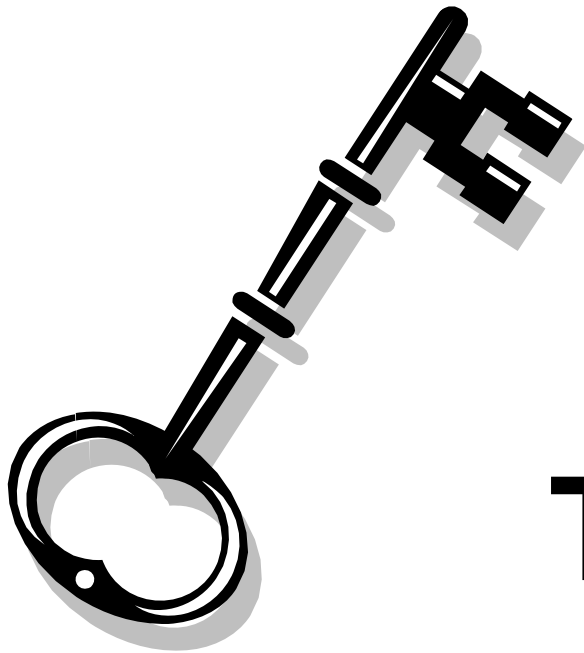


UNLOCKING



GOD'S

TREASURE

Keys for Correctly Interpreting God's Word

A ministry of:

[Striving For Eternity Ministries](#)

Unlocking God's Treasure

INTRODUCTION

Many Christians recognize that the Bible is the source of spiritual growth for their life but become frustrated when they come to the text and attempt to gain an understanding of it. This study is designed to give the student of the Scriptures some of the keys to correctly interpreting the Word of God. Before we enter into such a study, it will benefit us to outline the objectives of this study and the obstacles that will hinder your personal study.

I. The Objectives

- A. To help the student become more effective in interpreting the Word of God to the end that they may have a closer walk with God and that they may be ready to minister with the Word.
- B. To introduce the student to the various tools available for in-depth Bible study.
- C. To teach the student to more effectively use his-her English Bible.
- D. To assist the student in gaining a greater appreciation for the Word of God

II. The Obstacles

A. No *Conversion*

Spiritual things will have no bearing on personal life (1 Corinthians 2:14).

B. No *Commitment*

Searching the deep things of God is a rewarding task, but it is a task. A student must be committed to the study of the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15)

C. No *Church*

A Bible-teaching church gives you opportunities to not only gain insight into passages, but to gain glimpses of the process as well.

SECTION 1

An Appreciation of the Scriptures

The primary objectives of this kind of study focuses on the methods of Bible Study. In order to lay the foundations, however, it is essential to first gain an appreciation of the Scriptures themselves. This will assist all of us to appreciate the truths of any text we are studying.

This section of the study is indebted to John MacArthur and his book How to Study the Bible, Moody Press, 1982.

I. ATTRIBUTES OF THE BIBLE

A. It is *Infallible*

Every word of the Bible is exactly how God had intended them to be (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7)

B. It is *Inerrant*

The Bible is without error. This focuses on the necessary relation between the *authenticity* of the words and the *authority* of its message.

C. It is *Complete*

This truth is sometimes called *plenary*. This emphasizes the fact that nothing should be *added* to the Bible and nothing should be *subtracted* from it. (Revelation 22:18-19).

D. It is *Authoritative*

The Bible is God's *self-revelation* of the One who has the right and power to command compliance in thought and deed upon His rational creatures.

E. It is *Trustworthy*

All that God has said in His Word is sure and is either a present reality or will come to pass. This also includes the fact the statements of *history*, *geography*, and *science* are also trustworthy statements.

F. It is *Eternal*

Heaven and earth will pass away before God's Word. The standards and precepts for character and morality will be in effect throughout eternity.

II. AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE

It must be understood that we accept the authenticity of the Bible ultimately by faith. There are, however, certain realities that affirm the authenticity of the Bible.

A. Prophecy

Every thing that the Bible has said would come to pass has come to pass.

