

PRINCIPLES OF FRUITFUL BIBLE STUDY 2

KEY VERSE

2 Tim 2:15

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

Do your best to present yourself

- Be zealous, be eager, show keen interest– *spoudazo*
- Every believer must zealously pursue God's approval

One way – to ensure the right handling of Scripture

5. INTERPRETATION

- What did God mean by what He said?
- That question is at the heart of interpretation.
- It all begins with a dependence upon God's Spirit for illumination.

Good interpretation uses the normal rules of literary interpretation.

- Interpret the Bible as you would any other kind of literature.
- It is the 'literal' method in that it takes the text at face value.
- recognize figures of speech, symbolism or imagery used

Daniel Webster once remarked:

'I believe that the Bible is understood and received in the plain obvious meaning of its passages, since I cannot persuade myself that a book that is intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world should cover its meaning in any such mystery and doubt that none but critics and philosophers discover it.'

- Interpretation takes *language* into consideration.
- It looks at words and their meaning, grammar, figures of speech, verb tenses, and so on.
- Interpretation looks at *culture*. How did they live when the text was originally written? What special customs, habits, or mores of their day would be helpful to

understand? It helps to recreate the actual situation out of which a Scripture was written.

- *Geography* is another prominent area in interpretation.
- Interpretation always looks at *history*.
- All of the Bible occurs in the context of world history.
- This discipline is the time context in which to understand what God did with Israel in the Old Testament or the church in the New.

David Cooper puts it memorably:

‘When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other senses; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.’

6. APPLICATION:

- Applying the Word of God to your life in a practical way
- applying the practical truths that you have studied

After you have answered the question - What does the text mean by what it says?

The next question should be - What does the text mean to me?

A great help in this realm of application is to memorize and meditate on the text.

The Lord instructed Joshua:

‘You shall meditate on it [the law] day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it’ (Josh. 1:8).

Paul admonished: *‘Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you’* (**Col. 3:16**).

Here are a series of questions that you could ask of every Bible passage studied.

1. Are there *examples* to follow?
2. Are there *commands* to obey?
3. Are there *errors* to avoid?
4. Are there *sins* to forsake?

5. Are there *promises* to claim?
6. Are there *new thoughts* about God?
7. Are there *principles* to live by?

The step of *personalization* is summarized by Johann Albrecht Bengel summarized this step of personalization like this:

'Apply thy whole self to the text; apply the whole text to thyself.'

Your study of Scripture is will only be fruitful when what **you know begins to direct how you live.**

When what you head knows – transferred to the heart and to hands and feet.

Jesus told his disciples – John 13:17

"If you know (understand these things, you are blessed if you do them"

James 1:22

'But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves'

John promised in Rev 1:3

'Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near'

7. PROCLAMATION

- True learning does not happen until you are able to teach someone else what you have been taught.
- That is the mastermind of discipleship as given by Paul to Timothy:

Tim 2:2

'And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also'

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

- Ezra had three life goals:
- to study the law of the LORD,
- and to practice it,
- and to teach it to Israel'

The culmination was to teach others what he had learned and mastered with his life.

- This step requires you to develop the habit of telling people what we have learned from God's Word
- Ask God for a way to do this and also to bring someone into your life on a regular basis with whom you can share your exciting discoveries in God's Word.
- You cannot afford to be silent and selfish about this most precious book ever written—and this is because someone's life out there might depend on it.

Potential candidates to hear your treasures of truth that you've learnt include:

- Dad or mom
- Husband or wife
- Son or daughter
- Friend
- Employer
- Fellow worker
- Neighbor

TOOLS FOR BIBLE STUDY

In dynamic Bible study – you will never exhaust the riches in any one passage of Scripture.

Psalmist: Psalm 119:96

To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless"

- however, much you dig, you will never touch the bottom

Coz you see – God's word is His wisdom – which is unsearchable

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and decisions and how unfathomable (inscrutable, enigmatic, indecipherable) and untraceable are His ways!

THE MESSAGE VERSION

Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It's way over our heads. We'll never figure it out.

We are meant to search for this wisdom

Nonetheless, we should keep digging and digging with intentionality

Solomon put it this way,

PROV 2:4-6

"if you seek her like silver and search her out like treasure, then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and the knowledge of God you will find. For Yahweh will give wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

You as a Christian – needs to dig for yourself

To dig for silver and treasures:

- we need tools
- you need to know the tools
- these tools will make your personal bible study more exciting and fruitful
- if the devil can keep you from digging into the truths of God – then his work will be much easier
- because a Christian who cannot spend regular time in the word of God will not be able to resist the devil's temptations or schemes
- As a pastor – I cannot afford to hide these tools from you
- Because according to – **Ephesians 4:23** my duty is to "prepare you for works of service"
- So, I show you the tools so you too can dig on your own – no always to depend on me or any other leader – you've got to learn to do it on your own
- Not just giving you fish but also to train you how to catch it.

CAUTION

These tools are not meant to replace the Bible

- They are meant to aid us in our personal bible study
- They are designed to help you get deeper into the bible
- They are like a shovel - helping you to dig deeper so you can get to the treasures of the word of God.
- The shovel is not the treasure – it is the tool that helps you get to the treasure.
- Please also notice that I am not discounting the place of the Holy Spirit.

