

How to Study the Bible

Building Effective Study Habits and Techniques

Studying the Bible is important because it is the written word of God. Better study habits will not only increase our understanding of the Scriptures, but they will also increase our appreciation for the word of God. There are three basic steps we can take to build better Bible study habits.

- I. First, there is observation - what do I see when I look at the text?
- II. Then, there is interpretation - what does the text mean?
- III. Finally, there is application - what do I do with the text?

Parts I and II are meaningless if we do not practice Part III.

Observation is what is seen when I read a passage. Look up terms that I do not know the meaning of. For example - Propitiation, justification, repentance, frontlets, etc. Words can be looked up in a Bible dictionary. However, the meaning of the words are defined by the context.

I can look at grammar and sentence structure. What is the subject or verb in this passage? Verbs are action words that tell me who is doing what.

I can look at the literary structure. Are words or phrases being repeated? Is there a pattern of questions/answers or cause/effect in the text?

I can look at genre or form? Am I reading a narrative, a Psalm, a book of the Law, a Gospel, etc?

Interpretation is where I begin to ask questions about the meaning of the text. Who is the audience? Are they asking any questions? Are any questions being addressed? Before determining what the passage means to me, I must first know what the passage meant to its original audience.

Application is most important. Studying grammar and literary structure is the easy part. The most difficult part is application of the text. In other words, "What do I do with the text?" I must apply it to myself first before I apply it to others. Application is not about intellect, but it is about change. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2).