“Peter Stoner, in his book Science Speaks, said that if you take just eight of the Old Testament Prophecies Christ fulfilled (Stoner is a scientist in the area of mathematical probabilities), and add up the probabilities that these eight things could come to pass by accident, it would be one chance in 10^{17} that such an accident could happen – and yet every detail has come to pass. One chance in 10^{17} would be like filling the state of Texas with two-foot deep in silver dollars, putting an “x” on one of them, and giving a blind man one pick. He’d have one chance in 10^{17} in picking the one with the “x” on it” (MacArthur, How To Study the Bible, p. 17).

B. Christ

Christ Himself was convinced of the authority of Scripture (Matthew 5:18). He used it to defeat Satan (Matthew 4:1-11) and appealed to it as the record of salvation (John 5:39).

C. Miracles

The purpose of the witness of miracles was to attest to the truth of the message connected to it.

1. Exodus 4:28-31
2. Matthew 9:5,6
3. John 5:36
4. Acts 2:22
5. Hebrews 2:4

These were testimonies to the truths the apostles and Christ were teaching.

D. Experience

While certainly not the most authoritative proof, experience does bear witness of the authenticity of the Word of God. 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares that when one receives Christ, he/she is a “new creation”. Testimony upon testimony of life-change can be attributed to a proper response to the message of the Book!

III. AIM OF THE BIBLE

A. It Provides Us with *Doctrinal* Truth

1. God
2. Christ
3. Holy Spirit
4. Man
5. Angels
6. Salvation
7. Sin
8. Future

B. It Provides Us with *Practical* Truth

1. Guidelines concerning temptation
2. Guidelines concerning trials
3. Guidelines concerning marriage
4. Guidelines concerning children
5. Guidelines concerning finances
6. Guidelines concerning lifestyle
7. Guidelines concerning problems
8. Guidelines concerning work
9. Guidelines concerning church

Understanding the attributes of the Bible, the authenticity of the Bible, and the aim of the Bible; we should be all the more motivated toward diligent study so that we may truly be the ministers of Truth that God wants us to be.

IV. OUTLINE OF BOOK OF THE BIBLE

BOOK	DIVISION		
	MINOR	MAJOR	
Genesis	Pentateuch	The Law	
Exodus			
Leviticus			
Numbers			
Deuteronomy			
Joshua	Historical	Writings	
Judges			
Ruth			
First Samuel			
Second Samuel			
First Kings			
Second Kings			
First Chronicles			
Second Chronicles			
Ezra			
Nehemiah			
Esther			
Job			Poetical
Psalms			
Proverbs			
Ecclesiastes			
Song of Solomon			
Isaiah	Major Prophets		
Jeremiah			
Lamentations			
Ezekiel			
Daniel	Minor Prophets		
Hosea			
Joel			
Amos			
Obadiah			
Jonah			
Micah			
Nahum			
Habakkuk			
Zephaniah			
Haggai			
Zechariah			
Malachi			

BOOK	DIVISION	
	MINOR	MAJOR
Matthew	Gospels	Historical
Mark		
Luke		
John		
Acts	Acts of the Apostles	
Romans	Epistles of Paul	Epistles
First Corinthians		
Second Corinthians		
Galatians		
Ephesians		
Philippians		
Colossians		
First Thessalonians		
Second Thessalonians		
First Timothy		
Second Timothy		
Titus		
Philemon		
Hebrews		
James	Epistle of James	
First Peter	Epistles of Peter	
Second Peter		
First John	Epistles of John	
Second John		
Third John		
Jude	Epistle of Jude	
Revelation	Revelation	Apocalypse

SECTION 2

Tools for Bible Study

As in digging for buried treasure, the better the tools, the more efficient the dig. Below are some guidelines for effective tools for the study of God's treasure.

I. BIBLES

A. Translations of the Bible

Translations of the Bible fall into three primary categories:

- 1) Literal – word for word translation
- 2) Free – thought by thought translation; or sentence by sentence
- 3) Paraphrase – a paraphrase of the text

While this is not an exhaustive study on the families of translations, we will examine the benefits and weaknesses of each of the major translations. In the English language there are five translations used by churches and Christians. In this study, we will examine the history of these texts, their strengths and their weaknesses.

1. THE KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)

Also known as the Authorized Version (AV)

a. *Its History*

Because of the variety of independent versions, the Puritans petitioned King James 1 in 1603. This resulted in a conference at Hampton Court in 1604. One statement which came out of this conference was:

“That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service.”

