

L I F E I N T H E

Word of Road

The Why & How of Bible Study

Kelly Needham

WWW.KELLYNEEDHAM.COM

O V E R V I E W

WHY BIBLE KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY

Many reasons could be given about why we should know the Bible: it is the only source of truth (Psalm 119:160), it is how we've come to a saving knowledge of the gospel (Rom 10:13-14), it is for our joy (John 15:11), or that it is in His Word that we are sanctified (John 17:17). But perhaps a good place to start is with the greatest commandment:

And [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." Matthew 22:37-38

Just like any relationship, our depth of love is only so deep as our knowledge of that person. "The heart cannot love what the mind does not know" (Jen Wilkin). As Christians and adopted children of God, we ought to make it the business of our lives to know & love our Father. The deeper our knowledge of Him, the greater capacity we have to love Him. The more we love Him, the more we become like Him.

We do not study the Bible to become "better" Christians but to grow in our love for God. The Bible is a book about God and what He has done, not a book about us and what we should do. If you are in Christ, you are already righteous; in fact, you have been made into the very righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21)! It is in that knowledge that we study the Scriptures to get a firmer grasp on who God is and what He has accomplished for us in the gospel. Only through an accurate knowledge of God can we truly love Him, interact with Him, and see Him at work in our lives.

"True knowledge about God leads to new passions for God which produce holy living before God." - John Piper

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE IS NOT THE GOAL

However, Bible knowledge alone is never the goal. Consider these words which Jesus spoke to the religious leaders of His day:

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." John 5:39-40

They thought the Scripture gave eternal life, but it was not written to save from sin. To treat the Bible like a savior, as if it alone can provide the solution, is a misuse of its intended purpose. The Bible is a witness, not a savior. It testifies of Jesus, who is the antidote for the disease of sin. If we study the Bible, but stop short of going to Jesus Himself, we are no different than the unsaved Pharisees.

How can we know if we are misusing the Bible? When reading it produces to-do lists and not worship; when it becomes a self-help manual, instead of a platform to showcase our great Redeemer.

Proper Bible reading produces this result: sin exposed, Savior offered. "But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal. 3:22). The Bible shows us the need for a Savior and presents Jesus as that Savior. It leads us by the hand to helpless cries for mercy and ushers us on our knees to repentance.

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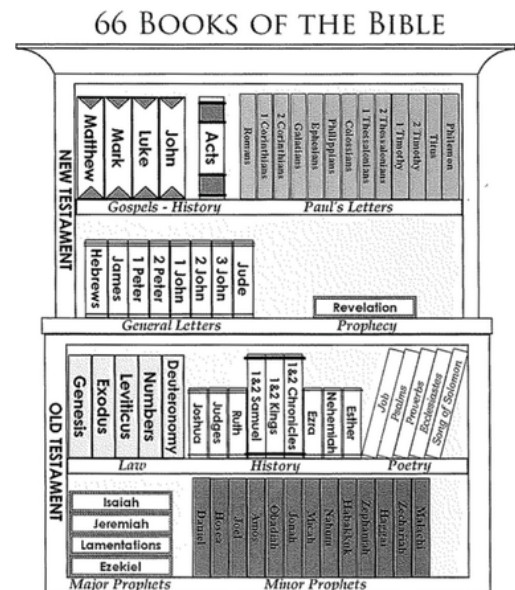
THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE

Now that we've established why Bible knowledge is necessary, we need to be reminded why understanding all, and not just some of it, matters.

Unfortunately, many people learn to read the Bible in verses, not in books. A steady diet of devotional books and topical sermons can perpetuate the lie that the Bible is only valuable as a reference or endorsement for other people's words. But the Bible was not written in verses; it was written in books. And so it should be read in books.

Think of the Bible as a library. A collection of 66 individual books of different literary styles. Some books are historical, some are poetic, some are letters, and some are prophecy. But all are telling the one unified story of God—the story of His redemption of His people through His Son. Because these books support one another and build on one another, it is important to work towards gaining a comprehensive knowledge of them.

