

Lesson 4

The Bible is Unique and HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION:

Purposes of study:

- To study the various ways or methods of Bible study.
- To learn how to ask the right questions in analyzing the scripture.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. UNIQUE IN CONTINUITY
 - A. Written over a 1,500 year span.
 - B. Sixty-six books written by over 35 authors.
 - C. Written in three languages.
 - D. Controversial yet harmonious.

- II. UNIQUE IN ITS CIRCULATION

- III. UNIQUE IN ITS TRANSLATION

- IV. UNIQUE IN ITS SURVIVAL
 - A. Through Time.
 - B. Through Persecution.
 - C. Through Criticism.

- V. UNIQUE IN ITS TEACHINGS
 - A. Prophecy.
 - B. History.
 - C. Personalities.

- VI. CONCLUSION ON UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

- VII. THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD
 - A. The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible.
 - B. Man is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to write the Bible.
 - C. Results: The infallible word of God.

VIII. THE BIBLE IS A DIFFICULT BOOK

IX. THE BIBLE HAS SPECIAL POWER

- A. The Bible has dividing power as a sword.
- B. The Bible has reflecting power as a mirror.
- C. The Bible has cleansing power as water.
- D. The Bible has reproductive power as seed.
- E. The Bible has nourishing power as food.
- F. The Bible has power to bless and prosper.

X. THE BIBLE COMMANDS THE BELIEVER TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Who is speaking: God: angel, man or satan?
- B. Who is being spoken to: Israel, gentiles, believers, to men, to a man?
- C. How can this Scripture be applied to my own life to make me a better Christian?

XI. HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

- A. Observation – What does it say?
- B. Interpretation – What does it mean?
- C. Application – How this truth applies to me today.

XII. BIBLICAL MEDITATION

- A. Empty yourself.
- B. Confess and forsake any sin.
- C. Reconciled to all.
- D. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- E. Come with faith that He will speak to you.
- F. Commitment to Obey – Lordship.
- G. Chose the passage.
- H. Bible Study Aids.
- I. Use a version of the Bible that is easy to understand.

XIII. HOW TO DO A CHARACTER STUDY

- A. Procedure.
- B. The example of Stephen.

XIV. HOW TO DO A TOPICAL STUDY

- A. Purpose.
- B. Procedure.

XV. PARABLE

A. Two Purposes.

B. To correctly interpret a parable you must:

XVI. ALLEGORY

A. Two Purposes.

B. To correctly interpret a parable you must:

I. UNIQUE IN CONTINUITY

Unique - One and only; single; sole. Different from all others; having no like or equal.

A. *Written over a 1,500 year span*

B. *Sixty-six books written by over 35 authors*

They are from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars.

C. *Written in three languages:*

Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

D. *Controversial yet harmonious*

Subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: God's redemption of man.

2 Peter 1:21: It is a book of ONENESS or UNITY and therefore a miracle. For 35 authors with such varied backgrounds to write on so many subjects, over a period of approximately 1500 years, in absolute harmony is a mathematical impossibility. So how do we account for the Bible? The only adequate explanation is "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2 Peter 1:21

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

II. UNIQUE IN ITS CIRCULATION

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history.

III. UNIQUE IN ITS TRANSLATION

The Bible has been translated and retranslated and paraphrased more than any other book in existence.

IV. UNIQUE IN ITS SURVIVAL

A. Through Time

The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.

B. Through Persecution

The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies as no other book. Many have tried to burn it, ban it and outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to present day Communist dominated countries.

C. Through Criticism

No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized and vilified.

V. UNIQUE IN ITS TEACHINGS

A. *Prophecy*

Mohammedism cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.

Micah 5:2

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The one to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."*

B. *History*

It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel.

C. *Personalities*

The Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. Other biographies try to cover up, over-look or ignore the shady side of people. Man could not write the Bible if he wanted to, but if he could, he would not.

VI. CONCLUSION ON UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is definitely unique. There is no book in all of literature like it. A person looking for truth would certainly consider a book that has the above qualifications.

The Bible is as high above all others books as the heavens are above the earth. Someone has said of the Bible: "Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be right."