Work began in 1607, and the version was complete in 1611. Fifty men made up six panels of translators. Three panels worked on the Old Testament, two panels on the New Testament, and one panel on the Apocrypha.

In 1611, three revisions were accomplished. The first was known as the “He” Bible, and the last two called the “She” Bible, because of their respective renderings of Ruth 3:15.

The revision made at Cambridge in 1762 and at Oxford in 1769 modernized the language of the previous Authorized Versions. These are the revisions that make up our King James Version.

b. *Its Features*

A very literal and reliable translation, based upon the Byzantine family of manuscripts and the Majority Text. Its only drawback is the use of archaic and obsolete words which make its reading difficult at times to the modern reader.

2. THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION (RSV)

a. *Its History*

“The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611” (Preface, p.iii).

b. *Its Features*

This text has often come into question for its consistent bent toward liberal theology in what text they choose. Some examples are Colossians 1:14, Acts 8:37, and Isaiah 7:14. The RSV is basically a literal translation, though often not used by conservative evangelicals because of their concerns over these liberal tendencies.

3. NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB)

a. *Its History*

This translation was realized because of the perceived need to incorporate recent textual discoveries as well as rendering it into more modern English (than the 1901 American Standard Version). The editorial team completed this version in 1971.

b. *Its Features*

“When it was felt that the word-for-word literalness was unacceptable to the modern reader, a change was made in the direction of a more current English idiom” (Preface to NASB) While it is idiomatic, it still may be considered a literal translation. The NASB is based primarily on the New Testament work of the Nestle's Novum Testamentum Text (based on the Alexandrian family of manuscripts).

Because of its exclusive reliance on the fewer and older manuscripts, it often omits or notes omissions in its margin of various texts (i.e., Colossians 1:14).

4. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

a. Its *History*

This version was developed by establishing a series of three committees: 1) The translation by the translators of the books of the Bible; 2) These translations were then reviewed by one of the Intermediate Editorial Committees for revision.

From that point it went to the General Editorial Committee who would make further revisions. The Committee on Bible Translation was the final revision. The actual work of the NIV was completed in 1978.

b. Its Features

While proclaiming to work from all families of the Greek text, their desire for a modern English translation resulted in the NIV being a free translation and not a very literal translation.

It eliminates a large amount of verses from the actual text (Matthew 17:21; Matthew 18:11; Matthew 23:14; Mark 7:16; Mark 9:44; Mark 9:46; Mark 11:26; Mark 15:28; Luke 17:36;; Luke 23:17; John 5:3-4; Acts 8:37; Acts 15:34; Acts 24:7; Acts 28:29; Romans 16:24). This does not include a number of *portions* from the other verses. Some of its translations are weak (1 Timothy 3:16 "he" instead of "God").

As a translation, it too often interprets (i.e. 1 Samuel 15:33 "and Samuel put Agag to death"; 1 Peter 1:2 "for obedience to Jesus Christ").

This translation may be helpful in Bible Study, but must be recognized as a free translation and not a literal translation.

5. THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION (NKJV)

a. Its *History*

The Preface of the 1611 AV stated their purpose was not "to make a new translation...but to make a good one better". Then they spoke of the Bishops Bible. The New King James editors used this purpose to refer to their new translation.

In the Old Testament they drew from a number of ancient Hebrew Texts, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and relevant portions from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The New Testament was based upon the Byzantine texts, with references made to various manuscripts discovered since the Authorized Version was completed. This work was completed in 1982.

b. Its Features

The NKJV includes variant readings in the Margin of the U (Nestle's Greek) and the M (Majority text) should there be differences in the manuscript witness.

The NKJV also includes the fullness of the King James Version and the literal translating which characterized the KJV.

The NKJV eliminates the archaic or obsolete words and replaces them with accurately translated alternatives.

B. Study Bibles

There are a number of Study Bibles available today. Here are just a few of them.

