have stood there in the same light. He who would understand and love his Bible must be much in prayer. Prayer will do more than a college education to make the Bible an open and a glorious book.

How to Begin in a Personal Profitable Bible Study

First read a book of the Bible in one sitting. Go to the book of *Matthew* at the beginning of the *New Testament*. Begin reading in chapter 1 and from there read the whole book in one sitting if at all possible. Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher encourages this approach. It was his practice to read a book of the Bible in its entirety and at one sitting. It was the practice of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones that he would read a book of the Bible at least 30 times before he began to preach from it.

From reading *Matthew* go all the way through to the end of the *New Testament*, including the *Revelation*. Read the *New Testament* through completely.

If it is not possible to read a book of the Bible in one sitting then read no less than five chapters a day. But more if possible.

Once you have read the *New Testament* through go to the beginning of the Bible and read the entire Bible through completely, again a book at a time, from Genesis 1:1 to the end of the *Revelation*. Remember, read at least five chapters or more per day, which will be at least thirty-five chapters per week. More than this is better.

It is extremely important for a Christian to have a good overall understanding of the Bible. Many people wrongly study the Bible, a little here and a little there. As a result, they never really have a clear, overall view of the entire Bible. They lack a good, biblical understanding of God, of God's judgments, and of how Satan deceives. This gives a place for the devil to deceive them. It is highly recommended that a person read the entire Bible through at least once every year.

Second, read the Bible and study its various doctrines or teachings. The Bible can be broken down into subjects. Key subjects that should be considered, include doctrines as outlined in Hebrews 6:1, 2, such as the Doctrine of Regeneration, Doctrine of Faith, Doctrine of Grace, Doctrine of Repentance, Doctrine of Baptism, Doctrine of Authority and the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

Other topics may include the Doctrine of Sin, Doctrine of Pride, Doctrine of Humility, Doctrine of Fasting, Doctrine of Fear, Doctrine of the Devil, Doctrine of Mortification or Self denial Doctrine of Idolatry, Doctrine of the Trinity, Doctrine of Prayer etc.

There are hundreds of doctrines that can be examined by simply listing all the places where a particular word is used and then commenting on the *Scripture* point by point.

An example of this type of Bible study is illustrated in the following Doctrine of Grace.

Doctrine of Grace

1. The first mention of grace in the Bible is found in Genesis 6:8 where we read "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*"
2. As used in the Old Testament, grace is often used in the sense of special favor being held based upon a high estimation of someone by another person. Joseph, for example, found grace in the eyes of an officer of Pharaoh the captain of the guard. Ruth found grace in the presence of Boaz.
 - *Genesis 39:4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.*
 - *Ruth 2:10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?*
3. In the divine economy grace is what God is freely able to do and indeed what He does do for those for whom Christ has died. Mercy, the compassion of God, and love, the motive of God, unite when expressed to manifest grace, which is undeserved favor.
4. The grace of God rules out human merit for salvation.
 - *Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*
 - *Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*
5. Grace perfects forever the salvation of the elect in the sight of God.
6. Grace bestows Christ's merit and Christ's forever.
 - *Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*
 - *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
 - *Colossians 2:9-10 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*
7. Grace removes any obligation to gain merit with God by legal duties (Rom. 4:14; 6:14-15).

8. Once man was in Adam but now he is in a state of saving grace, baptized into Christ, dead unto sin but alive unto God (Rom. 6:1-10; 5:2).
9. Saving grace is a free gift of God (Rom. 5:15; Titus 3:7).
10. Grace can abound or be diminished (Rom. 5:20).
11. There is the reign or ruling principle of grace under the New Testament economy (Rom. 5:20).
12. Grace can be abused (Rom. 6:1).
13. The election to salvation is based upon the principle of grace (Rom. 11:5).
14. Paul never ceased to marvel that he was the object of God's redeeming grace (Rom. 12:3; 12:6; 15:15; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:15).
15. What we have received from God should be desired for (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2).
16. In times of personal tribulation God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).
17. It is possible to fall from the sphere of grace if dependency is made upon salvation by good works or if there is excessive sin in the life (Gal. 5:4; Jude 1:4).
18. Praise should be offered to God for His great grace (Eph. 1:6; Col. 3:16).
19. Gracious words should characterize the speech of a Christian (Col. 4:6).
20. There is a throne of grace before which the Christian is to pray (Heb. 4:16).
21. More grace is given to the humble (James 4:6).
22. Christians are to grow in the sphere of grace (2 Pet. 3:18).

If you have a Bible concordance it will be easier to extract the various words or phrases to create your own doctrinal studies. But even without a concordance the teaching of Scriptures can be done either through memory or by creating index cards and recording the verse and topic. In other words create your own concordance in miniature. It may take some years to break down the entire Bible into subjects this way, but the result can be very rewarding.

A third way to begin to study the Bible is to label thoughts or subjects in your Bible. This involves beginning at Matthew 1:1 and reading to determine what verses to group together. For example,

- Matthew 1:1 to 1:17 might be labeled “*The Genealogy of Jesus Christ.*”
- Matthew 1:18 to 1:25 might be labeled, “*The Birth of Jesus.*”
- Matthew 2:1 to 2:12 might be labeled, “*The Wise Men.*”

The outline you create in this manner can be expansive or very detailed. For example in the *Revelation*, the following titles might be used.

- Revelation 1:1 and Rev 1:2, “*Introduction to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.*”
- Revelation 1:3, “*Blessed Is He That Hears and Keeps These Things,*”
- Revelation 1:4-8 “*Grace to the Seven Churches.*”

Once you have done the entire *New Testament* this way in your Bible, go on the *Old Testament*. As you do develop your own label for the paragraph or sections and outline your study of each book of the Bible, your wisdom and knowledge should continue to grow.

A fourth method for Bible study is the creation of questions chapter by chapter and even verse by verse. Turning to 3 John 1:1-13 the following questions might be created.

