

# How to Study the Bible

## The Method

“Method is ‘methodicalness.’ That is, it involves taking certain steps in a certain order to guarantee a certain result. Not just any steps; not just any order; not just any result.” (Howard G. Hendricks. *Living by the Book*, p. 35.)

### **Observation**

This step asks the question, *What do I see?* The minute you approach the scriptures you ask, “What are the facts?” You search out every detail in the text like a detective.

### **Interpretation**

Here you ask and answer the question, *What does it mean?* This question can only be asked and answered after you have exhausted the text through observation.

### **Application**

Here you ask the question, *How does it work?* If you have poured time into the first two steps, then this one will naturally follow through prayer.

## Observation

The majority of your time will be spent in this step. If you do this well then the interpretation and application will just naturally follow. Many wrong theologies have been born out of a lack of observation or laziness in their observations.

### **How to Read**

- Read prayerfully before, during, and after your reading. This is one of the most important things you can do and is often left out. Ask God to clear your mind and show you His truths and then help you retain the information.
- Read as if for the first time. Many times we dive into a book with the assumption that we know it, and we gloss over things that, in fact, we do not know and then wonder why we cannot understand or feel confused. Plus, this denies God the chance to reveal different things to you during different readings and times in your life.
- Read repeatedly because you never notice everything the first couple of times. Read the entire book in one sitting, read it in different translations, read it out loud or listen to it. It is only after going over it many times that will you begin to understand it.
- Read thoughtfully, as if you are detective or an investigative reporter and no detail is too small. Realize that every word chosen and every arrangement of the ideas was done for a specific purpose.
- Read imaginatively, not assuming that it is an old boring book that has nothing to offer. Put yourself in the text and imagine what it would be like to be there. Look at maps and pictures. Rewrite the text in your own words. Read it dynamically with emotion. Vary your setting.

- Read meditatively, thinking about it throughout the day as you're going to and from work, taking a shower, or exercising. Too often when we close our Bibles, we stop thinking about what we have read. Most things have to be mulled over in our minds for long periods of time.

### **Look for Key Terms**

- What are the most important terms in the verse?
- Are there any terms that need to be defined?
- Look multiple different translations (NET, NIV, NASB, ESV, RSV).

### **Determine the Literary Structure**

- The biographical structure builds on the key persons in the story. (Genesis 12-50 focuses on four patriarchal fathers: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.)
- Geographical structure depends on the locations in which the events are taking place. (The Exodus and the places Israel visit on the way to the Promised Land.)
- Historical structure focuses on the key events that are happening in the story. (The book of Revelation depends heavily on historical events.)
- Chronological order looks at how the author has organized the material around key times. Are the events in the story sequential? (1 and 2 Samuel follows like a diary the lives of Saul and David.)
- Ideological structure is how the author arranges the ideas and concepts. (The book of Romans is a great example of this.)
- Wisdom literature portrays the black and white of life; what something is and is not concerning morality. There is no grey there is only the ideal (Proverbs and I John).
- Poetry is the use of metaphors, hyperboles, personification, and symbolism to communicate and emotion (Psalms and Song of Solomon).

### **Grammatical structure**

- Identify the verbs. What tense is it? Is it active or passive? (In Ephesians 5:18 Paul writes, “be filled with the Holy Spirit.” It does not say “fill yourself with the Spirit.” The verb is passive, which means someone else is doing the filling.)
- Identify the subject and object. The subject does the acting and the object is acted upon. (Galatians 6:4 says, “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.” The subject is “each one;” the verb is “examine;” the object is “his own work.” Paul is arguing for self-reflection, which is important in the context of him talking about intervening with other believers when they have sinned.)
- Modifiers are descriptive words such as adjectives and adverbs. They expand the meaning of the words that they modify. (John 10:10 says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” The modifier “abundantly” means life *to the fullest*—God does not shortchange us.)
- Prepositional phrases tell you where the action is happening: *in, on, upon, through, by, to*, and so on (“in Christ,” “by the Spirit,” “in the flesh,” “under the law,” “through faith”).

