



SCRIPTURE'S CLARITY

"The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it." (Wayne A. Grudem, Bible Doctrine, pg. 52)

A. The Bible clearly _____ its own _____

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Deut 6:6-7

the testimony of the Lord is sure,

making wise the simple;

Ps 19:7

B. _____ for right understanding

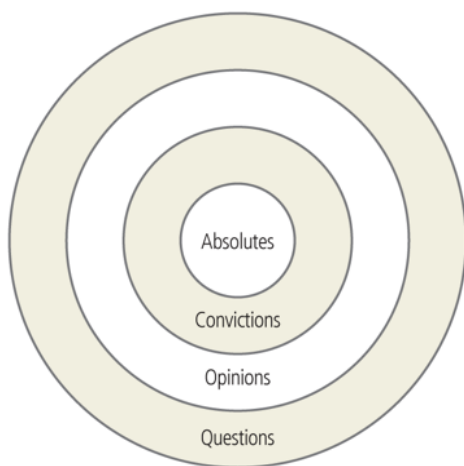
The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 2:14-16

"Thus, although the New Testament authors affirm that the Bible in itself is written clearly, they also affirm that it will not be understood rightly by those who are unwilling to receive its teachings. Scripture is able to be understood by all unbelievers who will read it sincerely seeking salvation, and by all believers who will read it while seeking God's help in understanding it." (Wayne A. Grudem, Bible Doctrine, pg. 51-52)

C. What about disagreements about what the Bible says?

I. The Bible is _____ clear, but not _____ clear across all biblical topics



1. Absolutes define the core beliefs of the Christian faith;
2. Convictions, while not core beliefs, may have significant impact on the health and effectiveness of the church;
3. Opinions are less-clear issues that generally are not worth dividing over;
4. Questions are currently unsettled issues.

How are issues categorized? 7 considerations:

1. Biblical clarity
2. Relevance to the character of God
3. Relevance to the essence of the gospel
4. Biblical frequency and significance (how often in Scripture it is taught, and what weight Scripture places upon it)
5. Effect on other doctrines
6. Consensus among Christians (past and present)
7. Effect on personal and church life.

“The ability to rightly discern the difference between core doctrines and legitimately disputable matters will keep the church from either compromising important truth or needlessly dividing over peripheral issues.”¹

II. Ultimately, the problem is NOT _____ ... The problem is _____

When we misunderstand the Bible, the problem lies with:

a) Our _____

As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Heb 3:15

¹ This entire section was taken from the ESV Study Bible, pg 2507

b) Our _____

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

2 Pet 3:15-16

D. How should we respond?

I. Be _____. The Bible is clear!

the testimony of the Lord is sure,

making wise the simple;

Ps 19:7

II. _____ God. This is the _____ of wisdom.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;

fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov 1:7

Prayer Response

"Help us tremble before you especially when _____"

III. _____ hard to _____ handle God's Word

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Tim 3:15

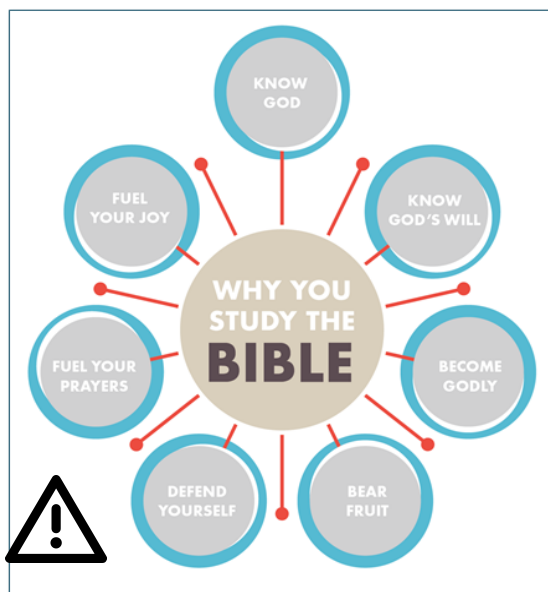
The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Acts 17:10-11

1. SCRIPTURE'S INTERPRETATION

A. WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

- To Know God (1 Sam. 3:7)
- To Know God's Will (1 Thes 4:3 & 5:18)
- To Grow in Godliness (2 Tim. 3:16 & Cor. 3:18)
- To Defend Ourselves (Eph. 6:17)
- To Be Fruitful (2 Tim. 3:17; Psa. 1:2-3; Matt. 13:23)
- For Your Joy (Psa. 119:162)
- To Fuel Your Prayers (1 John 4:14-15 & John 15:7-11)



Even though we may not fully understand every minute detail of Scripture, we can understand - through the use of _____ means - the main things the Bible is meant to communicate to us.

You can understand what God has said, because God is not an _____ communicator.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

B. HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Before we get to "what does this passage mean to me" we must ask the primary question "what does this passage mean?" What did it mean to the original author - what was their intent - what did they want their readers to understand?

To be sure, the Bible is FOR you. But it is not primarily about you. The Bible is all about God - and primarily about pointing us to Jesus Christ!

"_____ is the science that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation."²

The proper method of interpreting the Bible follows these 3 steps:

- I. **OBSERVE:** "What does the passage say?"
- II. **INTERPRET:** "What does the passage mean?"
- III. **APPLY:** "How does the passage transform us?"

I. OBSERVE: "What does the passage say?"

"The quality of your interpretation will always depend on the quality of your observation." (Hendricks)



KEY for this section: MOVE FROM _____ TO _____

We observe by noticing and asking questions of the text.