1. To whom was this letter addressed? (1:1)
2. For what did “the elder” pray? (1:2)
3. What gave the writer of 3 John great joy? (1:3-4)
4. In what was the recipient of this letter faithful? (1:5)
5. What information was circulating among the people in Gaius’s church? (1:6)
6. Why were “the brothers” sent out? (1:7)
7. Why did the elder say that believers ought to show hospitality to Christians who serve God? (1:8)
8. What did Diotrephes love? (1:9)
9. What was Diotrephes doing? (1:9-10)
10. What did the elder encourage Gaius to do? (1:11)
11. What is true about people who do good and people who do evil? (1:11)
12. What was commendable about Demetrius? (1:12)
13. Why is 3 John so short? (1:13-14)
14. What did the writer of 3 John hope to do? (1:14)

Once the core questions are created from Scriptures it will be possible to create more questions for a group Bible study that are more general in nature and designed to prepare others to examine the Scriptures. For example, individuals might be asked to respond to the following.

1. What gives you the greatest joy in life?
2. What sort of people in your church are well thought of?
3. What famous people are presently the objects of malicious gossip in the newspapers?

From this opening discussion the group can study the Scriptural text with the questions created verse by verse.

At the end of the Bible text study and by way of review some closing questions can be asked such as the following.

1. What does it mean to love someone in the truth?
2. If other believers were to give a report about you, how would they describe your faithfulness?
3. What about being a believer gives you joy?
4. In what area of life do you struggle to be faithful?
5. How can we show hospitality to other Christians?
6. In what situations do we love to be first, like Diotrephes?
7. What motivates people to gossip?
8. In what areas of your life do you need to do better at “imitating good” rather than evil?
9. What can you do to improve your record of faithfulness?
10. What kind of reputation do you have at your church?

Finally, if you are using your questions for a group study in a Sunday School class or a home Bible study personal application can be made.

1. In what area of your life can you be more faithful this week?
2. To whom can you show hospitality this week?
3. In what way will you imitate good rather than evil today?

Whether or not introductory and closing questions with personal application are created to be used in a group study, do not neglect to create questions chapter by chapter and verse by verse for the books of the Bible. It takes time and patience to do this, it takes thought and concentration but it will be a profitable Bible study.

A fifth way to study the Bible is to create a chronological order of events. This study method involves labeling your Bible and grouping the same verses from the synoptic or four Gospels together in the order they happened. It includes dating the verses as to the approximate time the events took place if possible. If two older Bibles can be found it would be possible to cut and paste the different passages on separate sheets of paper to create your own flowing narrative with the parallel accounts now side by side. This sort of Bible study can be extremely rewarding in knowledge for it is not only the gospels that can be harmonized but other Scriptures with parallel accounts such as Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. These three chapters in the Bible deal with the Great Tribulation, which is of tremendous interest to many people in America and Europe.

A sixth method for studying the Bible is to phrase or group words together for the purpose of examination and meditation. This type of Bible study involves starting at the beginning of the chapter or verse. As each verse is read place a slash or a colored pencil mark after each group of words. Do the whole verse. Then study each group of words intensely. For example, look at Matthew 1:1-2.

“The book / of the generation of Jesus Christ, / the son of David, / the son of Abraham. 2- Abraham begat Isaac; / and Isaac begat Jacob; / and Jacob begat Judas/ and his brethren. “

Now notice Matthew 2:1

/-Now when Jesus was born / in Bethlehem / of Judaea / in the days of Herod / the king, / behold, there came wise men / from the east / to Jerusalem, /.

By grouping words and phrases with a slash for study and meditation your knowledge of the Word should be tremendously enhanced.

A seventh method of studying the Bible is that of memorization. Memorizing Scripture can be very helpful to a person in witnessing. Some people have a very good ability to memorize. Others have a more difficult time. Some can study a verse for a few minutes and memorize it. Others may have to take several days of going over it and over it in order to memorize it. Some teach to memorize single verses. Some teach to memorize whole chapters or books. Both approaches can be very helpful. Select chapters and passages that contain verses helpful in teaching.

- Exodus 20: 1- 17
- Psalm 23
- Matthew 5-7
- John 3:1-21
- The *Roman’s Road* setting forth the plan of salvation

- ❖ Romans 3:10
- ❖ Romans 3:23
- ❖ Romans 6:23
- ❖ Romans 5:8
- ❖ Romans 10:9-10

Remember, when reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word, Satan can be expected to fight the effort in many unexpected ways.

Dangers in Personal Bible Study

There is the danger of intellectualism. *1 Corinthians 8:1-3 says that "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 2 And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him."* While the Bible must be understood academically there is a devotional aspect to the Scriptures that must not be neglected.

There is the danger of suppressing the truth. Many people discover the Bible does not actually teach some of the beliefs that have been instilled in their hearts. When the Reformers searched the Scriptures and compared the Word of God to what the institutional church taught there was surprise. They were tempted to support and therefore suppress what the Scriptures condemn such as forbidding the eating of meat and celibacy. *1 Tim 4:1-5 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."*

There is the danger of pride. Beware of those that say the Bible does not mean what it says. Some of those who have studied Greek or Hebrew at Bible college may state that certain words in the Bible mean something other than what is written. Though they may have good intentions, this can sow doubt and confusion in the minds of those listening or reading their materials. One may say a certain word does not mean what it says in the Greek or Hebrew; two or three others may come along that have also studied Greek and Hebrew, and say that it means something else entirely. In some cases, such things have overthrown the faith of others. Beware of any one that continually does this. Occasionally referring to the Greek or Hebrew may be helpful when offering a simple clarification or perhaps a deeper insight into a verse, but it should not greatly alter the meaning or harmony in which the Scriptures were written. Remember, the Bible was written so that even a child could understand.

There is the danger of becoming Pharisaical. The Pharisees became self-righteous in part because of their knowledge of the Scriptures. They actually thought they could keep all the commandments of Moses.