- Connectives are some of the most important words in the Bible. *And, but, therefore* will tell you so much about how things are related. (*And*: Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” *But*: Numbers 13:31; 2 Samuel 11:1; Luke 22:26; John 8:1; 1 John 3:17.)

### **Asking Questions**

- Who are the people in the text? What does it say about them? Search them out in the Bible to learn more about them. For example, Psalm 88 tells us that it was “Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite” who wrote it. The Psalm does not tell you who Heman the Ezrahite is; you have to go to the historical books to find out. There you will find a portrait that explains why Psalm 88 is so dark and disturbing.
- What is happening in the text? What are the events? In what order do they occur? What happens to the characters? What is not happening or not mentioned? What is the point? (In 1 Samuel 15, Saul wipes out the Amalekites and then praises God. What did he do wrong that causes Samuel to ask in verse 19, “Why did you not obey the Lord?” Saul had not obeyed completely, so you have to know what was required and what he did to know why.)
- Where is the narrative taking place? Where are the people? Where are they coming from? Where are they going? Where is the writer? Where are the original readers from?
- When did the events take place? When did the events take place in relation to other events in the book or scripture? (Mark 1:35 says, “And in the early morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there.” When did this happen? The context tells you it is after one of the busiest days of his life and yet he did not sleep in, even though he had every right to.)
- Why is this included? Why was this not mentioned? Why was it placed here? Why do people do or say certain things? Why do they not do or say something? Why is this important? There are infinite *why* questions that can be asked. (Why does the book of Acts end the way that it does with no answer to what happens to Paul and the other apostles.)
- How did it happen? How is this affecting the people or events in the passage? How are the events, people, or ideas related or not related?

### **Character Study**

- What is the meaning of their name?
- Where are they from? Where do they move?
- Who makes up their family?
- What is their job or skills/talents?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do they interact with others?
- What is their concept of God?
- Are they major or minor character?
- Are they round or flat character?
- Are they full-fledged, supportive, type, or agent?
- See the sample on page 14.

### **The Laws of Structure**

- Cause and Effect – an event, concept, or action that causes another (*therefore, so, then, as a result*). (Mark 11:27-12:44; Rom. 1:24-32; 8:18-30.)
- Means — A method, a course of action, or an instrument by which an act can be achieved (*through, by, according to*). (Heb. 1:2; Gal. 1:1, 4.)
- Comparison – two or more ideas that are alike or similar (*like, as, too, also*). (Psalm 1:3-4; John 3:8, 12, 14; Heb. 5:1-10.)
- Contrast – two or more ideas that are unlike or dissimilar (*but, yet*). (Psalm 73; John 10:10; Acts 4:32-5:11; Gal. 5:19-23.)
- Explanation or reason – the presentation of an idea or event followed by its interpretation (*for, because, therefore*). (Dan. 2, 4, 5, 7-9; Mark 4:13-20; Acts 11:1-18.)
- Repetition – terms or phrases used two or more times. (Psalm 136; Matt. 5:21-48; Heb. 11.)
- Proportion – emphasis indicated by the amount of space the writer devotes to a subject relative to other subjects covered. (Gen. 1:11; 12-50; Luke 9:51-19:27; Eph. 5:21-6:4.)
- Introduction or summary – opening or concluding comments on a subject or situation. (Gen. 37-39; 1 Sam. 1-3; Luke 1-2.)
- Interchange – when the action, conversation, or an idea moves to another, then back again. (Gen. 37-39; 1 Sam. 1-3; Luke 1-2.)
- Question and answer – the use of questions or questions and answers. (Hab.; Mal.; Mark 11:27-12:44; Luke 11:1-13.)
- Climax – a progression of events or ideas that ascend to a certain point before descending. (Ex. 40:34-35; 2 Sam. 11; Mark 4:35-5:43.)
- Pivot or hinge – a sudden change in the direction or flow of the context; a minor climax. (2 Sam. 11-12; Matt. 12; Acts 2.)
- Specific to general, general to specific – progression of thought from a single example to a general principle, or vice versa. (Matt. 6:1-18; Acts 1:8; James 2.)