Your main focus at this stage is the text in front of you. Note the characters, content and context.

² Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p.11

A. STRUCTURE (Paragraphs) - BIG

- What is the tone of the passage?
- What themes are repeated?
- What structure can I see in the text? Is it grouped or arranged a certain way?
- Are there transitions in the text? Does the focus shift or does the tone change?
- What is this section telling me? Is it describing something or prescribing something to me? (indicative or imperative?)
- Who are the characters in the text?

B. SENTENCES (Verses) - MEDIUM

- Is there anything of note about the order of words or how the sentence is constructed?
- What do I observe about the grammar? What is the main verb? Who/what is the subject/object? Is anything modifying the verb (adverb)? What are the adjectives (descriptive words)?
- What are the linking words? (conjunctions - e.g. "and, or, but, then, therefore, so that, etc...")
- Are there any OT references, quotes or allusions in the text?

C. WORDS (Phrases) - SMALL

- What words stand out to me?
- Are any words repeated - either exactly or in synonyms?
- Are there any words that are equated to each other?
- Are there words that are opposite to each other (antonyms)?
- Are there any words I don't understand?
- Are there any words that might have multiple definitions/meanings?

At this point you are simply making observations. You're looking. Note down your observations. Note down things that are confusing, surprising, interesting, etc. Don't try to _____ them as yet.

II. INTERPRET: "What does the passage mean?"



Key for this section: CONTEXT IS _____

Your main focus at this stage is the author's intent. How do the characters, content and context convey meaning?

"...do unto authors as you would have them do unto you." (John Piper)

A. STRUCTURE (Paragraphs) - BIG

- Where do these paragraphs occur in the book/letter? How does this affect how we read it?
- What is the genre of this section of Scripture? (law, narrative, poetry, letter, proverb, etc.)
- What is the historical time period and cultural environment in which it was written? How does that inform me?
- Who was the original author and audience? Who wrote it and to whom was it written?
- Does the overall tone affect how I read this passage or change its meaning?
- Are certain themes repeated? Why is this theme important in this passage?
- Is the author drawing my attention to something by the arrangement of the material?
- Is it telling me to _____ something or to _____ something?

B. SENTENCES (Syntax) - MEDIUM

- What are the verse(s) immediately before and after a passage? - does this affect the way you read the sentence? What information does it give you to help make sense of that sentence?
- Is there anything of note about the order of words or how the sentence is constructed? - perhaps the order of a list of things might indicate the order of importance or priority. Perhaps it is constructed oddly, is there a reason why?
- OT references/quotes/allusions – how does the context of the OT quote inform the text we’re studying?
- What do I observe about the grammar? What is the main verb? - A simple tip for finding the main verb (as it may not be as obvious in English) is to ask “what is the intended outcome or take-away of the sentence?”
- What are the linking words? – How do the linking words relate the different clauses or ideas in the sentences? Do they oppose them to each other (but/on the other hand)? Do they connect them (and/also)? Does it build upon one another (additionally/furthermore)? Does one explain the other (because/for)? Does it state the purpose (in order that/so that)?

C. WORDS (Semantics) - SMALL

- What is the significance of the words I noted in my observations?
- Look up words you don’t understand.
- What are the possible range of meanings for this word? What makes the most sense in context?
- Look for answers first in the text itself. Often times the text answers its own questions if we keep on reading.



Watch out for hanging too much on just one word alone without proper warrant from its context and the entire testimony of scripture - remember the first rule: context is king! When in doubt, consult a Study Bible or commentary.

III. APPLY: “How does this passage transform us?”




A. SUMMARIZE

- What main point(s) has the text made? What’s the big idea?
- What was the argument why we should believe the main point?
- What were the important verses/sentences in this text?
- What were the important words/phrases?
- How would I explain this passage to a non-Christian? (missional aspect) or my 10-year old nephew? (discipleship aspect)

B. HOW DOES IT TRANSFORM US?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)

1. **HEAD:** How does the Word shape my mind?
2. **HEART:** How does the Word shape my affections?
3. **HANDS:** How does the Word shape my actions?

 HEAD	ALLOWING THE WORD TO SHAPE MY MIND <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT GOD'S NATURE?• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT MYSELF IN RELATION TO GOD?• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT DOCTRINE OR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?
 HEART	ALLOWING THE WORD TO SHAPE MY AFFECTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TELL ME TO FEEL?• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TELL ME TO LOVE?• WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TELL ME TO HATE?
 HANDS	ALLOWING THE WORD TO SHAPE MY ACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO I HAVE ANY SIN THAT NEEDS TO BE CONFESSED?• IS THERE AN EXPLICIT COMMAND THAT NEEDS TO BE OBEYED?• IS THERE AN EXAMPLE THAT I NEED TO FOLLOW?• HOW CAN I ADVANCE GOD'S KINGDOM BASED ON THIS PASSAGE?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

On how to study the Bible:



- **A Visual Theology Guide to the Bible** by Tim Challies (Beginner)
- **Knowing Scripture** by R.C. Sproul (Beginner)
- **The Bible Study Handbook** by Lindsay Olesberg (Intermediate)
- **Inductive Bible Study** by Andreas Kostenberger (Advanced)

Bible Study Tools:

- **ESV Study Bible** by Crossway
- **The Believer's Bible Commentary** by William MacDonald
- **Best Commentaries List** – search on Challies & Ligonier
- **Bible Software Apps** – LOGOS, BibleWords, Accordance
- **Online FREE:** BibleStudyTools.com, DesiringGod.org (check out Look at the Book), Bible.org, BibleProject.com