There is the danger of boredom. One of the reasons for heresy is that individuals become so familiar with the Scriptures they become bored. Instead of telling the old, old story of Jesus and His love there is a sense of boredom and the need to see something that *“no one else has ever seen!”* Remember there is a body of truth entrusted to the church to declare. Jude 3 *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* Contending for the faith without being contentious, that is the goal and it can happen through Bible study.

Inductive Bible Study

The main requirement in Bible study is a willingness to slow down and really consider what the Scripture is saying. Psalms 46:10 *“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”* One of the reasons the Lord offered a gentle rebuke of Martha was that she was too busy. In Luke 10:40-11 we read that *“Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid [command] her therefore that she help me. 41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”* A.W. Tozer reminds us that time spent with God is never wasted.

When time is invested with God and a study of His Word, confidence will grow of what the Bible really teaches. There will be an increase of knowledge of God and of His ways. Personal faith will be strengthened. Such is the power of inductive Bible study.

To speak of an inductive Bible study is to speak of coming to a general conclusion based upon particular instances. For example, the Bible ascribes to God the Father certain divine attributes. A simple definition of an attribute is this: if it is true about God it is an attribute.

- The Bible says God is love (1 John 4:8). Love is one of God’s attributes.
- The Bible says that God is a spirit (John 4:24). Spirituality is a divine attribute.
- The Bible says that God knows all things (Psalm 139:2,4). Omniscience is an attribute.

Since these attributes are ascribed to the Son in particular passages and also to the Holy Spirit a general truth emerges, God is a triune God. The familiar term *“trinity”* was first coined by Theophilus, who lived from 116 to 181 AD, to express the Biblical teaching of three (tri) Persons in one (unity) God.

Through inductive Bible study the doctrine of the trinity and many other important general truths may be discerned independent of commentary, books, tapes or other study aides—as valuable and important as they are. This is not to neglect or discard what God has been pleased to reveal

to others. It is to say that if a person does not have many resources gospel truth can still be known and the historic faith of the church can be kept.

Beginning with the Basics

Inductive Bible study consists of three component parts. These three parts are observation, interpretation, and application. While each part can be considered independently they overlap.

Observation

Observation answers the question, *“What does the passage say?”* This is not always easy to understand especially upon a first reading of the Scriptures. It never has been easy for anyone. Several times during His ministry Jesus reprimanded His disciples with the words found in Mark 8:18 *“Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember?”* Though the disciples had been with Christ during His great miracles they still lost faith. They saw only what they wanted to see and forgot all else. In the study of the Bible it is possible to see only what we want to see or what we have seen so often before to the point that we yawn at the Bible stories and dismiss the need for serious study of the Scriptures. One cure for this spiritual lethargy is to engage in better observation, which means to train our spiritual eyes and mind to notice the details of the narrative. The fundamental question the student must ask constantly is, *“What does the author mean?”*

Interpretation

Interpretation answers the question, *“What does the passage mean?”* The basis for accurate interpretation is careful observation. A passage cannot be understood until it is properly observed. Interpretation is the process of discovering what the passage means. If a Scripture is properly observed the meaning will become apparent. However, if there is a careless reading of the passage, it will lead to a careless interpretation. The Mormon Church has built a practice of baptizing people on behalf of those who have already died based on 1 Corinthians 15:29. They have not observed the context of the passage and that has led to a faulty interpretation with practical consequences.

Application

Application answers the question, *“How does the meaning of this passage apply to me?”* On this point care must be taken. Usually people want to know how a particular passage of the Bible applies to them before they have even understood what the Scripture means. That is not good. First understand a verse and then apply, because in this way the life will be conformed into the image of Christ.

Application is not a third step in the inductive process as much as it is a response to being confronted with the truth and the need for gospel obedience. The basis for application is found in 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: 17 That the man of God may be*

perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” When you know what God says, what God means, and how to put God’s truths into practice, you will be equipped for every circumstance of life. To be equipped for every good work in life or totally prepared to handle every situation in a way that honors God is not only possible it is what the Lord wants for our lives.

Rules for Reading the Bible

Serious Bible study begins with selecting a book of the Bible to be examined as a whole. Each book of the Bible contains a complete message in and of itself that in turn is related to the whole Word of God and the great story of man’s ruin, redemption and generation. Therefore, having selected a particular book of the Bible observe the following rules for observation.

Prayer

First, begin with prayer. Ask the author of the Bible, God the Holy Spirit to guide the heart to the truth. John 16:13-15 *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

Identify the Context

Second, identify the context. Why? Because context always rules in interpretation. The word “*context*” means literally “*that which goes with the text.*” In the Bible, context is the words, phrases, or sentences. This context gives meaning to the particular word, phrase, or sentence and helps the reader to understand what the author is saying. If you observe what is said and pay attention to the repeated words, phrases or ideas you will clearly see the context in any book, any chapter or passage that is under consideration. Context is determined or identified by thorough, careful observation of the text. Therefore....

Observe the Obvious

When you observe the text begin by looking for ideas that are obvious or easy to see. Facts about people, places, and events should capture the imagination. They are easy to see. In John 2:1 we read *“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.”* The setting for the first miracle of Christ is set. The context is easy to see. If you keep your focus on the obvious, you will discover significant or repeated ideas; these will in turn lead to the context of the book, chapter, passage or verse being studied. However, as the text is being observed and the context is being discovered read the text objectively.

Read the Text Objectively

This point is very important because it is easy to be taught that a passage means something in particular and then the Scripture is turned to. Sure enough, there is a pre-condition to see something that is not there. In 2003 I was speaking at a conference in Indiana. I was asked to visit with a pastor to discuss the area of prophecy. He wanted to turn to Revelation 20. I said, “*Fine. But before we turn to that passage let me tell you what is NOT there.*” I did this on purpose because I knew he had been conditioned to assume many things about Revelation 20 that are not there in the context. The pastor got the message and he understood what I was trying to say. Presuppositional thinking can condition the mind to see certain things that are not in a passage at all.