### **Things to Look for**

- Things that are emphasized by the amount of space that an author has devoted to a subject (Gen. 1-11 compared to Gen. 12-50); the author's stated purpose (John 20:30); the order in which the material is arranged (the Baptism and approval of God in Luke 3 comes before Satan's temptation in Luke 4); movement from lesser to greater, and vice versa (the events leading to Acts 2, which forms a pivot and from which everything that follows grows out of).
- Things that are repeated, whether terms, phrases, or clauses (Psalm 139); characters (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22; 15:36-29); incidents and circumstances (the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew and Luke); and patterns (1 and 2 Samuel, whatever Saul does wrong, David does right). Another cause is the uses of Old Testament passages in the New Testament.
- Things that are related are demonstrated through movement from general to specific (Gen. 1), question and answers (Rom. 6:1), and cause and effect (Acts 7-8).
- Things that are alike are demonstrated by similes (Psalm 42:1; 1 Peter 2:2) and metaphors (John 15:1).

- Things that are unlike are demonstrated by the use of *but* (Gal. 5:19-22), metaphors (Luke 18:1-8), and irony (Luke 8:45).

### **Studying a Section**

- Read the entire book completely and again two or three more times.
- Identify the key terms and define them.
- Determine the genre, and make structural and contextual observations.
- Ask the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *why*, *where*, and *how*.
- Identify the paragraphs, and put a label or title on each paragraph.
- Make structural observations.
- Identify the paragraphs and put a label or title on each paragraph.
- Evaluate each paragraph in light of the other paragraphs and the book.
- Chart the book.
- Keep a list of your observations and unanswered questions

### **Making a Chart**

- As you study a text, assign titles and labels to the content in a way that summarizes the material. Be creative and make it your own.
- As you visualize the chart, ask: What are the relationships? What am I trying to show? What is this chart all about? When I have finished it, how am I going to use it?
- Keep your charts simple. You can always add detail; the challenge is to trim away the clutter. What key ideas, characters, themes, verses, terms, and other data from the text ought to take priority? What is the big idea? What structure needs to be shown? What material do you want to see at a glance?
- If you find you have too much material to include in the chart, chop it up and make several charts. Too much unrelated material is a clue that you need to go back to the text and do more observing.
- Be creative—there are many different ways to chart something. Your charts should not always be the same.
- Revise your charts in light of your study. No chart can summarize everything. Charts are only a means to an end. (See the examples on pages 15-16.)

## Interpretation

The majority of your time in this area will be doing the leg work and research in commentaries, Bible dictionaries, concordance, etc. in order to learn things about the language and culture you cannot know for yourself. These are not to be used to interpret the text for you but rather aid you in and critique your understanding of the text.

### **Hazards to Avoid**

- Misreading the text: pay attention to ALL the words and the order that they are arranged. Jesus in John 14:6 said that “I am the way,” not “I am a way.” Timothy 6:10 reads, “for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil,” not “money is the root of all evil.” The Psalmist cries in 37:4, “delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart,” do not pay attention only to “He will give you the desires of your heart.”
- Distorting the text: Do not make the text say what you want it to say and do not come to the text in order to prove an idea or belief that you already hold. If you do not understand it, then accept it (2 Peter 3:16).
- Contradicting the text: Be careful when you come to conclusions that seem to go contrary to other teachings in the Bible. Never use the Bible to rationalize something you believe or are doing (Gen. 3:1-4).
- Subjectivism: There is nothing wrong with having an emotional response to the text, but do not interpret the text based on that emotional response. The way you feel or do not feel has nothing to do with the meaning of the text. Do not throw logic out just because you may have trouble grasping the text or because initially you felt something and do not want to lose that.
- Relativism: There is only one interpretation, period. The text does not mean different things to different people or at different times. People may disagree on what that one interpretation is, which is fine as long as we keep in mind that the conflict is not in the text but in our limited understanding.
- Overconfidence: Do not assume that you have mastered the text or figured it all out. Pride will make you unteachable (1 Cor. 8:1), and there is always something to learn.