The Old Testament informs the New Testament and the New Testament informs the Old. Both are needed. Only reading the New Testament is like meditating on the answers without fully understanding the questions. Only reading the Old Testament can leave us with a murky view into God's redemptive plan. Paul tells us that "all Scripture is...profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16). And Jesus made it clear that all of the Scripture testifies of Him: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). This means we are to read all of the Bible and read it in light of the ultimate redemptive purposes of God in Jesus.



THE RESULTS OF PROPER BIBLE READING

If we are reading the Bible in these ways, here are some things that it should produce:

1. Prayerfulness

As mentioned above, Bible knowledge is not the goal—knowing and loving God is. That means good Bible reading should naturally lead to prayer, to talking with God about what you read. Our prayer could sound like any of the following: confession, thanksgiving, intercession, or supplication (asking God to work on your behalf). Use what you read in the Bible as a springboard to talk with your Father, thanking God for who He is and asking God to change your heart based on the time you've spent in His Word.

Many people have found that journaling is a good way to keep track of their prayers. For some, writing can feel unnatural, but it yields many benefits. Here are just a few: First (and most importantly), writing forces you to work out foggy thoughts and ideas. It forces precision. Writing makes you answer the question, "How do I communicate this truth in a concise, precise, and helpful way?" Secondly, writing (especially writing prayers) gives you a way of looking back and seeing how God has answered prayers. Thirdly, writing helps you remember what you read and what you are learning.

2. Repentance

In Isaiah 6:1-5, the prophet Isaiah gets a vibrant and clear picture of God. The result? "Woe is me!" Seeing God clearly will always expose our indwelling depravity. And therefore, knowing God requires repentance.

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Repentance is a change of direction, a turning from one thing to another (namely turning from self to God). To most, repentance is simply the required action when we outwardly sin. But the clearer we see God in the Word, the more apparent it is that we need to repent of our entire self-loving, self-dependent nature, whether it has acted out or not. Knowing Him exposes our self-centered nature and reveals our need to cling to Him continually in repentance.

Good Bible reading will produce a posture of repentance because repentance is not primarily about fleeing from something, but clinging to Something. If we are not actively clinging to God, we will be clinging to self. This is the essence of sin: choosing self over God. Even though your goal might be growing in holiness, if self is what you run to (i.e. working harder to keep the rules, creating new systems to not sin, etc.), you sever yourself from Christ and have fallen from grace (Gal 5:4). Biblical repentance lets go of self and grabs hold of Christ in the gospel.

3. Christ-likeness

God intends to make us like His Son (Rom 8:29). Part of the way He does that is through letting us see His glory in His Word.

“But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

Notice that when we approach God in repentance (turning to the Lord), the veil is removed from our hearts so that we can behold His glory. As we read the Bible to enjoy the beauty and glory of the character of our God, that very beholding and enjoyment produces transformation into His likeness. The principle is this: we become like what we worship. We naturally long to be like what we treasure most. So if we will make the primary goal of Bible reading to enjoy the inexhaustible riches of His character, the transformation we so desperately need and want will be a byproduct.

4. Transformed Thinking

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2

This verse makes it clear that transformation starts in the mind. And that process requires testing—literally in the Greek, examining or analyzing. The study of God’s Word should include the hard work of examining the text to discern the character of God. It is through this process that our minds are renewed and we are transformed.

New information doesn’t transform the mind. It just adds more files to the drawer. But wrestling with the text and all the hard things in it rearranges the file cabinet system entirely. This is why reading the Bible for ourselves is so important. If you are accustomed to devotionals and prepackaged studies, reading the “naked” Bible may seem intimidating. But reading and wrestling through the text ourselves is how our minds are most changed. When we read His Word to know Him and understand Him, we will slowly begin to see life through His perspective, not through our own limited, human perspective.

