

**CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION TEN:
BIBLE STUDY**

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The Bible both promises personal benefit and warns of the neglect of Bible study. In order to accurately understand what the Bible says we must follow certain principles of interpretation. This paper brings focus on three aspects of this process: the preparation, principles and one method of Bible study.

This presentation is a very brief survey of the discipline of what is known as hermeneutics, which includes exegesis, logic, along with historical and cultural elements of the original writings. Hermeneutics may be considered a science, art, and the application of specific skills. The primary purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to determine the meaning of what God has recorded in the Bible. This purpose has two parts: to find the original meaning of a text to the writer and readers, and to transmit that meaning to today’s readers in their particular cultural and personal context of life.

The Bible is the most valuable document given to humanity. From it we learn how to live life here and now, and how to prepare for the next life. The Bible is the Word of God. However, it one thing to believe the Bible is the Word of God; yet, it is quite another to know what that precious Word says. It is to this issue that the study of hermeneutics is concerned: how to study, understand, and apply the Bible to our lives.

With this introduction, we now turn to how to study the Bible. First, we consider the preparation for study.

PREPARATION FOR BIBLE STUDY.

In preparing ourselves for Bible study there are three issues to be discussed here: we must be spiritually, mentally prepared, and then possess good study tools.

Spiritual preparation.

1. First, we must have clear in our mind the reason and benefit for Bible study. Scripture clearly commands, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). Bible study gives us a framework to spot false teachers and religions (2 Timothy 3:1-9). We also learn how to live in this life and to be prepared for the next life. We gain profound knowledge, personal faith, purification of life, preparation and power for service and ministry (Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 3:15-18; 1 Peter 2:2; Romans 10:17; John 15:3; 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 5:11-14).

2. Secondly, we must be spiritually born again to fully understand and appreciate the Bible. We are told that unbelievers cannot and do not want to understand the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:14). I recall that before I received Christ as my Savior, the Bible did not make sense. It seemed like a book full of contradictions, old myths and lies. After my conversion, the Bible opened up to me. I was amazed. The supposed contradictions and lies disappeared, and the truths became very real to me. I even spent hours reading its pages. Granted, I do not fully understand everything in the Bible, but much has become clear, I am still learning and I want to know more. I have found that other believers have had the same experience. The Bible is about spiritual truth; thus, we must be spiritually alive to understand it.

3. Third, We must approach the Bible with a humble and clean heart. If we entertain and tolerate sin in our lives, we will not want to approach the Bible, and we will explain away those parts that speaks of our shortcomings and sin (1 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 4:12). Christ desires our deep friendship and fellowship, but if we have offended Him with sin, the fellowship is cut off. We must confess the sin and come to Him in humility and honesty (1 John 1:1-9).

4. We must pray (Psalm 119:18). Communication is a two way street: we talk to God through prayer, and He talks to us through His Bible. When a student does not understand a problem at school, they go and ask the teacher. In the same way, when we do not understand a part of Scripture, we go and ask the author – God.

5. We must recognize the role of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). It is His job to bring understanding and illumination to the Bible passages. He gives meaning and insight on how to apply the Bible to our lives.

Mental preparation.

As well as being spiritually prepared, we must also be mentally prepared. We must be willing to believe, obey and study the Bible.

1. Mentally we must be willing to believe the Bible (Matthew 13:10-15). We cannot doubt and refuse to believe the truthfulness and inspiration of the Bible. If we went to a class and told the teacher we refuse to believe what he said, he would refuse to teach us. We would be wasting our and his time. It is the same with God: why would He want to explain that which we refused to believe?

2. Mentally we must be willing to obey the Bible. We are to practice and proclaim the Bible truths we learn (Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 2:1-12; James 1:22-25). It is like someone said, “Use it or lose it.” As with belief, God will not teach us more if we will not obey what He has taught us. It must also be added, that God also teaches us through our failures and sin. It is from our mistakes in life that we learn of His grace, and that His way of living life is better than our own ideas and plans.

3. Mentally we must be willing to study hard (2 Timothy 2:15). In our study we need to find a quiet place and set aside blocks of time to concentrate on study. It is good to

study when we are mentally fresh. Keep a pad and pencil handy, and begin to build a library of good books about the Bible. Take Bible courses as often as you can. If a good local Bible college is not near, then we can study by correspondence or take courses on the internet. Take a serious interest in Sunday school and sermons.

Bible study tools.

We may have the motivation to mow our lawn, but if we don't obtain the proper tool (a lawn mower), the grass will just keep growing. Likewise, we may be spiritually and mentally convinced and prepared to study the Bible, but if we do not have the proper tools, it is very difficult. The following discussion offers an overview of Bible study tools; however, the amount of suburb literature is abundant, and the suggestions below offer only a thin slice of tools available.

1. A good Bible translation is important. Accuracy of the translation from Greek and Hebrew to English (or whatever is your native language) is critical. The New American Standard Translation and New King James Version are excellent. Other translations vary from average to bad. Paraphrases, such as the Living Bible, are useful for devotional use.

2. Study Bibles are a great addition to your Bible study tool box. As a start, I would recommend three: The Ryrie Study Bible, The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, and the Nelson Study Bible

3. Bible concordances are important. These books list every verse in which a particular word is found. Make sure the concordance matches the translation you have. Most study Bibles contain a small concordance. The two most commonly used are Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

4. Bible commentaries are critical. There are many good one volume works, and many two or several volumes. A one volume commentary is *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. A two volume set is *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck. An excellent multiple volume set is *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* edited by Frank Gaebelin.

5. Bible handbooks give much detail on issues of the Bible. One old standard is *Unger's Bible Handbook*.

6. Bible dictionaries are a step up from the handbooks. One example is the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Another fine work is *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, by J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney. Taking things to the next level would be a Bible encyclopedia. An example is the five volume *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, edited by Merrill C. Tenney.

7. Word studies or dictionaries of the original languages are helpful. An example is *Vine's Complete Expository Diction of Old and New Testament Words*, by Merrill Unger and William White, Jr.

8. Bible background books are vital. One can gain much from Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, but others give more detail. Examples are the *New Testament Survey* by Merrill C. Tenney, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, by Gleason Archer, *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*, edited by J.I. Packer and M.C. Tenney. Another old standard is *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim.

9. Systematic Theologies are also critical in understanding specific topic and doctrines. One classic is L. Berkhof's *Manual of Christian Doctrine*. More recent works include Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, and Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology*.

10. Apologetic works are supportive to Bible study. These works defend the Bible, exposes false religions, and explain how we got the Bible. An older but excellent work is Harold Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible*. Another older work is Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Josh McDowell has written many fine books. A recent (1999) book is his *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, which includes and updates his previous works on "evidences that demand a verdict." A vital work is *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Norman Geisler and William Nix.

11. Revelation and interpretation is a category to identify when suggesting books on Bible study. There are two old classics that still stand unsurpassed. One is *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, by Bernard Ramm, and the other is *Biblical Revelation*, by Clark Pinnock. Other books in this category would include ones on inerrancy and inspiration. There is also overlap between this grouping and others in this list.

12. Specific topic books form the final point in this list. These are books devoted to specific subjects concerning the Bible. They could be doctrines such as *Angels*, by Billy Graham, *Christian Counseling*, by Gary Collins, or creation vs. evolution works such as *The Genesis Flood* by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, or the *Genesis Record* by Henry Morris. Another great classic is *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*, by Wilbur Smith. The shelves of Christian Book stores are full of special topic works covering every imaginable topic.

Having now examined the issues of spiritual and mental preparation, along with a brief introduction to Bible study tools, we turn to an introduction to the principles of Bible study.

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE STUDY.

In this section we look at 10 principles that govern Bible interpretation.

1. First, we interpret the Bible in a **plain, literal, straightforward manner**. Let the interpretation be that which arises naturally out of the text, just as you study in the ordinary way you would any other piece of literature.

Some try to find a deep, hidden, spiritual meaning in the text, and the result is just their own wild imagination. Read the Bible like you would the newspaper or any other book. Look at what is on the surface, the direct intent of the author. God has communicated clear, plain, rational statements of fact to humanity concerning vital spiritual truths. The

better we apply reason, logic, and the rules of language to those statements, the better we can understand and relate to those real, spiritual dynamics and realities of the universe.

2. Principle two is to consider **figurative language**. The Bible uses metaphors, similes, symbols and other figures of speech, but even they have a plain, literal meaning behind the word picture. For example, Paul refers to Cephas and John as “pillars” of the church (Galatians 2:9). It is obvious they were not marble posts holding up the roof of a church building. The meaning of the word picture is that they were strong, supportive leaders in the church.