### **What Type of Literature is it?**

- Understanding what type of literature the passage is will help you understand how to interpret it better.
- What point is the author trying to make by the genre that he chose to communicate in? (The following examples are taken directly from Howard G. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, pp. 217-19.)
- Apocalyptic – dramatic, highly symbolic material; vivid imagery; stark contrasts; events take place on a global scale; frequently narrated in the first-person as an eyewitness account; portrays a cosmic struggle between good and evil (Revelation).
- Biography – close-up view of an individual’s life; subject is often portrayed in contrast to someone else; selected events reveal character development; either comedy (positive) or tragedy (negative) (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Saul, David, Elijah, Jesus).

- Encomium – sings high praise of someone or something; rehearses in glowing terms the subject’s origins, acts, attributes, or superiority; exhorts the reader to incorporate the same features into their lives (1 Sam. 2:1-10; Psalm 19; 119; Prov. 8:22-36; 31:10-31; Song of Sol.; John 1:1-18; I Cor. 13; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1-3).
- Exposition – carefully reasoned argument or explanation; well organized; logical flow; terms are crucial; builds to a logical, compelling climax; the aim is agreement and action (Paul’s letters; Hebrews; James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, 3 John; Jude).
- Narrative – a broad category in which story is prominent; includes historical accounts; structure is conveyed through plot; characters undergo psychological and spiritual development; selected events used to convey meaning; events juxtaposed for contrast and comparison (Genesis-Ezra, the Gospels, Acts).
- Oratory – stylized oral presentation of an argument; uses formal conventions of rhetoric and oratory; frequently quotes from authorities well known to listeners; usually intended to exhort and persuade (John 13-17; Acts 7; 17:22-31; 22:1-21; 24:10-21; 26:1-23).
- Parables – brief oral story illustrating moral; truth frequently relies on stock characters and stereotypes; presents scenes and activities common to everyday life; encourages reflection and self-evaluation (2 Sam. 12:1-6; Ecc. 9:14-16; Matt. 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 15:1-16:31).
- Pastoral – literature dealing with rural, rustic themes, especially shepherds; heavy on description, lean on action; often meditative and quiet; emphasis on bond between a shepherd and his sheep; idealized presentation of life away from urban evils (Psalm 23; Isa. 40:11; John 10:1-18).
- Poetry – verse intended to be spoken or sung rather than read; emphasis on cadence and the sounds of words; vivid images and symbols; appeals to the emotions; may employ features of encomium, pastoral, and other literary styles; in OT, heavy use of parallelism (Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon).
- Prophecy – strident, authoritative presentation of God’s will and words; frequently intended as corrective; intended to motivate change through warnings; foretells God’s plans in response to human choices (Isaiah-Malachi).
- Proverbs – short, pithy statements of a moral truth; reduces life to black-and-white categories; often addressed to youth; frequently employs parallelism; points readers toward good and away from evil; heavy use of metaphors and similes (Proverbs).
- Satire – exposes the ridiculous human vice and foolishness; is employed by various literary styles, especially narrative, biography, and proverb; warns readers through negative example (Prov. 24:30-34; Ezek. 34; Luke 18:1-8; 2 Cor. 11:1-12:1).
- Tragedy – relates the downfall of a person; uses selected events to show the path toward ruin; problems usually revolve around a critical flaw in the person’s character and moral choices; warns readers through a negative example (Lot, Samson, Saul, Acts 5:1-11).
- Wisdom literature – a broad category in which an older, seasoned person relates wisdom to a younger; may use parable; gives observations on fundamental areas of life—birth, death, work, money, power, time, the earth, and so on; appeals on the basis of human experience (Job, Proverbs, Psalm 37, 90, Ecc.).

