

BIBLE STUDY - WHERE TO BEGIN?

Before we begin, allow me to give a warning:

- Harmonize. Know all of God's word on the topic or book before you pull the trigger on what you teach or practice. This isn't meant to scare you (and we have all been off), but it's good to remember.
- Hermeneutics. It's the science of interpreting scripture. There are many good guidelines to follow, such as:
 - Follow a clear passage over an obscure passage.
 - Remember the Bible contains figures of speech, history, poetry, symbolism, etc. If you're not careful, you'll come away confused or with a misguided understanding of God's word.
- Honesty. If you go into a study with your mind already made up . . . what's the point? Don't read the passages that fit your position. Don't apply sound reason only when it's convenient for you, etc. Just be honest and have a heart to seek the truth.

I. Know the Background - Acts 7

- A. See how Stephen went through their history? From Abraham to Joseph to Moses to David and the Prophets and finally Jesus.
- B. Do you know the basic bible layout? If not you may want to start a yearly bible reading. It would be good to have someone you can reach out to help with some basic questions as you go along. As a general rule there's nothing wrong with some "guidance". We learn that principle from the Eunuch in Acts 8.
- C. Know the divisions of history, poetry, prophets, etc. Understand the layout of the New Testament. It's not in chronological order. Jesus' life, history, letters of Paul to churches and individuals, etc. Know the place/purpose of each book.
- D. Could you explain the Bible layout as a whole right now? Walk someone through the Old and New Testament? If not that may be a good place to start. Take notes as you go along and ask the question: why is this being mentioned? Look for the "story" being told and make sure you can follow.

II. Grasping Books - Luke 9:28-31

- A. It's an amazing account. We know what they were talking about generally (His departure), but not specifically.
- B. However, if Moses or Elijah were to speak to you would you know who they were and their significance? Before quoting from them you need to know who they are - specifically. What books of the Bible record the life of Moses and Elijah. Which books did Moses "pen"?
- C. It's very important that we know these books by themselves. What's their significance? What's the theme? Who wrote it and when? If God's word is to help us then you want to understand their place. For example: If we discuss suffering which books, not verse, would you go to? There more you understand a book the more your knowledge grows of various subjects.
- D. Try and take note of what the chapters are about. This is especially easier for the shorter books. You'll be surprised how much your knowledge will grow. Drill the basic meaning for each one.
- E. Try and pick a book and read it through at least one time every day. Start to notice certain themes. This is where marking will definitely come in handy. As you continue to read through

the letter you'll notice a main theme and then "sub-themes". Highlight each passage or idea with another color and match the themes.

- F. For example: 1 & 2 Thessalonians will address the Lord's second coming and the fate of those who had already died, but take a look at the terms faith, hope, and love and what they're connected to. Sometimes in Paul's letters he'll talk about the Lord and before you know if you've noticed that he'll bunch the Father, Spirit, and Lord all together, but his writings are so smooth it goes unnoticed. However, he was showing how the Godhead all worked together in our lives and salvation. For example: I love certain terms that John uses in His writings such as abide, know, light, darkness, says, walks, practice, "I am writing", born of, and love. Let's look at the idea of "born" in 1 John: 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. It's just really exciting!

III. Grasping Topics - Luke 20:27-44.

- A. Not only could Jesus talk big picture (summary of the Law), but He could get into the specific. Let's discuss topics.
- B. They want to discuss the topic of marriages protocol (Deuteronomy 25) and Jesus takes them to Exodus 3. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then He turns the table and asks about a Royal Psalm. Not Psalms as a whole, but the topic of the Christ.
- C. Using this as an example: begin to use your cross references. See other New Testament books that use this passage. Go back to Psalm 110. You'll notice the mention of Melchizedek and how Jesus relates to Him. Perhaps you begin to look back at David (because you know that 2 Samuel has to do with his rule and where you can probably find where a promise is made about His son ruling and you find yourself in 2 Samuel 7. Does it take time? Yep. Do you grow? Tremendously. You take what you know to be true as a whole and begin to fine tune topics. You never know where it will take you and the study is very satisfying. It feels very "original".
- D. You can begin to make notes in your bible and create your own bible chains. So, if you know a certain topic's beginning, you go to that passage and now you have your own cross-reference in the margins. Go to the next passage referenced and you'll find another passage you put in the margins, etc. So, you drill in your mind where to begin or take note of it maybe in some blank passages in your bible and you know where to start!
- E. Sometimes you can take what feels like very complicated ideas, but a few passages go a long way. For example: Look at John 1:13. I have cross references to James 1:18; John 3:3,6; 1 Peter 1:3, 23. However, when you reference off of 1 Peter 1:3 it takes you to 1 Peter 3:21.
- F. Not only does this help us contend for the faith, but it helps guide us when we're struggling against temptation ("It is written"), anxiety or sorrow, making decisions or instructing others.

IV. Helpful Tips

- A. Greek-English Lexicon - know what the words mean. Biblical dictionary so you know their biblical meaning.
- B. Several translations - sometimes the greatest tool. You'll see how the same word is translated using two or three different terms. Typically gives you a well rounded idea.
- C. Concordance - Great for topical study. It gathers all the passages together for that topic.
- D. Commentaries: It's alright to use commentaries. You know what I give you every Sunday? Commentary on the scriptures. It's why you're responsible for checking yourself. Only difference is you hear one and read the other. Just a different format. There are many on line that are free or brethren that will lend you some. Just understand that it's from the mouth of men, so it could be flawed. It will be flawed. There are bad conclusions from those inside and

outside the body. Obviously some more than others. Spit out the bones. Not recommended for those who are young in the faith.