VII. THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Upon this statement of fact, evangelical Christianity stands. By "inspiration" we mean that the Holy Spirit exerted His supernatural influence upon the writers of the Bible. The writings were inspired - not necessarily the writers, for the Bible nowhere claims to have been written by inspired men.

A. *The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible*

2 Peter 1:21.

Jesus told His disciples that He would leave many things unrevealed, and that the Holy Spirit would come and choose certain persons and through them reveal His perfect will unto man; and that the Holy Spirit would be the believer's teacher. **John 16:12-15**

John 16:13-14

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

B. *Man is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to write the Bible*

C. *Results: The infallible word of God*

Therefore, the Bible is free from error and absolutely trustworthy.

Psalm 12:6; 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:35

VIII. THE BIBLE IS A DIFFICULT BOOK

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (New Addition)

Because it came from the infinite to the finite. From the unlimited, all powerful God, to limited man. Therefore, you cannot understand the Bible as you would understand the writings of some great scholar. You can study the great philosophers with the natural mind, and by diligent application, grasp their profound meanings. If the Bible could be understood by natural man, it would be a natural book, and could not be the Word of God. Since, the Bible is from God, and therefore spiritual, before you can receive its teachings, you must be born of the Spirit (John 3:6). Always approach the Bible praying that the Spirit will be your teacher and will guide you to a better understanding of His Holy Word, or it will remain a difficult, closed book (John 16:12-15).

IX. THE BIBLE HAS SPECIAL POWER

A. *The Bible has dividing power as a sword.*

It will separate man from sin or sin will separate man from the Bible.

Psalm 119:9-11 Isaiah 59:2

B. *The Bible has reflecting power as a mirror*

In the Bible, we see ourselves as God sees us - as sinners.

Romans 3:23; 7:7; Galatians 3:22

C. *The Bible has cleansing power as water.*

David prayed that God would “wash him from iniquity” and “cleanse him from sin.”

Ephesians 5:26 Psalm 51:2

D. *The Bible has reproductive power as seed.*

1 Peter 1:23

We are children of God because we have been born into the family of God by the incorruptible seed of God.

This is the new birth. John 3:1-7

E. *The Bible has nourishing power as food.*

1 Peter 2:2

The Bible is spiritual food for the soul. No Christian can remain strong in the Lord and not study the Word of God.

F. *The Bible has power to bless and prosper*

The Bible has the power to Bless and Prosper the lives of those who study and obey it.

Joshua 1:8

Psalm 1:1-3

X. THE BIBLE COMMANDS THE BELIEVER TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES.

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

As you study the Bible, you will discover that it IS the Word of God. You must also keep in mind that the Word of God contains the “words” of others also. As you study the Bible ask yourself these questions:

- A. *Who is speaking: God: angel, man or satan?*
- B. *Who is being spoken to: Israel, gentiles, believers, to men, to a man?*
- C. *How can this Scripture be applied to my own life to make me a better Christian?*

As you study the Bible you will come to Love God’s Word.

1. **David**

- a) **Psalm 119:11** - Thy Word have I treasured in my heart that I may not sin against Thee.
- b) **119:97-104** - O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.
- c) **119:127** - Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.
- d) **119:140** - Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loves it.
- e) **19:7-11** - The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul

2. **Job**
 - a) **Job 23:12** - I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.
 - b) **Jeremiah 15:16** - Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.

XI. HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

A. Observation - What Does It Say?

1. Begin with **Prayer**
2. **Read** and Re-read the passage. Like you read a love letter.
3. Discover the Author's **Purpose**. i.e. John 20:30-31
 - a) The Main **Subjects** Covered
 - b) The **Problems** Dealt With
 - c) The **Exhortations** Given
 - d) **Repetition** of Key Words and Phrases
4. Always Ask **Questions**
 - a) **Who** wrote it? spoke it? to whom? about whom?
 - b) **What** are the Main Events? Major Doctrines? is the purpose? is he talking about?
 - c) **When** did it take place? will it happen?
 - d) **Where** did it happen? will it happen?