## **Defining Terms**

- If you want to know the meaning of a word, you must look up every instance of the word and see how it is used in all its usages. Notice the comparison between Old and New Testament. How is it used in different books and by different authors? Also, are there both a common definition and a theological definition? Concordances are handy for this.
- Do not depend on your preferred translation because others may have a completely different meaning. Why do they? For example Luke 16:16: The NIV and NASB say, "...the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." While the NET says, "...the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is urged to enter it."
- Notice whether a word is very common or obscure, and if it is obscure, why? How many instances? Where is the word used most often? Does this mean anything?
- Use a Bible dictionary to help you understand the fuller meaning of a word and not just how it is being used in its context.

## **Content**

- If you have done your work well in observation, then you know the content of the material and have answered the question, *what do I see?*
- The more time you have spent in observation, the less time you will have to spend in interpretation, and the more accurate your result.
- The reason people come to different interpretations is because one or both have not spent enough time observing the text.

## **Context**

- If you ignore the material that comes before and after the passage you are dealing with, you can make it say whatever you want. People don't start in the middle of a novel or movie and complain that they don't understand what is going on or think that they know exactly what is happening, yet this happens all the time with the Bible (Phil. 2:12).
- Different kinds of context:
  - Literary context: The literary context of any verse is the paragraph in which it is found, the section in which the paragraph is found, the book in which the section is found. It is the unity of the section and the scriptures as a whole in its themes.
  - Historical context: When is it taking place? Where does the passage fit in history? What else is taking place in the world at this time? What are some of the social, political, and technological influences on the writers and on those to whom he was writing?
  - Cultural context: The more you understand the cultures of the biblical times, the more insight you will have into the text. This can make a HUGE difference to whether you understand and then interpret something correctly.
  - Geographical context: Knowing the geography of the events in scripture will not only help you visualize it better but will also help you understand what is going on.
  - Theological context: What did the author know about God? What was the relationship of his readers to God? How did the people worship Him at that point? How much Scripture

did the writer and his audience have access to? What other religions and worldviews were competing for influence? A central issue is, where does this passage fit into the unfolding of scripture? Where does this fit into the major themes that go throughout the Scriptures?

## **Culture**

- Understanding the culture of the text will affect your interpretation. If you are looking at the text through *your* cultural understanding, then you will come to the wrong conclusion about what is happening and, thus, the point of it.
- You must take the time to look at the context of the passage and look up the meaning of sayings, the things that people are doing, the times of the year or day, etc.
- For example, to correctly understand the book of Ruth, one must understand the culture of the time and when is it happening. It takes place during the time of the judges, and Judges 21:25 sets up the context of Ruth. You must first understand this culture and the period of the judges to understand what makes Boaz and Ruth's actions so unique. People assume that the story is a sexy love story; however, they would never make that comment if they understood the customs of that time period. This means doing word studies on cultural terms that show up in the text.
- Questions to ask are:
  - Power: Where are the centers of power? Who is in charge? How do they gain control? How do they hold sway? How effective are they at maintaining control? Where are the challenges to their authority? Who makes decisions for our society as a whole? Who makes decisions at the local level?
  - Communication: What are the means of communication? How is news and information distributed? Who has access to it? Who has access to the media? How does our society determine credibility and the reliability of information? How do the means of communication shape the messages that are communicated?
  - Money: What place does money have in our values? How do people earn a living? With whom does our society trade? What goods are exchanged? What are the means of transportation? How do people get from place to place? What resources do we have? What resources do we not have? What are the technological achievements of our society?
  - Ethnicity: What peoples make up our culture? Where did they come from? What history and values do they bring? How is our society organized socially? How is it stratified? How is status determined? Who is at the top? Who is at the bottom? Why? What racial barriers and problems do people contend with? How do they affect daily life? What traditions and values characterize the various subcultures?
  - Gender: What are the roles of men and women? How do the sexes relate? What problems confront either sex?
  - Generations: What value does our culture place on the family? How are families structured? Who are the key families? Where do they live? What are their histories? How do they maintain influence? How is power passed from generation to generation? How are young people educated and socialized? What are they taught? Who does the teaching? How does a person become an adult in this culture?
  - Religion and worldview: What are the dominant religions? Where did they come from? What condition are they in now? What are the trends? Which groups are growing the fastest? Why? From what philosophical assumptions do people operate? What outlook do

they have as they look at the world and life? What exposure to the gospel has this culture had? What has been its response?

- The arts: What kind of art is our culture producing? What is the art telling us about ourselves and about our world? What place do we give to artists in our society?
- History and time: What legends and myths have been passed down? What stories are told and retold? Who writes our history? What stories have not been told? What is the pace of life in our society? How do people measure time? What place do we give to the elderly? What do children represent? Who represents children?
- Place: Where is our culture situated geographically? What topographic and climatic factors influence day-to-day life? How mobile are we in comparison to other societies? How long do families live in one place? What land has passed down through the generations? What people have been displaced? What locations have featured prominently in our culture's history? Where have the wars been fought? Where are the celebrations held? What monuments and memorials are there?

### **Consultation**

- After you have done your own observation and dissected and put back together the structure of the text, you must then consult other people's observations and insights.
- Never become so arrogant that you think you have all the answers and are the final say. There are millions of other brothers and sisters throughout history and cultures that have studied the Bible through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- You should not go to these sources first; rather, look to them *after* you have developed a good understanding of the text. These serve to reveal insights that you did not have, answer questions that you may have, and validate or make you support your observations and conclusions.
- If no one agrees with your conclusion, this should be a warning flag. There may be views you have not considered, as well as strengths in opposing views and weaknesses in your views that you have not considered.
- Sources include concordances, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible handbooks, atlases, and archaeological magazines.

### **Figuring Out the Figurative**

- Use the literal sense unless there is some good reason not to. For example, Song of Solomon cannot be seen as an allegory of Christ and the Church because it was written centuries before Christ. Likewise, the genre does not allow for this interpretation since it is about erotic love.
- Use the figurative sense when the passage tells you to do so. In Genesis 37 it is clear that Joseph's dreams concern the future. Likewise, Pharaoh's dreams in Genesis 41 and the dreams in Daniel 7-12 are understood to be figurative.
- Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning is impossible or absurd. In Revelation 1:16, it is unlikely for Jesus to have a literal sword coming out of his mouth. You need to search the text for an explanation; Hebrews 4:12 gets you started on what this image means, saying the Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword."

- Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning would involve something immoral. To understand John 6:53-55 literally would be morally wrong (as well as unsafe and disgusting).
- Use the figurative sense if the expression is an obvious figure of speech. Examples of this are Prov. 11:22 (simile); Isa. 24:23 (personification); 1 Cor. 15:55 (apostrophe).
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the context and scope of the passage. In Revelation 5:1-5, a literal lion would not fit the context.
- Use the figurative if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the general character and style of the book. To understand Psalm 63:7 literally goes contrary to the poetry of the genre.
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the plan and purpose of the author. Psalm 1:3 refers to the *quality* of a person's blessings, not the quantity, in light of the surrounding verses.
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation involves a contradiction of other scripture. In Mark 10:25 Jesus is not saying that the rich cannot be saved because this goes contrary to the total love and acceptance of God throughout all of the Scriptures (John 3:16).
- Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation would involve a contradiction in doctrine. Using 1 Cor. 3:16-17 as a proof text for the belief that those who commit suicide go to hell goes contrary to the doctrine of eternal security.
- In *Living by the Book*, pp. 266-67, Howard G. Hendricks lists the following figures of speech:
  - Anthropomorphism – the attribution of human features or actions to God (Isa. 59:1)
  - Apostrophe – addressing a thing as if it were a person, or an absent or imaginary person as if he or she were present (1 Cor. 15:55)
  - Euphemism – the use of a less offensive expression to indicate a more offensive one (Gal. 5:12)
  - Hyperbole – exaggeration to say more than is literally meant (2 Cor. 11:8)
  - Hypocatastasis – a comparison in which likeness is implied rather than stated directly (Luke 12:1)
  - Idiom – an expression peculiar to a particular people (Judges 15:1)
  - Merism – a substitution of two contrasting or opposite parts for whole (Psalm 39:2)
  - Metaphor – a comparison in which one thing represents another (Matt. 5:14)
  - Paradox – a statement that seems absurd, self-contradictory, or contrary to logical thought (Matt. 16:25)
  - Personification – ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or animals (Isa. 24:23)
  - Rhetorical question – a question that requires no response, yet forces one to answer mentally and consider its ramifications (Psalm 56:11)
  - Simile – a comparison using “like” or “as” (Psalm 1:3)