5. Joy in God

We all want our hearts to be content, joyful, and happy in God. The challenge is that we cannot force our feelings into submission to what we want. Our feelings (joy, sorrow, anger) are a response to something. So the fight for joy in God starts with putting the source of that joy (God Himself) into clearer view. This is what our Bible reading is doing: putting God on display so that our hearts’ affections would be kindled.

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Jesus affirms this principle in John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

If we want hearts that are satisfied in God, overflowing with the hope of life with God in heaven, amazed at His grace—if we want hearts that see the depth of our spiritual poverty (our sin) and the goodness of God's provision (his Son), it requires the hard work of seeing God in the Word. In His presence is the fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11)! The Bible is one of God's means to fan the flame of joy!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider the quote, "The heart cannot love what the mind does not know." How well (or not well) do you know God? Is the concept that knowledge of God fuels love for God new to you? How do you see this principle play out in your other relationships?
- How were you taught to read the Bible? (e.g. in verses or books, using it like a reference book to other people's writings, or as a self-help manual)
- Like the Pharisees, have you been misusing the Bible? What does your Bible reading produce more of: to-do lists or worship?
- Do you have a comprehensive or limited knowledge of the Bible? What parts are you least familiar with?
- Consider the list of 5 byproducts of proper Bible reading (prayerfulness, repentance, Christ-likeness, transformed thinking, joy in God). Does your current Bible reading produce any of these? If so, which ones? If not, what does your Bible reading produce in you?
- Do you feel like you cannot understand the Bible on your own? Like you need a study, devotional, or commentary to understand? What keeps you from trying to understand it yourself (laziness, fear, complacency, unbelief, etc.)?
- How happy and satisfied is your heart in God? Do you have the tendency to use spiritual disciplines as a means to perform before God rather than to simply enjoy God?

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OBSERVATION

"I just don't know what to do when I open the Bible." This is a common complaint I hear that keeps people from being in God's Word. That's what this guide is intended to solve by using the Inductive Bible Study Method: Observe, Interpret, Apply.

OBSERVE: WHAT'S IN THE TEXT?

Here's where much Bible reading misses the mark. We simply don't think about what we've read. The Bible is not meant to be read passively like a newspaper, but actively. Reading the Bible takes time and energy, because each part of the Bible is much deeper and wider than it appears upon first glance.

If you are driving past an accident on the highway, one quick glance might help you learn that two cars collided. But with only a glance, you cannot know much more than that and might make incorrect assumptions about what happened. But if you pull over and study the scene for a while, you will learn who was driving, why the collision happened, who was at fault, how much damage was done to the cars and the drivers, and what is being done to help. In the same way, you can read the Bible quickly and get a glance. At best, you will get an accurate but shallow understanding; at worst, you will misinterpret the information.

So the first and most important part of good Bible study is observation. This is where we pull over and observe the scene and notice what is there. Here are some key things to look for as you observe a text:

Pronouns. Who is he, she, we, they, that, this, and it in your context? Who is in this passage, who is being addressed, who is speaking? Look for information about the author and his readers.

Verbs. A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action takes place ("God raised us up") or that a state or condition exists ("you were dead"). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author's flow of thought.

Repeated Words or Phrases. What words or phrases are repeated in this text? And how many times are they repeated? These could be repeated concepts or ideas. Maybe the concept of listening is repeated a lot using different words (hear, listen, respond). Repetition is a big clue in understanding a passage.

Connecting Words. These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

- Comparison: either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: "and," "like," "as," "just as," "also," "so also," "even so (example)."
- Contrast: points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: "but," "rather," "yet," "however."
- Purpose: indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: "that," "so that," "in order that."
- Result: very similar to "purpose" but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: "that," "so that," "as a result," "with the result that."
- Cause: expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: "because," "since," and sometimes "for."
- Explanation: what follows further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word "for."

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- Inference: provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: "therefore," "for this reason."
- Condition: presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can occur. The statement may or may not reflect reality (it could be hypothetical). Key word is "if."