1. A GOOD STUDY BIBLE

- Should have print that is large enough for you to read without problems – especially when you want to read it for longer periods – don't want headaches caused by straining our eyes
- Should be one with wide margins – where you could make personal notes as you read along and receive revelation
- Should have a good structure of cross-referencing

Recommendations:

- i. *New International Version*
- ii. *KJV* – However, the ancient language could be a handicap to you – the only solution is to have a more recent translation at hand during your Bible reading and study
 - Today you can buy a parallel Bible – which includes several translations side by side
 - Although some translations will have weaknesses in them, they contribute to your understanding of scripture and,
 - the advantage is that you are able to compare them with one another during your study
- iii. *NKJV*
- IV. *The Amplified Bible*
 - published by the Lockman Foundation and published by Zondervan
 - It is a translation that includes different possible meanings of words used in the text

- Though it is helpful in doing word studies, it is not recommended as a regular reading Bible.
- V. *The New Living Translation*
 - a. Produced and published by Tyndale House
- VI. *Today's New International Version*
- VII. *ESV* – is what I use

These versions and others out there are works of groups of people

You can also add to your library the following paraphrases of the bible – which are usually the work of one person:

- *The Living Bible* by Kenneth Taylor (Tyndale)
- *The Message* by Eugene Peterson (NavPress)

2. AN EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE

- This is the most important tool – you will need in your arsenal of bible study

Why?

- If you have a study Bible - It is a Bible index of the words contained in that version
- It will be at the back – with a few of the major words and names
- An exhaustive concordance will list the usage of every word in the Bible and will give you all the references where that word may be found

Versions:

- I. The original one – *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* – compiled for KJV
- II. *Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible* (Eerdmans)

3. A BIBLE DICTIONARY AND BIBLE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

- Explains – words, themes/topics, cultures in the Bible
- Also, will give you some historical and geographical perspective of the texts you will be reading
- Encyclopaedia – magnifies on the Bible dictionary – giving you longer pieces of information that delve deeper giving more details on the subject at hand.

Some of the best:

- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Broadman& Holman)
- *Bakers Encyclopaedia of the Bible* – 2 Vols (Baker)
- *The Complete Book of When and Where in the Bible* (Tyndale)
- *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3 Vols. (Tyndale)
- *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd Ed. (InterVarsity Press)
- *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nelson)
- *Encyclopaedia of Bible Characters*
- *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Zondervan)

4. A TOPICAL BIBLE

- Analogous to the concordance – only that this one – catalogues Bible verses by topics – while the concordance does so by words
- Some specific words of a topic may not have been written in the Bible – but referred to in the verses – this tool will help you not to miss such key words that will help you understand the Bible better.
- Good thing is that the verses under each theme or topic – are written in full so you can quickly scan through the key verses without having to look up each one in the Bible

A good one – *Nave's Topical Bible* (Moody Press)

5. COMMENTARY

- This is a collection of descriptive notes and interpretations on a particular Bible text – by renown Bible scholars.
- Purpose is to explain and interpret the meaning of the text by analysing the words used, background, grammar etc – and the relation of that particular text to the rest of the Bible
- It is important to note that this is someone else's insights into the text at hand
- Although this will increase your understanding of the Bible, you should not heavily depend on their revelation.

- That is why you must never consult a commentary before you read the Bible for yourself
- You will need to have your own insights into the text – before you can investigate what others have found in the text at hand
- Commentaries should never take the place of your personal Bible study
- They are written by people and they are of course imperfect – only the Bible is infallible
- You will discover that the more you read them, the more you will find out that some commentators disagree on interpretations of the same biblical text
- Best way to use a commentary – to check out your own findings with those of these scholars – to find out whether they are solid and doctrinally committed to Scripture.
- These authors must subscribe to the infallibility of the Word of God – they must regard the Bible as the Word of God

Some good ones:

- *Bible Knowledge Commentary*. 2 Vols, (Victor)
- *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Baker)
- *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition*, 2 Vols. (Zondervan)
- *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nelson)
- *New Bible Commentary: Twenty-first Century Edition* (InterVarsity Press)

Also, commentaries with more volumes:

- *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 4 vols. (Victor)
- *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Broadman & Holman)
- *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Bradman & Holman)
- *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 13 vols. (Zondervan)

6. WORD STUDIES

- Helps you to study original words of the bible without knowing any Hebrew or Greek
- Some scholars have spent their lives searching the full meaning of these words – written them in simple and understand language

- They tell you the original root meaning of the word – etymology
- The various uses of such words throughout the bible
- The frequency with which the word is used or occurs in the Bible

Recommendations:

- i. *Kregel's Dictionary of the Bible and Theology* (Kregel)
- ii. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Hendrickson)
- iii. *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: New Testament*, 3 Vols. (Victor)
- iv. *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: Old Testament*, 4 vols. (Victor)

7. BIBLE SOFTWARE

- eSword
- Logos Bible Software

CONCLUSION

Now, you are scratching your head going

- Yes, you are right they are
- You need to think of them as an investment into your spiritual life– a long-term one at that
- There are many books that you will read – finish and heap onto your bookshelf
- But such reference books – you will read over and over again as you study the Bible
- If you are serious about your Bible study – you will invest in these tools – regardless of the cost
- You can start small – and build up your library as time goes on
- Set a goal of getting one – each month
- Because the Bible is God's word – Bible study must be given top priority in all your investments – timewise and moneywise

With these tools, you will be able to deeply and effectively delve into Scripture – and is so doing – live out **2 Tim. 2:15**

- Become a worker approved by God

- One who is without shame
- Able to rightly divide God's word