The Catholic Church teaches a terrible doctrine called purgatory. According to one Catholic scholar, and I quote, “*In the New Testament Our Blessed Lord in Matthew V 26 refers to the prison from which no one is released before his debts are repaid to the last farthing.*” Turning to Matthew 5:26 we read nothing of a place of fire or of souls being purified in eternity for hundreds and thousands of years. The doctrine of purgatory is nothing but a doctrine that teaches all people go to hell including Christians. It is a terrible doctrine. And yet Catholics are taught to receive this doctrine subjectively not objectively. We say again, study the context objectively. It is not wrong to read the Bible devotionally and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to the heart but make sure the thoughts are the thoughts of God brought out from the text and not thoughts being read into the text.

Read the Bible with a Purpose

Reading with a purpose is accomplished by asking questions of the text. Like a prosecuting attorney examining a witness asks questions. There are five questions to ask.

- **Who question.** *Who wrote it? Who said it? Who are the major characters? Who are the people mentioned? To whom is the author speaking? About whom is he speaking?*
- **What question.** *What are the main events? What are the major ideas? What are the major teachings? What are these people like? What does he talk about the most? What is his purpose in saying that?*
- **When question.** *When was it written? When did this event take place? When will it happen? When did he say it? When did he do it?*
- **Where question.** *Where was this done? Where was this said? Where will it happen?*
- **Why question.** *Why was there a need for this to be written? Why was this mentioned? Why was so much or so little information devoted to this particular event or teaching? Why was this reference mentioned? Why?*
- **How question.** *How did it happen? How were the actions accomplished?*

Without asking the right questions there will be little chance of coming up with the right answers. Accurate answers will help assure correct interpretation. By way of illustration consider John 7:1. *“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.”* Answer the following questions.

1. **Who** is this passage about?

Answer.

Jesus.

2. **What** was He doing?

Answer.

He was walking.

3. **Where** was He walking?

Answer.

In Galilee, not Judea.

4. **Why** was Jesus not in Judea

Answer.

Because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

5. When was this action taking place?

Answer.

“After these things.”

Do not think you have to answer the entire W’ questions or the how question but answer as many as possible by observation.

A Bird’s Eye View

With a desire to know the Bible using the inductive method it is suggested that the study begin with a short book. The objective is to get an overview of the text. This is done in the following manner.

Begin on Your Knees

The place of prayer in proper Bible study cannot be over emphasized. There must be a constant dependence upon the Lord for understanding.

Read and Re-read the Book

Set a goal of reading the book you are considering 5-15 times in the course of your study. The more you read the more you will remember. The first time you read just read the narrative without trying to figure out the difficult passages. They will become more clear in time. Just read and re-read the book.

Identify the Type of Literature

The type of literature determines the way you will handle the text. For example, the book of the Revelation is written in symbolic language. It was written in a style known as apocalyptic literature. Therefore the understanding of the Revelation is different than the Pastoral Epistles. In like manner Hebrew poetry such as the Psalms is different from the historical books such as Kings and Chronicles. When reading through the book determine which of the following best describes the text you are examining.

- **Is it historical?** The book of Genesis sets forth the history of God's creation; the book of Judges records the period of Israel under the judges; Acts reveals the spread of the gospel by the church in the first century.
- **Is it biographical?** The book of Luke gives a chronology of the life and ministry of Christ.
- **Is it poetic?** The book of Psalms is Hebrew poetry.
- **Is it proverbial?** The book of Proverbs is wisdom literature and so cannot be interpreted as prophecy or doctrinal.
- **Is it prophetic?** The book of Daniel and the Revelation are books of prophecy.
- **Is the book an epistle (letter)?**
- **Is there a combination of styles within the text?**

Once a determination has been made of the type of literature the next step is to.....

Let the Text Speak for Itself

So many times the context will explain or interpret the obscure text. In Matthew 13:3 we read that Jesus "*spake many things unto them in parables.*" In verses 18-23 of the same chapter we read the Lord's own interpretation of His parable. Let the text speak for itself.

Discover Facts in the Text about People and Events

This can be done in the following manner.

- **Identify the obvious names.** If possible, on a sheet of paper, list all of the proper names and try to identify them from the text. (*Ready Reference Study Bible*)

Ask the Five W's and an H (How) Questions

- **Who** is the author? Who is the book addressed to? Who is this person?
 - **What** does he say about himself? What are his circumstances?
 - **Where** is he?
 - **Why** is he there?
 - **When** in his life is he writing?
- ❖ **Identify the obvious events.** For example, in the book of Genesis in the first eleven chapters there are four great events: the creation of the world; the temptation to sin; the decision to disobey; and the flood. While people are mentioned, the great events are the focus of attention. Therefore ask:
- ❖ **What** is happening?
 - ❖ **Where** is it happening and when?
 - ❖ **Who** is involved?
 - ❖ **What** are the consequences of this event?

Mark the Key Words and Phrases

As the text is read and the main events are looked for, you will begin to notice that certain key words and / or phrases are repeated throughout the book. A key word or phrase is one in which, when removed, leaves the text unclear. For example, in 1 John the words “love”, “sin”, “abide, and “know” are repeated throughout the book, whereas “fellowship” is repeated once. The key words are to be noted along with any synonyms. A synonym is another way of saying the same thing. For example in 2 Timothy there are several synonyms used for “suffering.”

- *2 Timothy 1:16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my **chain**:*
- *2 Timothy 2:3 Thou therefore endure **hardness**, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*
- *2 Timothy 3:11 **Persecutions**, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

The more a word is repeated, the more obvious it becomes that the word represents a subject. The more that subject is repeated, the more obvious it becomes that the subject represents a theme in the book. As key words are repeated in Scripture so are key phrases and statements. For example in the book of Joshua there is this phrase: “*And the children of Israel did evil in the*

sight of the LORD...” (Judges 2:11, 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). It is important to pay attention to key words and phrases because they reveal the intended message of the author and how he will accomplish its purpose. Every key word will answer one of the questions: who, what, when, where, why or how.

