

Word of God

Lesson Four

Foundation Scriptures: *“¹⁶ Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose, and action), ¹⁷So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16, 17 AMP)*

“¹² For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12 AMP)

I. What Is The Word of God?

- A. There are two Greek words that express the “Word” of God: **Logos** (lo'-gos) – a word; the **written form** of what someone has said; what is declared, as the expression of thought. **Rhēma** (rhā'-mä) – that which is or has been uttered or **spoken** by a living voice, a thing spoken of, word or saying. (John 1:1; Matthew 4:4)
- B. The Old and New Testaments are the written (*logos*) Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God **is God**; it’s Living, Powerful, Infallible, and was manifested in the flesh through **Jesus Christ!** (John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:17, 18; Jeremiah 30:2; Amos 3:7; II Peter 1:20, 21)

II. How Do You Study The Word of God?

A. Bible Interpretation (II Peter 1:20,21)

“What does the passage mean?” It is important to keep in mind that “there is only one interpretation” to a passage. Because of this, it is crucial to be meticulous in one’s study, while at the same time, remaining humble and willing to adjust your interpretation as your understanding of scripture grows.

The *Science of Bible Interpretation and the study of the Principles* it involves is called **Hermeneutics**. (not to be confused with Homiletics which is the *Science of Preaching*) The application of these Principles in the study of the Bible is called **Exegesis**. Teaching others Bible Interpretation arrived at is called **Exposition**. *Teachers of the Word of God use hermeneutics to exegete scripture in order to present expository lessons*. When examining these principles, remember “the primary purpose of Bible Interpretation is to discover what the authors meant by what they said”, and guard against trying to make the Bible say what we want it to say. To ensure the accuracy of our interpretations, explore the following principles when interpreting scripture.

1. Always Interpret Scripture In Light Of Its Context

Every passage you read must be understood in the light of the verses that come **before** and **after** it. The prefix “**con**” means **with** – context (with the text). The meaning of words are often linked to their context. Many passages will not be understood, or understood incorrectly, if we fail to follow this principle. For example, did you know that the Bible states “*There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1)? But a study of this statement’s context shows that “The fool says in his heart, *There is no God.*” Context can make a big difference. The more of the context you know, the less chance of an erroneous interpretation of the passage.

At Minimum – Read the verses prior to and after the passage you are studying

Better – Read the entire Chapter in which the passage is found

Even Better – Read the entire Book in which the passage is found

Best – Read the entire Bible

2. Interpret Scripture By Scripture (Deuteronomy 19:15; II Corinthians 13:1)

When interpreting any passage, first see if the Bible already contains an interpretation of that passage. (Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:1-15) Sometimes parallel passages in other Bible books can shed light on the meaning of a passage which is unclear in its immediate context. Cross referencing is essential – the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible!

3. Interpret According To The Proper Definition Of The Words (Proverbs 4:1-7 AMP)

A proper comprehension of a scripture passage begins with a correct understanding of the words that make up that passage. This can be done in various ways.

- a. A **Bible Dictionary** (Vines Expository Dictionary) is especially useful in providing definitions specific to Biblical words. A concordance can also include brief definitions of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic words. If you are able, purchase reference books that will enable you to work in the original languages of scripture. If possible, take a class in Greek or Hebrew to familiarize yourself with the original languages.
- b. The **Context** of a word is vital to understand its meaning (see #1).
- c. An **Exhaustive Concordance** (Strong’s Concordance) will give you every reference for every word in the Bible. You would do well by examining every use of the word, first by the same author and then by other Bible authors to understand how it is used throughout scripture.

4. Interpret According To Correct Grammar

It is important that the rules of grammar be noted and followed. Interpretations must conform to grammatical rules. If you are in need of a refresher course, purchase a grammar book and study it. Train yourself to recognize the subject and related verbs

of a sentence - the direct object, adjectives and adverbs. Make sure you are able to correctly identify pronouns and their antecedents, as well as analyze verbs and their tenses. All of this, and more, are crucial to obtain correct interpretations.

5. Interpret According To The Historical, Geographical, And Cultural Background

One of the great challenges of biblical interpretation is bridging the gap between the time, place and culture of the Biblical authors and our own. A common mistake of many is to read the Bible from a modern mindset while ignoring the fact that the original authors lived in a different time and place. We must research and recreate that time and place in order to better understand what each author meant.

Bible Encyclopedias, Reference Books and Commentaries can teach us much about the History and Culture of a passage. **Bible Atlases** help us to visualize the geographic surroundings. These reference tools help us bridge the gap that separate us from the original authors and help us to better understand the true meaning of the Bible.

6. Interpret According To Literal (Normal) Meaning, Unless That Meaning Is Clearly Inadequate (there are convincing reasons to consider otherwise)

Another common mistake is to spiritualize or find a deeper (secondary) meaning besides the literal meaning of a passage. It is tempting to seek hidden meanings in scripture, but unless the passage indicates this, it is always best to interpret a passage according to its literal or normal meaning. However, there are instances when it becomes necessary to find a secondary meaning.