3. Principle three is to note the **grammatical structure**. Know what the words mean and how they are used in the sentence. It is always best to go to the original languages, but for most this is not possible. The next best choice is to obtain accurate English translations, and from there to the best native translation. Identify the subjects, verbs, modifiers, predicates, and how they relate to each other to communicate the meaning of the sentence and paragraph. Every sentence has a subject, verb, and predicate. Sometimes the predicate is implied, or can be contained in the verb. A simple example is, “The boy kicked the bucket.” Boy is the subject, kick is the verb, and bucket is the predicate.

4. Principle four is to interpret the section within its **context**. This principle can be broken down into two divisions. First, there is the textual context. Every word is couched within the context of a sentence. Sentences are in the context of a thought and paragraph. There is the context of the particular book, and finally there is the context of the Bible itself. An important key: what was the actual intent of the writer? What was he trying to communicate to his readers? What was his purpose? How would the original readers interpret the words of the writer?

The second context is the cultural, historical, and geographical context of the particular biblical text. The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, and the last book was written almost 2,000 years ago. Two major languages were used, and many cultures were involved. The writers came from different backgrounds. People in another culture and time of history think and live differently, and to understand them, we must understand their culture.

For example, I lived seven years in the South Pacific island country of Tonga. I did not understand all the nuances of the Tongan culture. The weddings, funerals, kava circles and ceremonies carry subtle meanings different than American culture. By the same token, Tongans have trouble understanding Western cultures when they travel overseas.

Consequently, to understand the Bible, we need to understand at least some of the culture, lands, and history, and situation of the people in the Bible. For example, Jesus used many illustrations from farming, and fishing. If we know something about the farming and fishing practices of those people in that day, then we can better understand what Jesus meant in His teachings.

5. Principle five involves the **progress of revelation**. God did not give the Bible all at once, but little by little. The practical result is that something that is very brief and hard to understand, say, in Genesis, may be explained more fully later. In fact, the Old Testament would be very difficult to understand without the aid of the New Testament. For example, the Old Testament does not mention the emergence of the church. However, Jesus announced its future coming (Matthew 16:18), Acts tells of its historical establishment, and the epistles further explain the significance of the church. In particular, Ephesians devotes much time explaining the nature and place of the church.

6. Principle six involves taking into account the **major divisions and eras** of the Bible. Scriptures, for example, that told Israel how to sacrifice animals do not apply to the church of the New Testament. Times were different with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which were different than the times of Abraham. Carefully determine which era the verses fit into.

7. Principle seven is to **gather all the pertinent verses** when studying a specific doctrine. It is foolish to base a doctrine on a few selected verses. All the biblical information needs to be brought together, compared, contrasted and analyzed before a doctrine can be stated. Give attention to the details of the text. Many times the answers to seemingly problems can be found right in the text, but were overlooked. Our Western court system works the same way. The police are to gather all the relevant information regarding a crime, and the defense does the same. Then, all the evidence is presented to a jury who sifts through the material to reach a decision or judgment.

8. Principle eight is to realize the **Bible is authoritative and final standard** over all matters of life: history, science, and faith. This means that when a conflict arises between someone's view of history, society, science, religion – or whatever – and the view of the Bible, then the Bible is taken as the final authority. Simply put: humanities opinions must bow to God's statements. For example, when choosing between Karl Marx's analysis of society and that of God's, then we believe God. Or, when choosing between whether or not we were created by God, or evolved from something that came from nothing, then we believe God.

9. Principle nine states that ultimately there is one perfect author of the Bible who cannot lead us astray, and who has given us an error free Bible in the original autographs. From this foundation, we may derive four sub principles.

First, **the Bible does not contradict itself**; therefore, we should view biblical data as complementary. Unfortunately, many people approach the Bible and try to manufacture as many contradictions as possible, but under closer examination, the so-called contradictions disappear and are found to actually complement each other with wonderful harmony.