Lists. Making lists can be one of the most enlightening things you do as you study a section of Scripture. Lists reveal connected truths and highlight important concepts. Identify and number simple lists in the text. This may include a lot of phrases describing one action or instructions regarding how to do something.

Setting and Changes of Setting. This includes references to places and locations, the time of day or year, and surroundings (in battle, at peace, at home, etc.). Notice when things change.

Let's take one short verse as an example of the importance of observation. Isaiah 66:2: "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My word." If we read quickly and jump to application, we might conclude this: I should be more humble. But that is missing the main point of this verse.

Here are 10 observations we can make about this verse that will help us accurately see what it is saying:

1. "My" is capitalized (God is the one speaking)
2. God looks to a specific someone
3. The one God looks to is described as humble, contrite, and someone who trembles at His word
4. "And" is used twice between the descriptors "humble," "contrite," and "trembles at My word" showing they are related, not contrasted
5. There are two action verbs in this sentence: look and tremble.
6. God is the one who looks
7. "He" is the one who trembles
8. The trembling is caused by God's Word
9. The humility and contrition described is specifically stated to be "in spirit"
10. "My" is a possessive word, showing the "word" belongs to God

As we consider those 10 observations about Isaiah 66:2, it's easier to see that the main person in this verse is God and the subject is what draws God's attention. It is not a command for us to obey so much as it is a statement about God's preferences. Of course, we will get to what this means and what it means for us, but for now, we are only asking what is the text saying. If we skip too quickly to application, we will miss much of the depth and purpose of the text.

PRACTICE OBSERVATION

Now we're going to give you a chance to practice observing the text by doing 3 different tasks. Below is the passage we'll be working with, found in Luke 18:9-14.

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated other with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

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1| Mark Up the Text

This is a simple exercise to help you notice things in the passage you are studying. The point is not to do this every time you study the Bible but as only a type of drill to help you see what you might be missing.

On the previous page, please do the following to the printed text of Luke 18:9-14.

- Underline all verbs
- Circle any key theological words or phrases or any repeated phrases
- Box all connecting words (use the above list to make sure you don't miss any)
- Number any lists you see in this passage

2| Write Observations

Use the space below to write 5 observations per verse. Making observations is the most important (and often the most difficult) step in studying God's Word. It's difficult because it can feel so simple that many blow right past it, rushing onto "more important things" like application. Observing the text forces us to slow down, take in each word, and leave no stone unturned. The more you practice this discipline, the more it will become second nature as you read the Bible.

These should NOT be statements about what this means (e.g. "It seems the Pharisee trusted in himself.") but rather what information these words are communicating (e.g. "The Pharisee thanked God that he fasted and tithed."). Think of it this way: if someone who knows nothing of Christianity and has never read the Bible could not have observed it, then it is not an observation. If you get stuck, use the list above for Isaiah 66:2 to give you ideas. We've given you 1 example per verse to help you out.

VERSE 9

1. "He" is speaking
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

VERSE 10

1. There are 2 men in the parable
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

VERSE 11

1. "I" appears 5 times in the Pharisee's prayer
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

VERSE 12

1. "all" is used, not "some"
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

VERSE 13

1. The first word of the prayer is "God"
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

VERSE 14

1. "rather" is a word of contrast
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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3| Write a Theme

In a word, phrase, or short sentence, write the theme of the above passage. A theme is the main idea, the central truth or command that the passage focuses on. Identifying the theme of a passage early in your study will give you conceptual “handlebars” to hold onto and will help you grasp the author’s direction and intentions quicker.

- Theme: _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have an example of when you, or someone you know, misinterpreted the Bible because they didn’t properly observe what it was saying?
- Is observation a hard or confusing concept for you? Why or why not?
- Consider the accident analogy. How often have you taken a glance at a passage of Scripture and tried to understand it? What do you see as the benefits of “pulling over” and noticing the facts?
- What observation was most helpful or eye-opening in the example of Isaiah 66:2?
- Of the 3 practices you did (marking up the text, writing observations, writing a theme), which was the hardest for you? Why do you think that is?