1. MacArthur Study Bible

- a. Excellent reference for in-text study.
- b. The introduction for each book provides the reader with information about the historical background (title, authorship) as well as an overview of its contents.
- c. Provides key information under the text in order to help understanding of the text.
- d. Introduction to the Bible
- e. How We Got the Bible
- f. How to Study the Bible
- g. Topical Index
- h. Overview of Theology

2. Thompson Chain Reference Bible

- a. Set up with a number system on the side margin that allows a person to topically study a text.
 - b. In the back are eight departments to which this numbering system is linked:
 - 1) Text cyclopedia
 - 2) Outline studies
 - 3) Analysis of Bible books
 - 4) Character studies
 - 5) Harmonies and illustrated studies
 - 6) Archaeological Supplement
 - 7) Concordance
 - 8) Indexed Atlas
3. Ryrie Study Bible
- a. Excellent reference for in-text study.
 - b. The introduction for each book provides the reader with information about the historical background (title, authorship) as well as an overview of its contents.
 - c. Provides key information under the text in order to help understanding of the text.
 - d. The back provides a number of helps:
 - 1) Harmony of the Gospels
 - 2) Survey of Bible Doctrines
 - 3) Background and History of the Bible
 - 4) Helpful tables of information
 - 5) Topical Index
 - 6) Concordance
 - 7) Maps
4. New Open Bible
- a. Put out by Nelson's publishers.
 - b. The New Open Bible contains:

- 1) Concise book introductions
- 2) Cross-references
- 3) 40 in-depth word studies
- 4) 48 in-text maps
- 5) 100 illustrated Bible close-ups
- 6) Includes a "How to Study the Bible" section

5. Other Study Bibles

- a. Comparative Study Bible
- b. Reese Chronological Bible
- c. Cults Reference Bible

II. CONCORDANCES

A. Their Objective

A concordance gives the lay-person an opportunity to glean from the original languages of the Bible while not having to know a thing about them.

A concordance is used by first looking up the word in the English as it appears in your text. You then take that number and find it in the back. This will give you a brief explanation of the word you were looking up.

B. Some Options

1. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
2. Cruden's Concordance
3. Young's Analytical Concordance

III. BIBLE HANDBOOK

A. Their Objective

Bible handbooks are good because they give you the opportunity to gain an overview of a certain book, glean valuable background information, as well as giving you an overview of the content of the book.

B. Some Options

1. Unger's Bible Handbook
2. Halley's Bible Handbook

3. The Baker Bible Handbook

4. Walk Thru the Bible

IV. DICTIONARIES

There are a variety of tools that adorn the title "dictionary". In order to eliminate any confusion, we will introduce three types of dictionaries.

A. *Expository* Dictionaries

1. Their Objective

These provide the student of Scripture with the meanings of words in their original languages.

2. Some Options

a. Vine's Expository Dictionary (New Testament)

b. Nelson's Expository Dictionary (Old Testament)

c. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

B. *Bible* Dictionaries

1. Their Objective

Bible Dictionaries furnish the student of God's Word with background information on various people, places, and things of the Bible.

2. Some Options

a. Unger's Bible Dictionary

b. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

c. New Bible Dictionary

C. *Theological* Dictionaries

1. Their Objective

This type of dictionary supplies background information on various theologies, their history, those who held them. These also furnish some biographies on key historical leaders in the church.

2. Some Options

- a. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Elwell)
- b. New Dictionary of theology (Ferguson, etc.)

V. OTHER HELPFUL TOOLS

A. *Commentaries* on the Bible

1. Their Objective

Commentaries provide the student with insight from those who have studied the entire content and provided their findings.

WARNING: Before you use a commentary, it is important that you know the background of its author. The way they interpret certain things may be influenced by their theological background.

2. Some Options (on the whole Bible)

- a. Jamison-Fausset-Brown
- b. Expositor's Bible Commentary
- c. Bible Knowledge Commentary
- d. Everyman's Bible Commentary
- e. Tyndale Bible Commentary

B. Books on *Bible Geography*

1. Their Objective

These tools for study provide maps which correspond to certain Bible events, geographic descriptions, as well as archaeological information.

2. Some Options

- a. MacMillan Bible Atlas
- b. Moody Atlas of the Bible

C. Bible *Encyclopedias*

1. Their Objective

These are expanded Bible dictionaries, typically coming in more than one volume.