Second, we should **compare Scripture with Scripture**. Obscure and hard to understand verses must give way to clearer verses that deal with the same subject. Brief statements are better understood in light of fuller explanations. We can find several places in the Bible where the same subject is discussed. By looking at the accumulated data, we gain a

better understanding. An example is Colossians and Ephesians, and the subject of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We discover that the experience of being “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18) is described later by Paul as letting, “*the word of Christ richly dwell within you*” (Colossians 3:16)

Third, we are to compare conclusions with the **analogy of Faith**. This means that a verse must agree with the other known clear fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith. Our findings must not contradict the total teachings of Scripture on a particular point.

Fourth, if there seems to be problems with a particular text that we do not fully understand, then we wait for more information to clear up the problem. Do not jump to the conclusion that God made a mistake. The mistake is in our inability to understand what God has said, having overlooked or misunderstood some information, or not having all the information.

10. Principle ten of Bible interpretation is to **understand that different kinds of literature** have special rules of interpretation. The Bible contains many kinds of material: history, letters, poetry, drama, prophecy, parables, types, legal, etc. In this space, we bring attention to three particular kinds of literature in the Bible that sometimes brings difficulties in understanding what the text means.

First, there are Bible types. Types are historical people, institutions, events, actions, offices, and things in the Old Testament that symbolized, predicted or prefigured the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Types are object lessons or pictures by which God taught His people about His grace and power.

For example, Adam was a type of prefiguring of Christ (Romans 5:14). The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9) was a type of Christ’s crucifixion (John 3:14-16). The sacrificial system in the Old Testament is a type of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins. Since it is easy to invent types where none exist, the safest rule to follow is to determine from the New Testament whether the thing is plainly said to be a type. For example, in speaking of the time Moses struck the rock to provide water for Israel, Paul wrote, “*They drank of that spiritual rock...and that rock was Christ*” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

The second kind of literature that can bring difficulties is the parable. Biblical parables were a teaching method that took a commonly known earthly experience, event, or custom that contained or illustrated a spiritual lesson.

Examples are the parables of the sower, wheat and tares, mustard seed, leaven, and fig tree (Matthew 13:3, 24, 31, 33; 24:32). This was a method Jesus used to communicate spiritual truth to responsive disciples, yet hide the truth from unresponsive hearers (Matthew 13:11-17; Luke 8:8). To understand the parable, one must recover the local, cultural background. Locate the one central truth in the illustration. Find how much is explained by Christ Himself. Search for clues in the context. Compare the parable with the recordings of the parable in the other Gospels wherever possible. Finally, compare the doctrinal truth with other clear teachings, and do not read doctrine into the parable.

The third type of literature considered here is prophecy. It requires special guidelines. When interpreting prophecy, take the literal meaning unless by a careful study of the context it indicates the section is a type, symbol, or other figurative imagery. Note the historical background of the prophecy, the political and social events. Remember that prophecy involves describing future event that are beyond the experience of the immediate hearers. For example, think of the difficulty of describing the internet to a person who lived before electricity, telephones, radios, satellites, and photography.

One must also take into account the context and flow of the discussion. The prophets were not always systematic in writing their information, but gave pictures of events that represented realities present, would happen soon, or would happen very far away in the future. Events that occur vastly apart in time can be presented together in the same prophetic sequence. Find parallel passages of prophecy to compare and contrast. Realize there can be multiple fulfillments of a prophecy. Christ is the heart of the Bible, so relate every thing to Him.

11. As a final aid to our study process, we suggest below several study tips that are helpful in studying for exams, in the event you are a student.

**Study tips for greater learning
And better exam scores.**

Following are some basic suggestions to make your study time more effective.

1. One must actively process the information. Using the SQ3R method is helpful, as explained below.
2. S = Survey. Read the chapters related to the test for an overview of general content. Get the bird's eye view.
3. Q = Question. As you prepare to reread the section, form questions in your own words, then seek the answers as you read the material.
4. 3 = three R's: Read, Rehearse, Review. As you **read**, write down all the concepts, people and terms, and what they mean. As you **rehearse**, restate the material in your own words. Then, **review** the material until you have mastered it.
5. Understand and memorize the terms and their definitions.
6. Write down all the important people, and why they are important.
7. Then take the test.

The bottom line is this: just keep going over the material until you know it. Review, review, review.

Some other helpful hints are as follows.