Discern the Main Theme of the Book

By reading the text, by observing key words and phrases the main theme of the book comes into focus. No theme has to be ascribed or given to a book, it will reveal itself. The shorter the book the easier it will be to discern the theme of which you can create a simple chart for your own future reference at a glance.

Discover the Theme of Each Chapter

What is done for the book can be done for the chapter. Every chapter in the Bible has a theme or a main idea. This theme might be independent of the overall theme of the book or it might relate. Eventually as you study the book chapter by chapter, you will be able to choose a key verse for each chapter.

Identify Various Divisions of the Book

Not every book in the Bible has clearly defined segments but most do. A book might be divided according to date, places, topics, doctrines, reigns of kings, major characters or events. For example, turning to 3 John, three divisions can be observed. In verses 1-8 John writes about a man named Gaius. In verses 9-11 he speaks about Diotrephes. In verse 12 he mentions Demetrius. Finally in verses 13-14 he comes back to himself. Another example is the book of Romans. Chapters 1-11 are doctrinal; chapters 12-16 are practical. In the Revelation John sets forth the divisions of his work in 1:19. “*Write the things which thou hast seen [chapter 1], and the things which are [chapters 2-3], and the things which shall be hereafter [chapters 4-22].*” While some of your thoughts will differ from others in terminology, the labor will be your own and the blessing as well. With a general overview in mind attention can turn next to focusing on the details.

Focusing on the Details

As there are specific steps to take in gaining a general overview of a book so there are specific steps for detailed observation of the content of each chapter.

Remember to pray. Never stop praying. Pray without ceasing.

Keep the context in mind. Do not neglect, forget, or set aside what has been labored for up to this point. Remember that each chapter has a theme, a key verse and a truth.

Ask once more the five W's and H questions. While this may seem repetitious it is how everyone learns. Repetition and review are an integral part of the learning process. Therefore, cultivate a questioning mindset. **Who** spoke it? *About whom? Who are the major characters? Who are the people mentioned? To whom is the author speaking?* **What** are the main events? *What are the major ideas? What are the major teachings? What does the author talk about the most? What is his purpose in saying what he did?* **Where** was this done? *Where was this said? Where will this happen?* **Why** was there a need for this to be written? *Why was this mentioned? Why was it not mentioned? Why was so much or so little said about a topic? Why was this reference mentioned?* **How** is it done? *How is this truth illustrated?*

Look for and mark key words and phrases. In 2 Timothy 1 a key word is God. *2 Timothy 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."* Now....

List what can be learned about each word. Look what can be learned about God in 2 Timothy 1.

God.

- It is God that made Paul an apostle (1:1).
- It is God that gives grace, mercy and peace (1:2).
- It is God that is the Father (1:2).
- It is God that is thanked and served (1:3).
- It is God that gives gifts (1:6).
- It is God that does not give a spirit of timidity (1:7).
- It is God that gives a spirit of power, love and discipline (1:7).
- It is God that gives power for suffering (1:8).
- It is God that saved us (1:9).
- It is God that called us (1:9).

In examining these verses it is noticed that the subject of salvation comes into view. A new topic can be developed.

Salvation.

- God saved us (1:9).
- God called us with a holy calling (1:9) and that not according to our works but His power and grace.
- Salvation was granted to us in Christ (1:9) and that from all eternity.
- The appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ (1:10) has revealed salvation.

In this way, like a rose unfolding, the Scriptures open themselves up to our hearts.

Look for contrasts, comparisons, terms of conclusion and expressions of time. A contrast is an evaluation of things that are different or opposite in the context being viewed. Many times a contrast is indicated by the word “*but*.” For example. In 2 Timothy 1:7 we read, “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*”

Contrast ideas and not just words. Care must be taken to make sure ideas are being contrasted and not just words. For instance. In 2 Timothy 1:3 Paul says that he remembers the believers night and day. “*I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.*” This is not a contrast of words for Paul is saying that in both parts of the day he is praying for the people. However in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 using the same words Paul contrasts a thought between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. “*Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*”

There are places where there is not a contrast. While considering this matter of making contrasts between words and ideas be careful not to make a dramatic distinctions in Scripture where none exists. Some students of the Bible see a dramatic distinction between “*the kingdom of God*” and “*the kingdom of heaven*”. Upon examination this dramatic contrast cannot be found. There are several passages that show that *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven* are synonymous. The first words out of John the Baptist's mouth are recorded in Matthew 3:2 “*And [John preached] saying, Repent ye: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.*” So we immediately see that the kingdom of heaven was said to be at hand. Jesus basically reiterated this identical statement when His ministry began. In Matthew 4:17 we read, “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.*” Here is the harmony of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven in the gospels. Be careful of making dramatic distinctions where none exist. Where a contrast does exist it is important. The words “*but*”, “*however*” or “*nevertheless*” show a contrast.

Words of comparison. As there are words of contrast so there are words of comparison. A comparison refers to things that are similar or alike. Determine, if possible the spiritual truth being revealed through the comparison. For example, in 2 Timothy 2:3 we read these words. “*Thou therefore endure hardness [suffering], as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*” A comparison is made between the sufferings of Christ and a soldier.

Expression of time. Words such as “*then*”, “*after this*”, “*until*” and “*when*” show timing or sequence of events. Make a note of time references in the text. John 2:12 “*After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.*” When? After the first miracle in Cana of Galilee.

Terms of conclusion and result. Words such as “*therefore*”, “*for*”, “*so that*” and “*for this reason*” indicate that a conclusion or summary is being made or that a result is being stated. Therefore, watch for such terms. Consider an example of this from 2 Timothy 1:7-8. “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8 Be not thou*

therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” Because God has given to Christians a spirit of power, love and discipline rather than a spirit of fear or timidity believers are not to be ashamed of the testimony of Christ. Notice other terms of conclusion or result in 2 Timothy 1:4; 1:6; and 1:12).

Concluding Observations. A book of the Bible goes from the whole to the parts. Begin by looking at the whole book, getting an overview of the same and discover its theme. Move to its parts by examining the chapters. Discover the chapter themes. Then move to the chapter parts found in the paragraphs and identify their themes. Create an outline from the book theme to the chapter theme to the paragraph theme.

Book – Theme

Chapter 1 – Theme

Paragraph 1 – Theme

Paragraph 2 – Theme

Paragraph 3 – Theme

Chapter 2 – Theme

Paragraph 1 – Theme

Paragraph 2 – Theme

Chapter 3 – Theme

Paragraph 1 – Theme

Paragraph 2 – Theme

Paragraph 3 – Theme

Leader's Study Guide

Review

Part 1

Questions and Answer.

1. List eight conditions for Bible study.

Answer.

- The first of the fundamental conditions of having a profitable Bible study is that the student be born again.
- The second condition of the most profitable study is a love for the Bible.
- The third condition is willingness to do hard work.
- The fourth condition is a will wholly surrendered to God.
- The fifth condition is very closely related to the fourth. The student of the *Bible* who would get the greatest profit out of his studies must be obedient to its teachings as soon as he sees them.
- The sixth condition is a childlike mind.
- The seventh condition of studying the Bible to the greatest profit is that we study it as the Word of God.
- The eighth and last condition of the most profitable *Bible* study is prayerfulness.

2. What four principles undergird studying the Bible as the Word of God?

Answer.

- First, it involves the unquestioning acceptance of its teachings when definitely understood, even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible.
- Second, studying the Bible as the Word of God involves absolute reliance on all its promises in all their length and breadth.
- In the third place, studying the *Bible* as the *Word of God* involves obedience—prompt, exact obedience, without asking any questions to its every precept.

- In the fourth place studying the *Bible* as the *Word of God* involves studying it in God's presence.
3. List seven ways that a study of the Bible should begin.

Answer.

- First read a book of the *Bible* in one sitting.
 - Second, read the *Bible* and study its various doctrines or teachings.
 - A third way to begin to study the Bible is to label thoughts or subjects in your Bible.
 - A fourth method for *Bible* study is the creation of questions chapter by chapter and even verse by verse.
 - A fifth way to study the Bible is to create a chronological order of events.
 - A sixth method for studying the *Bible* is to phrase or group words together for the purpose of examination and meditation.
 - A seventh method of studying the *Bible* is that of memorization.
4. What five dangers exist in personal Bible study?

Answer.

- There is the danger of intellectualism.
 - There is the danger of suppressing the truth.
 - There is the danger of pride.
 - There is the danger of becoming Pharisaical.
 - There is the danger of boredom.
5. List five rules for reading the Bible.

Answer.

- First, begin with prayer.
 - Second, identify the context.
 - Third, observe the obvious.
 - Fourth, read the text objectively.
 - Fifth, read the Bible with a purpose.
6. What are the five W questions and the one H question?

Answer.

- *Who question. Who wrote it? Who said it? Who are the major characters? Who are the people mentioned? To whom is the author speaking? About whom is he speaking?*
- *What question. What are the main events? What are the major ideas? What are the major teachings? What are these people like? What does he talk about the most? What is his purpose in saying that?*
- *When question. When was it written? When did this event take place? When will it happen? When did he say it? When did he do it?*
- *Where question. Where was this done? Where was this said? Where will it happen?*
- *Why question. Why was there a need for this to be written? Why was this mentioned? Why was so much or so little information devoted to this particular event or teaching? Why was this reference mentioned? Why?*
- *How question. How did it happen? How were the actions accomplished?*

7. List six types of literature that can be found in the Bible.

Answer.

- Historical
 - Biographical
 - Poetry
 - Proverbs
 - Prophecy
 - Epistles
8. Once a determination has been made of the type of literature what are the next six steps that should be taken?
- Let the text speak for itself.
 - Discover something in the text about the people and events.
 - Mark the key words and phrases.
 - Discern the main theme of the text.
 - Discover the theme of each chapter.
 - Identify any divisions of the narrative.

9. In trying to discover the facts in a given text what three things should be done?

- Identify the obvious names.
- Ask the five W's and the one H questions to see if they apply.
 - ❖ Who?
 - ❖ What?
 - ❖ Where?
 - ❖ Why?
 - ❖ When?
 - ❖ How?

- Identify the obvious events by asking the following questions.
 - ❖ What is happening?
 - ❖ Where is it happening and when?
 - ❖ Who is involved?
 - ❖ What are the consequences of this event?

10. What should be marked in particular?

Answer.

Key words and phrases are to be marked.

11. What should be discerned, discovered and divided?

Answer.

Discern the main theme of the Bible, discover the theme of each chapter and identify the various divisions of the book.

12. When making a contrast between words and ideas what care must be taken?

Answer.

Care must be taken to make sure ideas are being contrasted and not just words.

13. Provide one example where some have made a false comparison and contrast.

- Some students of the Bible have imagined a dramatic distinction between *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven* suggesting that the kingdom of God has reference mainly to national Israel and the kingdom of heaven refers to the church. However, upon examination this dramatic contrast cannot be found. There are passages that show that *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven* are synonymous. For example, the first words out of John the Baptist's mouth are recorded in Matthew 3:2 "And [John preached]

saying, *Repent ye: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.*” We immediately see that the kingdom of heaven was said to be at hand. Jesus basically reiterated this identical statement when His ministry began. In Matthew 4:17 we read, “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.*” Here is the harmony of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven in the gospels.

Personal Reflection and Application.

1. Do you believe the Bible is the literal, infallible and eternal *Word of God*? If so, why and if not why not?
2. Do you believe the Bible contains the solution to every human problem or should Christians also be dependent upon worldly counselors to deal with problems of the soul?
3. Write out a plan for personal Bible study on a daily basis and show that plan to someone to who you are spiritually accountable. Include in this plan a structure for reading the Bible through in one year.
4. How much of the Bible can the person who is not a Christian understand?
5. Do you think there are parts of the Bible which Christians will never be able to fully comprehend? If so, provide an example. And if not, on what basis do you believe every verse of the Bible is comprehensible?