## **Application**

If you have done the first two steps well and have been praying and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit than this step should take no effort at all. Below are some principles to help you make the application more concrete in your life.

### ***Four Substitutes for Application***

- We substitute interpretation for application.
- We substitute superficial obedience for substantive life-change.
- We substitute rationalization for repentance.
- We substitute an emotional experience for a volitional decision.

### ***Steps to Application***

- Know the text and yourself
  - Know the text – if your interpretation of a passage is in error, then your application will be in error as well. Likewise, if your interpretation is correct, then your application will possibly be correct. Remember, there is only one interpretation but many applications.
  - Know yourself – you have to know yourself in order to know how to apply the text. What are your greatest strengths/talents and weaknesses/sins (1 Tim. 4:16, Rom. 12:3)?
- Relate – you must be able to relate the text to your own life and to every aspect of your life. How does the text affect your relationship to God, yourself, other people, and your enemy (Satan)? Does it expose a sin in your life, give a command, provide an example to follow?
- Meditate – you need to not only take the time to study and understand the text but also to give yourself time to mull it over in your mind and digest it before taking in new information. True meditation is pondering the truth with a view to letting it help and readjust your life (Jos. 1:8; Psalm 1:1-2).
- Practice – God has given you His word in order that it may transform your life. Your hunger for it is in direct proportion to your obedience to it. The more you understand it, the more you will want to use it; and the more you use it, the more you will want to understand it.

### ***Questions to Ask***

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

### ***The Principle: Is Your Perception Correct?***

- Principles should correlate with the general teaching of Scripture. People get into trouble finding a “principle” from a single verse and then trying to build a whole doctrine on the basis of that one reference. How does the principle you have come to fit into the overall teaching of the Scriptures? Is this a unique principle or is it reinforced throughout the whole of Scriptures?
- Principles should speak to the needs, interests, questions, and problems of real life today. If you understand your culture well, then you will know what matters in life. You should know the major issues in society and the needs and desires of people. The principles of Scripture will always speak to those issues, not to the ones that have no real bearing on what matters in life.
- Principles should indicate a course of action. What am I going to do with this truth? When, where, and how am I going to apply this?

### ***A Process of Life-Change***

- Make a decision to change.
- Come up with a plan.
- Follow through.

## Character Development for the Joseph Story

Read Genesis 37-50 and observe the development of Joseph and the other characters by paying attention to their actions and how they interact with each other. Answer the questions below, paying attention to what the characters are doing and not necessarily to why they are doing it. **Be very specific and concise in your answers.** Your grade is dependent on how specific and concise you are and the examples and support you give for your answers (include Bible references). Do not quote the Scriptures unless it is something they said and is necessary to make your point. Number your paper and answer the questions in complete sentences (Times New Romans, 12 pt, 1-inch margins, single-spaced).

### Observation of Character

1. What is the meaning of Joseph's name (go back to when he was born)? What period of time does Joseph live in? Where does he live? How long did he live?
2. What is his job or training in the story? Are there any skills or talents that he has?
3. Who makes up Joseph's family and what are the dynamics like (how does he relate to them and they to him)? Give examples.
4. What weaknesses do you see in Joseph's character (describe as many as you can find)? Support and give examples (are there any key phrases or events that describe him).
5. What strengths do you see in Joseph's character (describe as many as you can find)? Support and give examples (are there any key phrases or events that describe him).
6. What do you observe about Joseph's understanding of and obedience to God and his response to difficulties? Give examples.
7. Describe his relationship with others in his life? (Must include: father, brothers at beginning of his life, Potiphar, Potiphar's wife, men in prison, Pharaoh, brothers at the end of his life, God). Give examples; be sure to include how he treated them and responded to their actions and how they responded to him?
8. What attributes or character traits of God are revealed in this story (must have at least three)? Give examples.
9. Does Joseph's character change throughout the story? Does he improve or get worse? Give examples.