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I N T E R P R E T A T I O N

INTERPRET: WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

In observation, we are attempting to discern what the texts says; in interpretation, we're attempting to discern what the text means. Interpreting the Bible means first working to discern what God intended the text to mean to the original audience. Only then can we know what it means for us.

We all need to be reminded of the danger of skipping from observation to application. We have a tendency to jump straight to "how does the text apply" without addressing "what does the text mean?" There is great danger in skipping the interpretation step. Until we see what the text means we'll find ourselves continually misapplying the text to our lives. To state it another way: before we can apply a text, we have to know what God is saying in it.

PRACTICE INTERPRETATION

Using the same text on page 6 (Luke 18:9-14), complete the following tasks.

Ask Questions.

Making observations will naturally lead to asking questions. But to help you strengthen this muscle even more, write out 2 interpretive questions per verse for the passage. Reference your list of observations from page 7 to give you ideas of what questions to ask. It's okay if you already know the answer to the question; we are simply trying to work an often unused muscle. Here are some example questions you could ask:

WHO is...

...this about?

...accomplishing the action?

...benefiting from the action?

WHAT is the...

...meaning of this word?

...significance of this phrase?

...main point of this passage?

...relationship between these phrases?

WHEN...

...will these events happen?

...did this happen?

WHERE...

...did or will this happen?

...was this said?

...was this person from?

WHY...

...did the author choose this word?

...did the author not say _____?

...this person?

...at this time?

...will this happen?

HOW...

...will this happen?

...is it to be done?

...was this accomplished?

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VERSE 9

1. Who is "he"?
- 2.

VERSE 10

- 1.
- 2.

VERSE 11

- 1.
- 2.

VERSE 12

- 1.
- 2.

VERSE 13

- 1.
- 2.

VERSE 14

- 1.
- 2.

Answer the Questions.

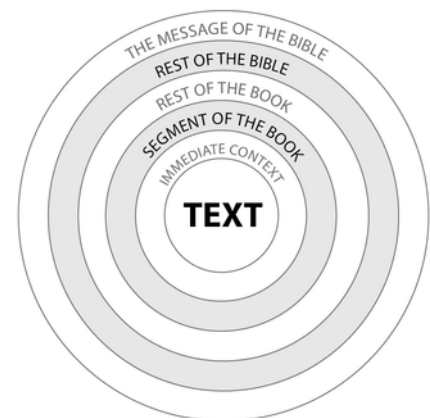
Pick 3 questions from your above list and answer them. There are some basic rules of interpretation that we must keep in mind as we try to understand what the text means. As you answer your questions, please notate what interpretation rule you used to answer. Read through these rules first and then use them to answer the questions you pick.

Rule 1: Context.

The context is the text's surrounding. Most poor Bible interpretation is due to overlooking the context. Jeremiah 29:11 ("For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope") is written to the recently-exiled Israelites who, one verse prior, were told they would be forced to remain exiles for 70 years. Habakkuk 1:5 ("Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded, for I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told") is God's way to introduce His plan to send the dreaded Chaldeans to afflict His people in response to Habakkuk's prayer for reformation. If we take either of these verses from their context, we can easily interpret them to mean something God never intended. Much poor interpretation and poor understanding of God's character and ways is solved by reading the surrounding verses and chapters. So, look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author's flow of thought through the whole chapter or book. Research the author and the audience of the book and when and why it was written.

Every text also has a literary context. The Bible contains various kinds of writing (law, history, poetry, letters, prophecy) and that literary context shapes our interpretation. Poetry is not meant to be interpreted literally, but history is.

Lastly, every text has its place in the larger biblical narrative. The Bible contains one unified message from Genesis to Revelation (humanity's need for redemption and God's plan of redemption through Jesus), and we have to be careful to keep every passage inside of this biblical context. The circle graph to the right illustrates this point. The passage has its place within its immediate context, its section of the book, the rest of the book, the rest of the Bible, and the Bible's message as a whole. Keeping the text embedded into the rest of the Scriptures, and its unifying message of Jesus as the redeemer of all things, keeps us from most false conclusions.



