

Bible Teaching Methods: Lesson 7
Preparing to Teach: **Analyzing and Interpreting the Text**

“Bible teaching that affects people’s lives begins with effective Bible study.” –R&B, p. 62

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2Tim 2:15, NIV)

- Work is involved in preparation.
- Preparation is the foundation for faithful communication of God’s message. Sometimes the preparation will be the 90% of the iceberg that your students never see.
- Familiarity with the Bible in general and your lesson text in particular gives ease in teaching it.
- Respect for the life-changing power of the Bible keeps the teacher from merely using the Bible as a springboard for launching the teacher’s own objectives. If the Bible’s truths are bypassed, then so also will be the authority of the Bible.

Key terms for interpreting Scripture

EXEGESIS: “reading the meaning out of a passage”; literally, to “draw out” the meaning, as opposed to reading our assumptions into it by reading between the lines or by jumping to conclusions

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (John 1:18 NKJV)

HERMENEUTICS: foundational rules for the science of biblical interpretation. A Greek “hermeneus” was an “interpreter,” the title being derived from Hermes, the messenger god.

“...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
–2Peter 1:20,21

Preparatory Inductive Bible Study

Inductive Bible study normally focuses on a passage or several parallel passages, as opposed to a topical study that ranges throughout the Bible to develop a theme or doctrine.

Five steps in the lesson study process:

1. **Observation:** What does it say?
 - a. Setting Questions
 - i. Who is the author or speaker?
 - ii. Why was the book written?

- iii. What historic events surround the book?
 - iv. Where was the book written?
 - v. Who is the audience?
- b. Context Questions
- i. What is the literary form of the passage?
 - ii. How does this passage fit into the book's overall message?
 - iii. Context: what precedes and follows this passage?
- c. Structural Questions
- i. Notice repeated words and phrases.
 - ii. Are there comparisons? Contrasts?
 - iii. Cause and effect in the text? ("since... therefore...")
 - iv. Forward progress in the passage in time? Action? Locomotion?
 - v. Is there a climax? If not, is there a pivotal statement or word?
 - vi. Identify and explain figures of speech.
 - vii. Are there linking words ("also, likewise, moreover" etc.), and what ideas are linked?
 - viii. What verbs describe the action/concepts in the passage? Where else are these words used in the book or in other books by the same author?

2. **Interpretation:** What does it mean?

While different Bible passages may have manifold applications to put into practice, a key principle of interpretation is that there will be **ONLY ONE** Interpretation—the original meaning intended by the Spirit through the biblical writer.

- a. Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture
 - i. Law of non-contradiction
 - ii. Clearer passages will shed light on more obscure parallel passages
- b. Context, both immediate and the larger, should interpret the passage, as opposed to lifting the text out of its context.

- c. The customary, “plain sense” meaning of language should be used first in interpretation. This approach recognizes deliberate figures of speech and apocalyptic imagery.

3. Generalization: What is the Big Idea of the passage?

- a. Determine the single, unifying principle
- b. Two helpful determinitives
 - i. What is the author saying? (= Subject)
 - ii. What is the author saying about his proposition or narrative? (= complement)

4. Application: What ways can it be put into practice?

- a. Necessarily preceded by interpretation
- b. Fixing the Big Idea should make it easier to show the Bible’s relevance without having to try to make the Bible relevant
- c. Especially note
 - i. Truth to live by
 - ii. Rebukes of attitude
 - iii. Correction of behavior or thinking
 - iv. Improvement in righteousness

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. –2Tim 3:16,17

5. Implementation: What must I change to practice it?

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
bridle his tongue
visit orphans and widows in their trouble,
keep oneself unspotted from the world. --James 1:22,27