1. Space your study time. It is better to distribute study in smaller chunks over a period of time rather than cramming just before an exam.
2. Find a quiet place to study, and use the same place to do your work. Try to study at the same time every day. A familiar time in a familiar quiet place gears your mind to focus, and shuts out distractions.
3. Think critically. Note people's assumptions, evaluate the evidence, and assess the conclusions. Questions to ask include, "Who is saying it (are they an authority)?" "What

exactly do their words say?” “What do they mean by the words?” “How do they know (what is the evidence, and is it valid)?”

4. While in class, listen actively. Write down notes. Stay focused. Listen for the important main points and sub points. Ask questions.
5. Over learn the material. Even though you may understand the contents as you read, over learn the content by reviewing. Devote extra study time.
6. Be wise in taking exams. If you have a combination essay and multiple choice exam, turn to the essay first. Focus on the question to make sure you understand what the instructor wants. Jot down some ideas, then turn to the multiple choice. When you finish them, then return and write out the answers to the essay. Check your spelling and grammar.

When taking multiple choice exams, remember to select the best answer from the choices. There might be two or more answers that may be construed to be correct, but pick the best answer. As you read the question, take a moment to try to think of the answer before going to the choices. If you don't know which might be the best answer, use the process of elimination. That is, eliminate those answers you know are wrong, then select the answer left standing. Again, be sure to focus on and clearly understand the question.

Regarding the process of Bible study, we have examined the preparation phase, studied several important principles of Bible study, and now we turn to a single method of Bible study.

A METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

One of the hard problems in life is knowing how to apply the Bible to every day living. Too often the Bible seems like a collection of fables and stories from another world – like Maui hoisting up an island from the depth of the blue sea. We listen to preaching, we read the Bible, but it is hard to connect the words of the page to our fears, frustrations, and problems in the everyday grind of life. It sometimes is like trying to screw a half inch nut onto a one inch bolt.

However, the task is far from impossible. There are several valid methods of Bible study. Some examples include the historical Bible study, topical study, concordance word study, biographical study, or an exegetical exposition of a single passage.

In this space, we introduce a simple, 3-step plan that involves observation, interpretation, and application. It is the “inductive” method. Depending on the Holy Spirit, and with practice, patience, prayer and perseverance, the plan will become a durable and effective tool for you to dig out timeless treasures of Bible truths. These truths will make a rich, vital and real impact on your life.

As we walk through this process, we will use a familiar verse to simply illustrate the process, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

1. Observation is the first step. We must determine what the passage actually says. We can read the section over a few times to get the overview, then dig out the details: facts, people, figures, writer, readers, grammar, culture, history, geography. We determine the context, find the purpose of the writer, and trace the thought progression. In plain, normal, straight forward language, just what do the words actually say? What do they mean? What is the historical and cultural background?

Apply the who, what, why, where, when, and how questions. For example, ask questions such as who is writing? Who are the people in the text/story? Who are the readers? What is the writer saying? Why is he saying it? When did he say it? What were the circumstances? Where did the events take place? How are the people to respond? What truth did the writer tell the readers?

Now we can study our sample verse. From a good study Bible, commentary, Bible dictionary or handbook, we find the Apostle John is the writer, people in general are the readers, and John wrote the Gospel so that people might be saved (John 20:30-31). In the immediate context, John recorded a convincing conversation between a powerful Jesus and a puzzled Jewish theologian by the name of Nicodemus on how to be saved – that is how to obtain eternal life.

Looking at the grammatical connections, “God” is the subject of the sentence, and “gave” is the main verb. The motive for God “giving” His son was love for humanity. The result of this gracious “gift” is that eternal life, not punishment, may be given to all who believe.

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, maybe with a Bible concordance, we discover that God’s Son is Jesus Christ. Later in the book, we learn that the “giving” refers to Christ’s Atonement, or, His death, burial and resurrection from the dead. This act paid sin’s penalty and obtained eternal life for all who believe.

Next, we get a dictionary to understand key words. We take three words that are very important: believe, perish, and eternal life. The Greek word for believe, we discover, means to trust, stick to, cling to, and is illustrated in the context by an Old Testament story (John 3:14, 15; cf. Numbers 21:4-9). The story is of those who sinned, and consequently were bitten by poisonous snakes. If the afflicted, however, looked by faith to the bronze serpent Moses had erected, then they were healed.