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Rule 2: Understand the A.I.M. (Author's Intended Meaning).

Although every text can be applied in many ways, it can only have one meaning. And the text cannot mean something now that it did not mean to the original audience. Every text has a cultural or historical context. We have to fight against reading the Bible from a 21st-century American perspective and put ourselves in the shoes of the author, seeking to understand the Bible from their perspective for their audience.

For example, Jeremiah 29:11 meant exile before blessing to the original audience. So we cannot assume God's plans for our future will be devoid of hardship either. To interpret a text we have to discern what the author intended the text to mean to the original audience. Only then can we accurately apply it to our own lives.

Rule 3: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture.

The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. We do this by looking up cross-references. These are simply other passages in the Bible that are somehow related to the verses we are studying. For example, when you read Ephesians 2:2—"the prince of the power of the air"—cross-references will lead you to John 12:31, where Jesus is talking about "the rulers of this world." Other places in the Bible will help you learn who this "prince" in Ephesians is instead of jumping to conclusions.

You can find a few cross-references in the margins of your Bible. You can also use websites like biblestudytools.com and biblegateway.com to look up additional cross references or other verses related to the one you are studying.

Rule 4: Look Up Words.

It's amazing how helpful looking up English words in the dictionary can be. Take Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Have you ever asked yourself what the difference between prayers and supplications is? An English dictionary defines supplication as "the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly." Just reading the definition already helps us to understand how God wants us to pray when we are anxious.

There are also many Bible dictionaries online to help us understand who key people are (e.g. Abraham, Melchizedek) and what key words mean (e.g. atonement, sanctification) as defined in the Bible.

Rule 5: What's Most Clear in the Bible Gets More Weight Over What's Less Clear.

We should never base core beliefs off obscure passages. What is clear in the Scriptures should be used to clarify and put boundaries around what is less clear. For example, though Hebrews 6:4-6 can sound like it may be possible to sin your way out of God's grip, there are many very plain passages about the security of those who are in Christ (John 6:37, 10:28, 17:12; Rom. 8:33-39). These passages are very clear about what is true of those in Christ, but Hebrews 6 is unclear about who verses 4-6 are talking about. Therefore, we allow the clear passages to help us interpret the less clear ones.

You can find more helpful principles of interpretation in the appendix. Now pick 3 questions, answer them, and share what interpretation rule you used.

- Example Question: Who is "he" in verse 9?
- Answer: Jesus
- Rule used: Context. Jesus starts speaking in Luke 17:17 and continues through this passage.

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Question 1:

Answer:

Rule used:

Question 2:

Answer:

Rule used:

Question 3:

Answer:

Rule used:

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A P P L I C A T I O N

APPLY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

As we've already stated, the point of Bible reading is not to acquire more information; it's to know and love God and be transformed into His likeness. We're reading the Bible because we want to know, love, enjoy, and obey Jesus. It can be tempting to apply the Bible in works-based ways (try-harder, do-better philosophies). But the central message of the Bible speaks against that. Our Bible reading has to stay connected to repentance (clinging to God and what He already accomplished for us in Jesus). Reading without repentance produces hard-hearted legalistic Pharisees. Bible reading with repentance produces happy-hearted and obedient followers of Jesus.

Here are some questions to help you apply a passage.

- Do I have any incorrect thoughts about God that need to change?
- Is there something to worship God for or thank Him for? The primary point of the Bible isn't to tell you what to do, but to show you what God has done for you in Jesus. This is what produces worship, love, and affection for Jesus. Worship of Jesus is produced as we realize what God has commanded us to do, how we have failed to do that, and how Jesus obeyed perfectly on our behalf. This is what we want to see in every passage and every place of the Bible.
- Is this passage exposing sin, namely self-trust or self-worship, that needs to be confessed?
- Where is repentance (turning from self and clinging to God) needed?
- Is this passage revealing a truth about God or the Gospel of Jesus Christ that I need to believe? What false beliefs must I turn from?
- What would my life look like if I believed the meaning of this text? How different is that from my life now?
- What action steps do I need to take—empowered by the Holy Spirit—today? Make your application specific to your life, not just a general principle. Also make your application realistic and doable.
- Is there someone to pray for or something to pray about?
- Is there a verse or passage on which to memorize or meditate?
- Who can I share this with?