2. Some Options
 - a. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)
 - b. Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia
- D. Books on *Customs and Manners*
1. Their Objective

Customs and Manners books provide topical studies typically on things like the home, money, trade, schooling, etc. during Bible times. Note that much of this information may also be found in Bible dictionaries or Encyclopedias.
 2. Some Options
 - a. Handbook of Life in Bible Times (Thompson)
 - b. Today's handbook of Bible Times and Customs (Coleman)

VI. Computer Software

A. Logos

1. Books, Books and more Books

Logos has more books available than any other software package. This provides the widest range of material.

2. Searching

The searching ability makes Logos worth its price. It allows the user to sift through thousands of books within minutes (depend on the computer processor of course). However, Logos provides many different ways to search through the Logos library to find what the desired results.

3. Integrated Tools

Logos provides a well integrated tool set. This tool is great for personal Bible study or serious research. The integration makes it easy to get original language help.

B. Bible Works

The strength of this tool is for its original language research. It has one of the best Greek works. Bible Works may be good for the serious Bible student but not as useful to the casual Bible student.

C. Ages

Ages provides inexpensive books in an Adobe pdf format. Adobe does not provide much in the way of search tools or integrated books. However, if inexpensive books are the desire, this is the best way to go.

VII. Web Sites

Note: The mentioning of these websites is not an endorsement. Discernment is always required, especially on the internet.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com> – Commentaries and Bible passage search online

<http://www.virtualeseminary.net> – Many books online

<http://www.biblebb.com> – Many online sermons, including John MacArthur

<http://www.iclnet.org> – Mega-site of books

<http://www.ccel.org> – Mega-site of classic Christian literature

<http://www.puritansermons.com> – Mega-site of Puritan sermons and books

<http://www.sermoncentral.com> – A site full of sermons

<http://executableoutlines.com> – Outlines and overview of Bible books

<http://www.bible.org> – Home of the NET Bible and many other resources

<http://www.answersingenesis.org> – Many creation science articles

<http://www.creationontheweb.com/> - More creation science articles

<http://www.carm.org> – Christian apologetics and research materials

<http://www.str.org> – More Christian apologetic materials

SECTION 3

Keys to Unlocking God's Treasure

The basic type of study this section will discuss is the *Inductive Bible Study*. Inductive Bible study is the process of allowing the Scriptures to interpret themselves. Moving from the big picture to the details allows interpretation to be determined by context. We first of all need to identify what are the incorrect methods of interpretation and the correct model of interpretation.

I. *Models of Interpretation*

A. Incorrect Models of Interpretation

Among those who respect the authority and validity of the Bible, there are basically three false methods of interpretations.

1. *Isolationism*

Interpreting a verse or passage without regard for the context in which it is found.

2. *Prooftexting*

Stringing a series of verses together in order to prove or develop a certain theology.

This is done typically by stringing together verses that have been interpreted apart from their context (isolationism).

3. *Spiritualizing*

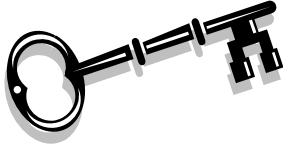
Reading a truth (either spiritually or historically) into a text or book of the Bible.

B. Correct Model of Interpretation

We believe in the literal-normal model of interpretation which embraces the following truths:

1. Scripture is to be interpreted in its historical context.
2. Scripture is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar (which includes the recognition of literary devices).
3. Scripture is to be interpreted according to its context.

We will consider the FOUR KEYS to understanding God's Word.



KEY # 1: IDENTIFICATION

In order to correctly interpret any passage, the student of Scripture must first recognize what type of literature they are investigating. Within the Scriptures there are basically five types of literature: Historical narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, prophetic revelation, and epistles of instruction. Each of these types of literature have different rules of interpretation.

I. *Historical Narrative*

A. Books of the Bible which are Historical Narrative:

1. Old Testament

Genesis-Ruth

1 and 2 Samuel

1 and 2 Kings

1 and 2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

2. New Testament

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

B. Keys to Interpreting Historical Literature

1. Narratives do not directly teach doctrine
2. Narratives do not always record what should happen or record good examples. They simply record what happened.
3. Narratives do not always include a statement as to whether the event was good or bad.