Believe is more than simply agreeing to something such as whether the weather today is rainy or sunny. Belief is a commitment, an embracing, or casting of one’s deep trust upon something – like trusting an airplane to stay up in the air while we are riding on board.

Eternal life means everlasting. It is a wonderful quality of life that will never end, personally knowing and experiencing God, and residing, forgiven, in the presence of God (John 17:3). Perish, on the other hand, means a final destiny of ruin, described as the hot wrath of God abiding on the one who stubbornly refuses to believe (John 3:26). Other

Scripture tells us that the place of eternal ruin is hell (Cf. Revelation 20:10-15; Matthew 25:46).

Having now gained a pool of information, we can move on to the next step, which is interpretation.

2. Interpretation is the second step. In this phase we find out what the passage actually means. We discover the major theme – the big idea. We locate the spiritual truth the writer is communicating to the readers. We determine what the passage teaches us about God, and how He relates to us. What doctrines are taught? How is the theme developed? What is the main lesson? The key things to extract out of the text are the eternal, abiding principles that remain constant and absolute in all cultures and time of history. We separate out and discard those elements that relate only to that time and culture, but not to us today.

From our example, we pick up several precious principles that brings light to our mind, joy to our heart, and energy to our will. First, God loves. Second, all humanity needs salvation. Third, God has provided salvation. Fourth, salvation is obtained by faith. Fifth, salvation involves escaping eternal punishment, and gain eternal life – like escaping the hungry lunge of a shark by climbing safely onto the wooden deck of a rescue boat.

As a safeguard, it is always wise to compare our interpretations with other teachings of the Bible to see if they agree. A good book on Bible doctrine, or a commentary, will help. Our interpretation of John 3:16, we will find, is consistent with New Testament teaching. As a final point, for any verse, there is one true interpretation, but there can be many applications.

3. Application is the third step. This step involves much prayer to have God show us the true needs in our life. We conduct an honest appraisal of our lives, not morbid introspections, but a fair examination of what areas need change (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Application is connecting the truths we have discovered into our personal life: our character, behavior, feelings, thinking, attitudes, relationships, service, priorities, and spiritual life. It is hooking the Bible up to our life, like hooking a horse up to a cart. The secret to application is understanding, faith, and obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit. We understand the Bible and believe it to be true. Then, we act until new habits are formed, and our devotion to Christ increases. Some question might be:

Are there attitudes for me to change?

Are there sins for me to confess?

Are there actions I need to take or cease?

Are there promises I can claim, or commands to obey?

Are there insights on how to pray better?

Do any of the principles instruct or encourage me on relationships of life: marriage, family, workplace, etc.

Are there things that help me in the defects of my character?

Are there encouragements for disappointments and failures in life?
What in the text gives me hope?
What does it tell me about God?
What changes can I make to practice better priorities in life?
What intellectual thoughts stimulate my mind?
What does it teach me about the next life?
What does it teach me about right and wrong?
Are there examples to follow?
Are there prayers to pray?
Is there a new perspective I can adopt in light of my life experience?
Is there a new skill I can learn?

As a final exercise, you may wish to wrap up your study by asking yourself what is the main lesson you received. What is the main “morsel” that stood out to you and became very real? In other words, what truth personally stood out to you and deemed to impress your heart in a real, fresh, special way? Why did it stand out? What does it mean to you personally?

In light of our example, we might ask ourselves, “Have I ever, personally, with a conscious act of my will, linked my belief (trust) onto the Person and work of Jesus Christ to save me from my sins and give me eternal life?” We must make the application personal. That is, we are talking about your sins, not that He died for sins in general, but rather, He died and rose again for your sins – personally, for your sins.

By the way, I have. Have you? If not why not now?

Remember, the goal of all this study is that we might become conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Not only is Christ God, but He is a Person who desires our close fellowship (1 John 1:1-7). To strengthen, develop and fully experience that special relationship, we must learn about Christ, and the only source of knowledge is the Bible.

In summary, in this study we have examined the preparation for Bible study, several principles to accurately understand the Bible, and finally, we have introduced a three step method of Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application.

SCRIPTURE ANALYSIS
OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION

Student name: _____ Scripture: _____

1. OBSERVATION: What does it say?

2. INTERPRETATION: What does it mean?

3. APPLICATION: What does it mean to me?

MAIN MORSEL: The main lesson I learned from this study.