- e) **Why** was it written? did this happen?
 - f) **How** did this happen? did he do it?
5. Look For And List God's: (*see Appendix: Practical Session*)
- a) **Attributes** What can I learn about God
 - b) **Doctrines**
 - c) **Promises**
 - d) **Commands**
 - e) **Warnings**
 - f) **Principles** i.e. sowing and reaping
 - g) **Reasons** to Love God
6. Marking Your Bible - **Colors** to use
- a) **Golden** God's Promises
 - b) **Green** The Holy Spirit
 - c) **Purple** Kingdom of God
 - d) **Yellow** Important verse or words
 - e) **Blue** Deity of Christ
 - f) **Red** The Blood
 - g) **Pencil** write in margin, circle key words, make a chain reference
7. Determine the best **Theme** or Title for each Chapter.
Select a key verse
8. Determine the best Theme of **Title** for the whole book.

B. Interpretation - What Does It Mean?

1. Insights

- a) Scripture will never **contradict** scripture.
Let the **Word** interpret itself.
Do not take a passage out of **context**.
- b) Always interpret scripture **literally**.
Do not change its meaning.
- c) Is there a **cultural, social, or religious** custom to be considered?

2. Procedure

- a) Ask **Questions**. Why? What does it mean?
- b) Do any necessary **word** studies.
- c) Determine what it meant to the **original** readers.
Historical context.
- d) Check other **passages** that support, amplify, or give understanding.
- e) Read other **translations** if it is available.
- f) Use a Bible **Commentary** if you have access to one.
- g) Summarize your **conclusions**

C. Application - How This Truth Applies To Me Today.

James 1:22

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- a) **Teaching** - Be a disciple, a learner.

- b) **Reproof** - Exposes or makes plain what is wrong with my thinking and behavior.
 - c) **Correction** - Confess and turn from that which is wrong.
Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15
 - d) **Training** in righteousness - How to live.
1 Corinthians 10:11
Romans 15:4
2. Is There:
- a) A **Sin** or Wrong to avoid
 - b) A **Command** to obey
 - c) A **Promise** to me
 - d) An **Example** to learn from
3. Read Through Your Bible Every Year
- a) Read **three (3)** chapters every day
 - b) On Sunday read **five (5)** chapters

XII. BIBLICAL MEDITATION

Joshua 1:8
Psalm 1

BIBLE STUDY: The Logos, for knowledge. First goal is to understand the passage, analyze it. Compare with other passages, Scripture with Scripture. Use commentaries and other aids.

BIBLE MEDITATION: Come to the Word as a child and ask the Lord to feed your spirit, and direct your path. Read it and wait on the Lord to speak to you. Open up your whole life to the passage. He will encourage, guide, direct or rebuke you as need be. You leave having met the Lord and heard from Him. You go into your day to obey and apply.

Purpose to give Jesus a specific block of quality time each morning before your day begins. Psalm 119:147

A. *Empty yourself*

1. Bring every **thought** captive
2. Do not let your former **understanding** of the passage prevent you from receiving something new.
3. Do not make it say what you want to **hear**.

B. *Confess and Forsake any sin*

“Search me O Lord” **Psalm 139:23-24**

C. *Reconciled to all*

Matthew 5:23-24

D. *Be filled with the Holy Spirit*

Ephesians 5:18

He is the Author - The Master Teacher John 14:26

E. *Come with faith that He will speak to you.*

“Our Father....”

Hebrews 12:25

**Isaiah 50:4; 51:1, 4, 7; 55:2-3;
Habakkuk 2:1**

F. *Commitment to Obey - Lordship*

Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21

Say: "Lord, speak to your servant, I will obey regardless of what it costs."

G. *Chose the passage*

1. Strongly suggest you take a **book** and meditate on it from beginning to end.
2. Go **systematically** from day to day. Very important.
3. Ask the **Holy Spirit** where to begin. If He leads to another Scripture for a special lesson or expansion, obtain it and return to your passage.

H. *Bible Study Aids*

1. **Devotional** books are good but should not be used for morning meditation.
2. Learn to hear His **voice** for that which is specifically and originally yours.
3. Avoid commentaries for the same reason. Let Him give you your personal commentary. It may not be as scholarly but it will be yours.

I. *Use a version of the Bible that is easy to understand*

XIII. HOW TO DO A CHARACTER STUDY

The Bible contains true accounts of men and women's lives in order that we might learn from them, realize that failure is not final, and that even the strong have weaknesses.