Memory Work.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Part 2
Interpretation

How to Study the Bible

The Principles which Guide Biblical Interpretation

Having learned the principles of observation, attention can be turned to those principles which guide the interpretation of the passage for the heart wants to know what God has said but understand what the Lord has said as well. During the days of Christ the Scribes and the Pharisees were great students of the Bible. They knew what the Bible said as far as the letter of the law but they did not understand the meaning of *Scripture* as revealed by the questions they would ask Jesus or the statements they made. One night a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus asked Jesus how it was possible for a man to be born again. Jesus responded by saying in John 3:10 “*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*” The implication is that Nicodemus should have known. But he lacked understanding. His interpretation of the Scriptures was flawed. With this in mind consider seven basic principles to help guide the interpretation of the Bible.

Principle 1

Remember that Context Rules

The context of a passage is the text that surrounds the word, phrase, verse or teaching. A question needs to be asked. Specifically, “*Is my interpretation of a particular verse or section consistent with the theme of the chapter, book and the whole of the Bible?*” A belief in polygamy will certainly not be justified simply by appealing to a passage that lists the multiple wives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David or Solomon for the whole of the Bible condemns the taking of many wives. 2 Timothy 2:16 teaches ministers to “*shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*” Does this mean that ministers cannot use sanctified humor in the pulpit? No, not in context because the understanding of the passage has to do with the gospel and the need to handle it accurately.

Principle 2

Always Seek the Full Counsel of the Bible

As you read the Bible and study it carefully you will become more familiar with the whole counsel of God’s Word and will be able to discern if a teaching is biblical or not. For example. In John 15:7 Jesus says, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” Does that mean you can ask God for anything at all and He will—He must—give it? Not at all! The Bible has much more to say about prayer to include asking according to God’s will (1 John 5:14) and asking with the right motivation (James 4:3).

Principle 3

The Scripture Will Never Contradict Itself

Conservative Bible teachers have maintained that the Bible holds no contradictions. Therefore, it is not possible to declare the Bible teaches a particular doctrine in one place and then hold to an interpretation that is not consistent with that text. If Acts 1:11 says that Christ is coming in the same manner that He went away then any interpretation that argues for a secret silent coming of the Lord must be based on an equally clear passage. If Hebrews 9:28 says that Jesus is coming the second time for all who believe then any teaching that introduces a third coming of Christ into the Christian consciousness must have a clear Scriptural teaching as well. They are consistent. The interpretation of them should be the same.

Principle 4

Never Base an Interpretation on an Unclear Passage

An unclear passage is one in which the meaning is not clear. For many years I have been asking individuals to show me a clear passage in the Bible that says that some of God's people will suffer through a specific seven year Great Tribulation period or that the earth as a whole will be put through a specific time period of suffering minus the Christians and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In America these ideas are part of a very popular teaching. But what is the evidence? I once asked a Catholic priest to show me where the doctrine of purgatory was taught in the Bible. On another occasion I asked a female Lutheran pastor how she could justify from the Bible her role as an ordained minister. My objective was not to be argumentative in these matters but to discover how others interpret the Bible and how they come to such positions. I need to be challenged in my thinking, and sometimes the Lord allows me to challenge the thinking of others. Over the years I have discovered that many current religious beliefs seem to be based upon obscure passages of Scripture or passage taken out of context. As a result new systems of theology emerge while other systems of theology keep changing—but truth should not change. I say again, do not base doctrine on an obscure passage of *Scripture*.

Principle 5

Interpret the Bible Literally

I will say this with some hesitation because there are many styles and literary devices used by the writers of Scripture to interpret the Bible literally. However, sometimes pressing for a literal interpretation can create misunderstanding and anger as reflected in John 2:18-22. *“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? 19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”* Scripture must be interpreted according to the

literary style in context but the literal meaning must be given a place of priority. Historically the church has gotten itself into a lot of trouble by forgetting the authors had something literal to say in recording the miracles of the Bible and the doctrines of Scripture. I like the man who said, *“I believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale because the Bible teaches it. And if the Bible says that Jonah swallowed the whale I would believe that too.”*

Principle 6

Look for the Author’s Intended Meaning

The authors of the Bible had a specific message for their generation and for the ages to come. It is a holy duty to discover that abiding message to mankind.

Principle 7

Consider What Other Christians Believe

Principle 7 is a call for humility. If you ever discover something that no one else has ever seen before, it should be suspect and for this reason. How can the church contend for the faith as it is commanded, if the faith is not known for more than 2000 years? Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. I do believe in a completed revelation. All that God has to say to mankind has been said until Jesus returns. It is as simple as that. One distinguishing mark of every cult is that it introduces new revelations from God. The mark of every heresy is that it departs from the historic faith.

Conclusion

There is enough in Scripture to satisfy the heart and meet every need while giving guidance in every situation.

Leader's Study Guide

Review

Part 2

Questions and Answers.

1. What seven principles should guide the interpretation of the Bible?

Answer.

- Remember that context rules.
- Always seek the full counsel of the Bible.
- Remember that the Scripture will never contradict itself.
- Never base an interpretation on an unclear passage.
- Interpret the Bible literally or in a plain sense.
- Look for the author's intended meaning.
- Consider what other Christians believe.

2. Which principle teaches the importance of knowing what surrounding passages say?

Answer.

Principle 1 stresses the importance of context.

3. Which principle maintains the Bible will not say one thing in one place and something opposite in another place?

Answer.

Principle 3 states the Scriptures will never contradict each other.

Answer.

4. Write out the *Scripture* that commands Christians to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Answer.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Personal Reflection and Application.