4. Narratives are not allegories with hidden meanings
5. Narratives are stories about God first.

II. *Poetic Literature*

A. Books of the Bible which are Poetic Literature

Psalms

Song of Solomon

Plus portions of many Old Testament Books

B. Keys to Interpreting Poetic Literature

Hebrew poetry includes the following types of parallelism:

1. *Synonymous* Parallelism (Psalm 3:1)

The second line is saying the same thing as the first for emphasis.

2. *Synthetic* Parallelism (Psalm 95:3)

The second line builds up the thought in the first.

3. *Emblematic* parallelism (Psalm 42:1)

The first line illustrates the content of the second.

4. *Antithetical* Parallelism (Psalm 1:6)

The first line is put against the second that form a contrast.

5. *Climatic* Parallelism (Psalm 29:1)

The second line completes the first by repeating part of the first then expanding.

6. *Formal* Parallelism (Psalm 2:6)

Two lines put together to express thought or theme.

III. *Wisdom Literature*

A. Books of the Bible which are Wisdom Literature

Job

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

B. Keys to Interpreting Wisdom Literature

1. Wisdom literature is advice from those who had learned valuable lessons from life.
2. Wisdom literature uses "maxims", or short statements of truth.
3. Wisdom literature uses a variety of literary devices.
 - a. Parallelism (see above)
 - b. Comparison (Proverbs 22:1)
 - c. Contrasts (Proverbs 10:1-14)
 - d. Metaphors and Similes (Proverbs 26:23)
 - e. Portraits (Proverbs 31:1-31)
 - f. Vignettes (Proverbs 27:23-27)

IV. *Prophetic Literature*

A. Books of the Bible which are Prophetic

Isaiah-Malachi

Revelation

B. Keys to Interpreting Prophetic Literature

In order to understand prophetic literature, these issues need to be carefully addressed:

1. Identity of the Prophet
2. Understand the reason why the prophet spoke
3. Note his audience
4. Note the time of his prophecies

V. *Instruction from the Epistles*

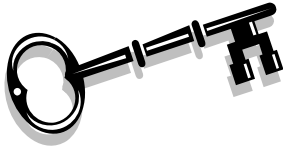
A. Books of the Bible which are Epistles (letters)

Romans-Jude

B. Keys to Interpreting the Epistles

New Testament Epistles are very special and vital for our faith for a number of reasons:

1. Epistles are letters of instruction for the churches.
2. They were written by their authors to a specific group which had specific problems or needs. Therefore, they are very important for the New Testament believer.



KEY # 2: INVESTIGATION

Read through the text you are studying number of times. It is best if you are doing a study like this to read through your passage a number of times, from two or more versions if possible. As you read through the text, write down the answers to these significant questions:

I. *What?*

Note key themes or events in the text as well as any key indicators of the structure of the text. Look for recurring words (e.g. “ungodly” in Jude), phrases (e.g. God forbid [KJV] in Romans), addresses to specific groups (e.g. wives, husbands, children, etc., in Ephesians). Also note Old Testament quotations in New Testament.

II. *Who?*

Determine who the writer is, who is the recipient, or any other characters mentioned in the text. Note any comments about these people; their nationality, occupation, family, character, or any other significant features.

III. *Why?*

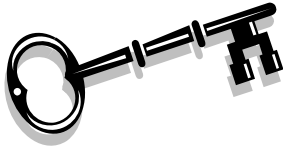
Look for the reason(s) why the author wrote what he wrote. This is the purpose of the book. Sometimes it is found in one verse (e.g. John 20:31; 1 John 5:13) or repetitious themes (e.g. 1 Peter “suffering”; Genesis “these are the generations of”). Some books have more than one purpose (e.g. Hebrews seems to have both a Christian and non-Christian audience.)

IV. *When?*

Observe any indicators of time in the book as to when it was written. Also note times of day, mentioning of months and years. Possibly any feasts or holidays connected to the text. These unlock insight into the book (e.g. Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1). It is also important to note where the book fits into the plan of the church or the plan of Israel.

V. *Where?*

Are there any significant geographical features or mention of locality in the text (i.e. cities, type of geography, seas, rivers, countries, etc.)?



KEY # 3: INTERPRETATION

Once we have written our first impressions and general observations of the text, we begin to gain some information which will further our understanding of the text. At this point we begin employing some of our tools.