A. *Procedure*

1. Decide on a particular **person** whose life you want to study.
2. Make a list of **related** verses or passages. Use a concordance if available.
3. Read the passages and make notes of the **important** points.
4. Look for:
 - a) **Meaning** of name (Moses - to draw out of water)
 - b) **Family** history
 - c) **Training** and **conversion**
 - d) The **time** he lived in and the periods of his life.
 - e) **Failures** and **accomplishments**
 - f) **Spiritual** life
 - g) Scriptures to illustrate spiritual **principles**
 - h) **Effect** of his life on others.
 - i) His **death**

B. *The example of Stephen*

(Work this out)

1. List of verses or passages: **Acts 6:3 - 8:2; 11:19; 22:20**

2. Meaning of his name: **crown, diadem, or victor's wreath.**

XIV. HOW TO DO A TOPICAL STUDY

A. *Purpose*

1. To determine what God's Word has to say regarding a **specific** topic. It gives the total picture on that subject.

B. *Procedure*

1. Look up every parallel and relative passage on the **subject** you are studying. Each reference must be understood and analyzed within its context.
 - a) Use a concordance, topical Bible, etc.
 - b) Look up all related words. i.e. Prayer / intercession
 - c) Find passage where topic first mentioned in Bible. Study thoroughly.
 - d) Look up contrasting passages.
2. Assemble Your **Data**
 - a) Study each passage thoroughly, examine it to ascertain the author's **intended** meaning.
 - b) Check the **context** carefully.
 - c) Determine the main **truths** taught in the passage.
 - d) Record your **observations** and new insights.
 - e) Note passages that are clear and those unclear. Do not build a doctrine on the **obscure**.

- f) Note how often a particular teaching is **repeated** and give it greater attention.
 - g) Never build on **inference, tradition** or **extra-Biblical** sources.
3. **Organize** Material into an outline.
- a) Make sure you have a coherent and **complete** coverage of the topic.
 - b) Make sure you put the **emphasis** where God puts the emphasis.
4. **Apply:** Consider how all that you have learned is to have its effect on your life.

XV. PARABLE

A story which teaches a **moral** lesson or a truth.

It is not usually factual but remains true to life. It is designed to make one central point. It is not legitimate to ascribe a spiritual meaning and application to each point.

A. Two Purposes:

- 1. To **reveal**, clarify, or emphasize a truth in a memorable or convicting way.
- 2. To **hide** truth from those who had rejected it. Matthew 13:10-17

B. To correctly interpret a parable you must:

- 1. Discover **why** was it told and **what** prompted it.
- 2. Look for the **intended** meaning of the parable.
 - a) Will sometimes be **stated**.
 - b) If not stated, it will be **identified** by the application.

- c) The meaning is not to be imposed beyond what is **clearly** stated or applied to the hearers by the author.
 - d) Identify the one **central** theme or emphasis.
3. Identify **relevant** details. Will always reinforce the central theme.
i.e. Jesus Mark 4:13
4. Identify the **irrelevant** details. All details in a parable do not have significance and to attach meaning that is not relevant to its central emphasis is wrong.

i.e. The Prodigal Son is often misused. It was to the Pharisees to show them the heart of the Father in forgiving sinners versus their grumbling like the elder brother. Luke 15:2

Parables that have cultural themes must be interpreted in the light of Biblical culture rather than our culture.

i.e. The wise and foolish virgins. Matthew 25:1-13

Parables should never be the primary basis of establishing doctrine.

XVI. ALLEGORY

A story with an **underlying** meaning different from the surface meaning of the story itself.

i.e. John 10 and 15

John 10:7
I am the door

John 10:11
I am the good shepherd

John 15:1-5

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing

- A. *Can have more than one central point of emphasis*
- B. *Can teach a number of truths*
- C. *The details of an allegory may be many and varied relating to more than one theme.*
- D. *Can have irrelevant details; all the features of an allegory do not have to be identified. Intertwines the story and the meaning.*
- E. *Application is found within the allegory*

Reference:

How To Study Your Bible Precept Upon Precept.