PRACTICE APPLICATION

Write out 3 possible applications from this passage we've been studying. Pick 1 to walk out today:

Application 1: _____

Application 2: _____

Application 3: _____

We don't expect you to do all these steps in this much depth every time you pick up your Bible. Taking the time to do these things is like a drill. It strengthens the muscles so that rightly observing, interpreting, and applying the text comes more naturally to you every time you read your Bible. Be encouraged. The truth is that many of us will wake up in the morning, read our Bibles, and someone is going to ask us at lunch, "What did you read today?" and we are going to stare back with a blank look on our face because we have no idea. Be of good cheer. Reading the Bible and forgetting is far better than not reading the Bible at all. By reading the Bible (even when you forget), you are giving the Spirit of God a voice in your life to speak to your soul; by reading the Bible you are obeying God; and by reading the Bible you are putting kindling in your heart. And let's pray together for the Spirit of God to bring the fire to that kindling, so that our hearts will grow more and more happy in God.

Kelly Needham

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MAKE A PLAN

The most basic part of good Bible reading is choosing a place and a time to do it. Knowing how is one thing; actually setting aside time is another. Use the form below to come up with a plan for yourself. An example has been given to help you.

EXAMPLE PLAN

- Ideal Time: 6:30am
- Ideal Place: Living room
- Backup Time: 1:00pm
- Backup Place: During my lunch break at work or in the car before picking up kids from school
- Book of the Bible: Joshua
- How Much to Read: For 30 minutes, read 1 chapter, etc.
- How Will I Keep My Reading About Knowing and Loving God? Sing worship songs for 10 minutes after reading, keep a journal of what I am learning about who God is, etc.

MY PLAN

- Ideal Time: _____
- Ideal Place: _____
- Backup Time: _____
- Backup Place: _____
- Book of the Bible: _____
- How Much to Read: _____
- How Will I Keep My Reading About Knowing and Loving God? _____

After you complete this exercise, share your action steps with someone who can hold you accountable.

Kelly Needham

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A P P E N D I X

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- Principle of Illumination – Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to properly interpret Scripture. All born-again believers have been equipped by God to understand and interpret His Word. (I Corinthians 2:14)
- Principle of Inerrancy – All Scripture is inspired by God and inerrant (without error). (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21)
- Principle of Authority – All is our final authority for every area of life. (John 17:17)
- Principle of Sufficiency – Scripture is sufficient to answer all the questions and problems of life. (II Peter 1:3-4)
- Principle of Literary Form – A passage must be interpreted in relation to its literary form (narrative, exposition, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic, etc.).
- Principle of Meaning – A passage has one intended meaning for its original readers and should be taken literally unless it is obvious the author is speaking figuratively. The original meaning should be discerned before being applied to today's reader.
- Principle of Words – To correctly interpret a passage, we must understand the meaning of the individual word in the Greek or Hebrew. A good Bible translation is doing this for us (ESV, NASB, etc.).
- Principle of Grammar – To correctly interpret a passage, we must understand the basic grammar of the passage.
- Principle of Context – A word, verse, or passage must be interpreted in relation to its context (what comes before it and what comes after it).
- Principle of Background – To correctly interpret a passage, we must understand its historical and cultural background.
- Principle of Correlation – A passage must be interpreted in relation to what the rest of Scripture teaches. Scripture best interprets Scripture.
- Principle of Personal Application – We do not have to be absolutely correct in our interpretation of Scripture for God to speak to us.
- Principle of Teaching – We must do accurate interpretation before we teach something as a biblical absolute from Scripture.

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