I. *Chart* the Passage

A. Determine the Units of thought.

1. Breakdown the passage into Paragraphs

These are usually identified by bold verse numbers, paragraph marks, or headings.

2. In New Testament Epistles (Romans-Jude) it is beneficial to identify the sentences within each paragraph. Since these books of the Bible are *instructional* in nature, the sentences will provide support for the themes of each paragraph. This is not necessary in historical books, prophetic books or in poetry.

There are also recorded sermons in which this may be beneficial (e.g. Acts 2:14-36).

B. Determine their link with the preceding and proceeding passage.

What does the preceding and proceeding paragraph of information have to do with your context?

II. *Examine* the Context

A. Background to the characters

1. Within the book
2. In Other books of the Bible
3. In Outside sources

B. Key Themes and Events

1. Observe comments in study Bible or Dictionary
2. Write definitions of key words as they fit into the context

C. Time Factor

1. Find out date of book
2. Observe any other books of the bible that may give you insight into the historical setting.
3. Look up historical information which will give you insight into historical setting, the feasts, etc.

D. The Purpose(s) or Reason(s)

1. What is the Need of the Recipient?
2. What is the Message of the Writer?

E. The Location and Geography

Note place of recipients and study events in that place at that time. Look up information on cities, countries, bodies of water, etc. that are relevant to understanding your text.

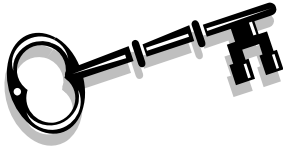
III. *Compare* the Scriptures

Compare your information with other Scriptures related to themes of the passage you are studying. A Topical Bible, topical index in a Study Bible, or a cross-reference apparatus will lead you to other related passages.

IV. *Consult* another Student

This is where contacting a commentary would enhance your understanding the text. These will help place some of the details into the flow of the text.

V. *Synthesize* your Study



KEY # 4: IMPLEMENTATION

1 Corinthians 8:1 warns all of us that *“knowledge puffs up, but love edifies”*. James encouraged his readers to *“be doers of the word and not hearers only”*. These passages remind us that the goal of studying the Scriptures is NOT simply for knowledge, but to CHANGE OUR LIFE!!

I. Evaluate Your Strength and Weaknesses

This is where true change in our life takes place. We need to honestly examine ourselves and identify our weaknesses or areas of vulnerability.

II. Relate your Study to Applicational Situations

A. Social

B. Family

C. Church

D. Work

E. Relationship with God

F. Personal

G. Emotional

H. Finances

I. Physical

J. Thoughts

K. Recreation; time

II. Determine the Principles for Life from your Study

III. Be honest and humble to your findings

IV. Meditate on the truths

V. Write or memorize key verses or principles.

SECTION 4

Alternative Types of Study

This section will provide the student with two different avenues by which one may study the Scriptures. An important truth that needs to be emphasized concerning any type of study: any study must be based on a correct interpretation of the Scripture.

The three studies we will introduce are Biographical Studies, Topical Studies, and Analytical Studies.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL BIBLE STUDIES

- A. Choose a Character to Study from the Bible
- B. Locate all the Revelation on that Particular Character

This can be done by means of cross-referencing and concordances.

EXAMPLE: For the life of Abraham, we see references not only in the book of Genesis but all through the Old Testament and the New Testament. Here is a list of the books in which Abraham is mentioned: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter (26 books total).

C. Look for these Features

1. *Dates*

Bible studies or dictionaries may help you in this area. Also notice references of time when dealing with biographies (i.e. mentioning of months and years of reign, feasts or holidays, etc).

Try to gain some of the historical setting that the character you are studying is experiencing.

2. *Family*

- a. Parents
- b. Wife
- c. Children
- d. Other Family

For example, for the life of Abraham, we see that his father was Terah, his wife Sarah, his children were Isaac and Ishmael (plus others). Another key family member was Lot.

Notice carefully the interactions in these relationships as they will glean for the student positives and negatives on interrelations with family members, etc.

D. *Conversion*

Note the circumstances and the results. Often not mentioned in the Scriptures.