1. Do you believe there are spiritual special revelations the Lord reveals to people that no one else has ever seen? If so, give an example. Since the canon of Scripture is complete, is there danger in believing in a present progressive revelation?
2. Provide an example of a popular teaching in the church which is taken out of context in the Bible.
3. Have you ever had to change your doctrinal position because you came to understand you had been taught incorrectly or you had misunderstood a portion of Scripture? If so give an example.
4. To what extent should the teachings of others be valued?
5. Do you believe the Bible contains any contradictions? If so, provide an illustration. How would contradictions in the Bible affect a person's faith?
6. Provide two examples from *Scripture* how the hearers of Jesus took His words literally when a symbolic understanding was intended.

Memory Work.

Psalms 86:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

Part 3
Personal Application

How to Study the Bible

Personal Application

As observation leads to interpretation through an inductive study of the Bible so these unite to move the heart to personal application. The objective in making personal application is to transform the life. Once a person knows what a passage means there is a responsibility to live it. *2 Timothy 2:15* “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Personal application of the Word of God to life is the natural outworking of observation and correct interpretation. No matter how much a person may learn about the Bible if there is no personal application of its principles to the life then all the study will become meaningless and fruitless. There can be no confidence of salvation or heaven. The apostle James said that anyone who believes they can know the Bible and not obey it is self-deceived. “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*” (*James 1:22-25*). Application answers these questions.

- *How does the meaning of this passage apply to me?*
- *What truths am I to embrace or believe?*
- *What change should I make in my belief and in my life?*

If the Scriptures have been given for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction or training in righteousness that the man or woman of God might be mature then the matter of making personal application becomes very important (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*).

- **For doctrine** (teaching). Doctrine is what the Bible says on any particular subject. Many times during a normal week I am asked what the Bible teaches about a particular matter.
- **Reproof.** The Word of God can expose areas in our thinking and behavior that is not pleasing to the Lord.
- **Correction.** God does not just tell people what they do wrong; He expects there to be an adjustment or conformity to His will. If the heart does not receive reproof and corrects behavior then it will grow hard and harder and harder still.
- **Training in righteousness.** Through teachings and commands, by promises and exhortation, with warning and biblical examples the Lord trains His children.

In making personal application of the Scriptures to life care should be taken.

- **Care must be taken not to dismiss a gospel command as being of no significance.** When I was in Fiji a very good pastor took offense when some of the young people and ladies hugged me as I was leaving. He had made mention of the fact that in the Indian culture there was no showing of affection like that for it offended people. My response was this. There are many Christian practices and beliefs that offend any given culture. Nevertheless, the beliefs and practices set forth in the Scripture must be honored. Four times in Scripture the command comes to greet one another with affection.
 - ❖ *Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*
 - ❖ *1 Corinthians 16:20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*
 - ❖ *2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.*
 - ❖ *1 Thessalonians 5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*

There is a principle at stake here and that is for believers to show affection one to another. It may be a handshake instead of a kiss but the concept cannot be dismissed. If I did nothing else when I was in Fiji I think I helped at least one congregation show some affection one to another in the name of Christ.

- **Care must be taken not to try to make personal application of a passage that in context would mean something else.** I have known people to ask God for divine guidance on a matter, go to the Bible, open the Scriptures and read the first verse that comes to mind—and take that as a measure of being led of God. Something like that can be dangerous. I heard the story of a man who tried to find God’s will. He prayed and then he opened his Bible and read the Words in Matthew 27: 3 of how Judas went “*and hanged himself.*” Well he knew that could not be right so he thought he would try again. He opened his Bible put his finger on a text and noticed the words of Matthew 3:11, “*do likewise.*” That did not seem to be quite right so he thought he would try again. He opened his Bible and read in John 13:27, “*What thou hast to do, do quickly.*”
- **Care must be taken to bring balance to the Christian life.** It is possible to make application of some parts of Scripture while neglecting others. Some people for example might like to study to show themselves approved unto God but neglect to witness. Some might enter into times of praise and prayer to the neglect of legitimate daily duties. I know a man who likes to talk about the Lord all the day long, but he will not work at a steady job even though he could. The result is that his wife and children suffer. Never forget that observation, interpretation and correct application will lead to transformation.

*“O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.*

*O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee,
Blessèd Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.*

*O to be like Thee! Full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind,
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wandering sinner to find.*

*O to be like Thee! Lowly in spirit,
Holy and harmless, patient and brave;
Meekly enduring cruel reproaches,
Willing to suffer others to save.*

*O to be like Thee! Lord, I am coming
Now to receive anointing divine;
All that I am and have I am bringing,
Lord, from this moment all shall be Thine.*

*O to be like Thee! While I am pleading,
Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love;
Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling,
Fit me for life and heaven above.”*

Thomas O. Chishom

Leader's Study Guide

Review

Part 3

Questions and Answers.

1. What is the main objective in making personal application of the Word of God?

Answer.

The objective in making personal application is to transform the life.

2. What three questions does application answer?

Answer.

- *How does the meaning of this passage apply to me?*
- *What truths am I to embrace or believe?*
- *What change should I make in my belief and in my life?*

3. List four benefits of personal Bible study.

Answer.

- For doctrine (teaching).
- Reproof.
- Correction.
- Training in righteousness.

4. List three cares that should be taken in studying Scripture?

Answer.

- Care must be taken not to dismiss a gospel command as being of no significance.
- Care must be taken not to try to make personal application of a passage that in context would mean something else.
- Care must be taken to bring balance to the Christian life.

5. According to the Scriptures how are Christians to greet one another?

Answer.

- ❖ *Romans 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*
- ❖ *1 Corinthians 16:20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*
- ❖ *2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.*
- ❖ *1 Thessalonians 5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*

Personal Reflection and Application.

1. What should be done when a cultural taboo comes into conflict with the principles of the Word of God?
2. Give an example of how the Word of God has corrected some behavior of yours.
3. What is the greatest doctrinal truth you have learned from Scripture?
4. In what area do you need balance in your Christian life? Please be specific.
5. Is there any biblical command you are uncomfortable with? If so please share. If not, is it your testimony that you want to obey every gospel commandment in order to be like Jesus?

Memory Work.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.