**Mark 4:35-5:42**

<b>Miracle</b>	<b>Realm</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Faith</b>
Stilling of Storm	Physical	Jesus Disciples	Speaks	A Great Calm	No Faith/ Only Fear
Demoniac	Mental	Jesus Man Townsppeople	Speaks	Sitting Clothed Right Mind	Recognition Desire to Follow
Woman Hemorrhaging	Physical Emotional	Jesus Woman Disciples Crowd	Touch	Immediate Healing	Her Faith Healed Her
Jairus' Daughter	Physical Emotional Spiritual	Jesus Parents Daughter Disciples	Touch Speaks	Stands Walks Eat	Great Faith

**The Gospel of Mark**

<b>“Come to Serve”</b>		and	<b>“Give His Life”</b>	
Prologue	Service		Sacrifice	Epilogue
<b>Jesus Came</b>	<b>Who is He?</b>	<b>Who Do People Say That I Am?</b>	<b>Where is He Going?</b>	<b>Jesus... Received Up</b>
1:1-45	2:1 8:26	8:27 8:30	8:31 15:47	16:1-20
<b>His Person</b>		and	<b>His Purpose</b>	

**Malachi**

“The Wail of Wounded Love”

Intro 1:1-5	<b>Rebuke</b>	<b>Warning</b>	<b>Appeal</b>	Conclusion 4:4-6
	Priests 1:6-2:9	Accusation 2:17	Response 3:7-18	
	People 2:10-16	Announcement 2:17-36	Reason 3:7-4:3	

**Luke**

Law of Proportion

30 Years Preparation	2 ½ Years Galilean	½ Year Samaritan	8 Days Jerusalem	50 Days Resurrection
1:1-4:13	4:14-9:50	9:51-19:27	19:28-23:56	24:1-52

## 1 Peter

<b>The Identity of the Believer (1:1-2:12)</b>	<b>The Submission of the Believer (2:13-3:7)</b>	<b>The Suffering of the Believer (3:8-5:14)</b>
<b>Salutation (1:1-2)</b> Foreknown Chosen Sanctified	<b>Authorities (2:13-25)</b> Be Subject to Every Institution For the Lord's Sake In order to win others to Christ This Finds Favor with God	<b>Suffering for Doing Good (3:8-17)</b> Be Harmonious and Bless Others For a Full Life Always Ready to Give and Answer
<b>Great Salvation (1:3-12)</b> Hope of Salvation Joy of Salvation Greatness of Salvation		<b>Christ's Example (3:18-4:6)</b> Suffered Obeyed Proclaimed Entrusted Vindicated The Believer Do Likewise
<b>New Way of Life (1:13-2:3)</b> Hope Holiness Godly Fear Love Growth in the Word	<b>Husband and Wives (3:1-7)</b> In the same way (For the Lord's Sake) Wives Be Subject to your Husbands Husbands Love and Honor your Wives Living According to the Knowledge	<b>Need for Mutual Love (4:7-11)</b> Be Self-controlled Love Covers a Multitude of Sins Do it with God's means So that God would Be Glorified
		<b>The Fiery Trial (4:12-19)</b> Do not be Surprised But Rejoice Do not be ashamed but Glorify Entrust your Souls to God
<b>Priestly Calling (2:4-12)</b> <u>Christ</u> Living Stone Corner Stone <u>Believer</u> Holy Priesthood To be Pleasing to God To Glorify God To Lead others to God		<b>The Church Under Trial (5:1-11)</b> Give Care to God's Flock The Younger Submit to Elders Be Sober and Alert Endure for God's Glory
		<b>Conclusion (5:12-14)</b> To Encourage and Testify to the True Grace of God Stand Fast in it