E. *Ministry/Vocation*

Notice the type of ministry or lack of ministry your character has. Note the positive and negative aspects of ministering to others.

F. *Death*

Note the causes or any significant features surrounding the character's death.

For example, if you are doing a study on Judas, you will notice his death was very significant.

G. *Key Verses*

Any significant verses that would be practical for your life.

H. *Points to Practice*

Notice any virtues of the character you are studying. Taking David as an example, you will note characteristics such as courage, submission to government, steadfastness in trials, etc.

I. *Points to Shun*

Taking the same example, notice various vices to shun from David's life such as adultery, murder, etc.

J. *Life Illustrations*

Point out what truths your character best illustrates in life. Some examples are:

1. Abraham – Faith that works
2. Solomon – Knowing more than you do

3. Paul – a zeal for evangelism
4. Peter – zeal which had to learn

K. Read outside material on Subject

There are various books on characters of the Bible. These may give you further insight into the character you are studying.

II. DOCTRINAL (TOPICAL) BIBLE STUDIES

A. Define the boundaries of your study.

1. The *Topic*

The topic may be as general (a topical study of Christ) or as specific (a topical study of Christ's method of witnessing) as you like.

Remember, the broader the topic, the greater the revelation to be dealt with.

2. The *Text*

You may want to limit your study to a certain part of the Bible. For example, instead of doing a study on the Holy Spirit in the Bible, you may want to do a study on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Holy Spirit in the Gospels, etc.

B. Organize the Information

There are a number of ways one may want to organize information.

1. *Chronologically*

Some examples of the studies in which you would want to organize material chronologically.

- a. Life of Christ
- b. Eschatology
- c. Development of the Church

2. *Development in Scripture*

Organizing material as it appeared in Scripture is done by placing the information as it fits into these categories: 1) Old Testament, 2) gospels, 3) New Testament, 4) End Times.

This type of organization would be beneficial for studies like:

- a. Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- b. The Means for the Presentation of the Gospel

3. *Sub-Topics*

Taking the topical study and breaking it down into related themes is another way of organizing information.

This is an example using the topic of the life of Christ to the various ways it may be organized.

CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

1. The Early Life of Christ
 - a. His birth
 - b. His childhood
2. The Ministry of Christ
 - a. His public ministry
 - b. His private ministry
3. The Death of Christ
 - a. The betrayal
 - b. The trial
 - c. The crucifixion
 - d. The resurrection
 - e. The ascension

DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

1. Christ in the Old Testament
 - a. Prophecy
 - b. Personal
2. Christ in the Gospels and Acts
3. Christ in the Epistles
4. Christ in Revelation

SUB-TOPICAL STUDY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

1. The Prayer life of Christ

- a. Methods
- b. Content
2. The Evangelism of Christ
 - c. Methods
 - d. Message
3. The Discipling of Christ
 - e. Teaching techniques
 - f. Modeling
4. Christ's Way of Dealing with Temptation
5. Christ's Way of Dealing with Trials

III. ANALYTICAL BIBLE STUDY

The analytical method of Bible study is taking the whole apart into smaller sections for thorough analyzing.

It must be remembered that this type of Bible study is build off of the principles of inductive study. Using this kind of study in the Epistles is effective.

A. Choose a Text

The key with the analytical method of Bible study is to not break off too big of a chunk.

B. Break down your passage with a *Block Diagram*

1. Keep main thoughts / clauses to the left of your vertical chart.
2. Indent subordinate clauses.
3. Note the punctuation in your English Bibles. While these were never inspired, they are mostly accurate gauges to determine main and sub-thoughts.
4. Notice also subordinate words that explain nouns and subordinate words that explain verbs.

EXAMPLE: Nouns = who, whom, which, etc.

Verbs = that, so that, because, -ing words

From here the process of investigation is similar to what we have seen before, except the detail (depending on your desire) may be much deeper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barber, Cyril. J. *Dynamic Personal Bible Study*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1981
- Braga, James. *How to Study the Bible*. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1982.
- Finzel, Hans. *Opening the Book*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books. 1987.
- Jensen, Irving L. *Independent Bible Study*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1963.
- MacArthur, John. *How to Study the Bible*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1982.
- Vos, Howard F. *Effective Bible Study*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James Version, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982.