- a. Metaphors and Similes (John 7:37-39; Isaiah 55:10,11)
- b. Parables or Allegories (Proverbs 5:15-23; John 15:1-11; Ephesians 6:10-17)
- c. Poetic Passages using imagery (Song Of Solomon 4 – A Bride's Beauty Praised)
- d. Prophetic Passages using symbolic language (Ezekiel 16:15-34; Jeremiah 3:1-14)
- e. Hyperboles (not to be taken literally but figuratively) (John 6:47-59; Mark 16:18)

B. Book, Character & Topical Studies

The Bible can be studied in a variety of ways, from a methodical study of an entire Book, to a comprehensive study of a specific Bible Character, to a thorough study of a Bible Topic. No matter which is chosen, the Principles of Bible Study still apply. Consider the following when undertaking Book, Character, and Topical Studies.

1. Book Study

A Book Study involves **studying through an entire Book in the Bible**. This is the best way to learn God's message and to learn His Will for us through that book.

a. **The Author** – Getting to know the author helps us understand their perspective of what is shared in the book. For example, although Matthew and Luke

both wrote about the life of Christ, because Matthew was a Jew and Luke a Gentile, their Gospels reflect these different points of view.

b. **The Historical Setting** – Understanding the historical background of the book gives you its context in relation to the surrounding events in history. For example, the Prophetic Books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah were all written at various times when the surrounding nations of Assyria, Babylon and Persia were rising and falling, all impacting the nation of Israel.

c. **The Dates of the Book** – Knowing the dates gives us an understanding of the time involved. For example, knowing that Israel remained in Egypt for over 400 years (between the time of Joseph and Moses) gives us an appreciation of why the Israelites wanted to return to Egypt. Egypt was the only home they knew; a place of security, even though it was also a place of slavery for them.

d. **The Purpose of the Book** – Most Study Bibles will include an introduction to each book that gives the Purpose of the book. Knowing the purpose helps to understand the author's main message that God is trying to relay to the reader.

2. Character Study

A Character Study involves carefully **studying the entire Life of a Bible Character** in order to learn God's lessons through that person's life.

a. Once you have selected a Character to study, use an Exhaustive Concordance, to locate every passage that mentions this Character.

b. Read through the passages and their context several times to gain a good overview of this Character's life.

c. Copy these passages in sequence in a notebook or make a chart of the main events in the Character's life (listing them as scripture relates them). This list will help you to see the life and all its events as a whole. It will also help you to see the progression of this Character's life and how God works in and through it.

d. Make a list of the spiritual truths and principles taught by the passages. This list will be what the Bible teaches about this Character's life. Write down any questions to ask others later.

3. Topical Study

A Topical Study involves a **careful and thorough study of a Specific Topic** addressed in scripture. These may be theological in nature, such as a study Jesus, Salvation, Sin, Christ's Return, Faith, etc.; or they may be general topics of interest such as Parenting, Marriage, Miracles, Forgiveness, Worship, etc.

- a. Once you have selected a topic to study, use an Exhaustive Concordance, to locate every verse that mentions this Topic. A **Topical Concordance** is especially helpful to direct you to related verses that speak about the selected Topic.
- b. Read through the passages and their context several times to gain a good overview of what the Bible teaches about this Topic.
- c. Copy these passages in a notebook so that you can see and study them as a whole.
- d. Make a list of the spiritual truths and principles taught by the passages. This list will be what the Bible teaches about this Topic. Write down any questions to ask others later.

C. Personal and Group Study

“It’s not What You Know, It’s What You Do with What You Know!” There is much wisdom in that statement; **unless what is learned is applied, then what was learned was vanity!** Utilize what has been learned personally and with others.

1. Personal Study

Every Christian should have a personal Bible Study regimen. Research God’s Word and discover His Will for your life! Too many believers depend solely on a pastor, teacher, or someone else to “feed” them God’s Word, limiting and stunting their spiritual growth and fruitfulness!

- a. Commit yourself to a personal study of God’s Word
- b. Set goals to study a selected Book, Character or Topic
- c. Determine a place and time for your personal Bible Study
- d. Keep a journal of your study for future reference as well as to share with others
- e. Invest in a good Study Bible, various translations, and other reference resources

2. Group Study

Studying the Bible with others can make Bible Study more interactive and interesting. A Group Study may motivate you more than if done alone. Group Bible Studies tend to enhance observations, interpretations, and applications as you share and learn from one another.

- a. Studying with others offers greater protection from inaccurate interpretations
- b. Can motivate you to be more accountable to apply what you’ve learned
- c. Group Bible Studies help to foster fellowship and build relationships
- d. Be willing to receive correction as well as give it; discuss, not argue, which tends to be unfruitful

It is important to remember, from all your studies, to share your notes, results, and questions

with individuals more mature and familiar with those principles and methods. This will help you develop accountability and protection from error. Finally, **apply these spiritual truths and principles** that God teaches you to your daily life!

Notes:

Questions:
