

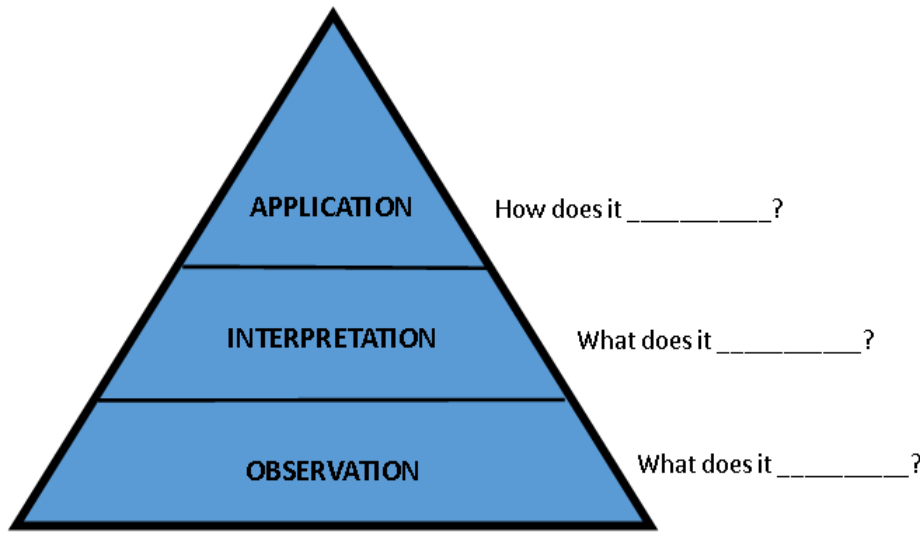
LOOKING BACK: SEVEN CRUCIAL PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Introduction:

Bibliology: The study _____ the Bible. (i.e., Inerrancy, Inspiration, etc.)

Bible Study: The study _____ the Bible.

The Three Components of Effective Bible Study:



Principle #1. Effective Bible study necessitates accuracy in all three components of the pyramid.

All three levels of the pyramid require hard work and growing in skill and precision.

A. Terms:

1. Exegesis (Observation)

“The purpose of exegesis is to ‘lead out’ the meaning which has been deposited in the biblical text by the writer.” (Jerry Vines & David Allen, “Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Proclamation”, Criswell Theological Review, 1987)

2. Hermeneutics (Interpretation)

3. Exposition (Application)

“Exposition is the communication of the meaning of the text along with its relevance to present-day hearers. Exegesis is the actual interpretation of the Bible, and hermeneutics consists of the principles by which the meaning is determined.” (Basic Bible Interpretation, Dr. Roy Zuck, p.19-20)

- B. 2 Timothy 2:15. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

ορθοτομουντα (orthotomounta):

“rightly dividing” NKJV - “handling accurately” NASB

- Only usage in the New Testament
- Defined as “cutting a path in a straight direction”
- Derivative means “upright, straight, correct”
- English terms derived: orthodontist, orthopedic

- C. Learn by formal instruction. (Classroom instruction, books, online, etc.). See “Recommended Resources” on the final page of these notes.

- D. Learn by observing the study practices of other exegetes.

Principle #2. Defining words and terms within the biblical text necessitates grammatical study and avoiding theological eisegesis.

- A. Many words are polymorphic (many meanings). The specific definition of a term when used is determined by examining the possible definitions from usage and determining the specific definition by context in each individual usage.

B. Examples:

- 1.) διακρινω (diakrino, "doubt") James 1:8

- 2.) σωζω, σωτηρια (sozo/verb, soteria/noun, verb: to save, rescue, deliver, preserve, noun: salvation, deliverance). Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 2:15, 4:16, Mark 8:24-38/1 Peter 1:9

C. Word studies in Greek and Hebrew are important.

D. Caution: A little Greek and/or Hebrew can be dangerous!

Example: 1 John 3:9, Present Tense or Absolute?

Principles #3. Extra biblical information and resources need to be authenticated.

A. In the study of Scripture, one must determine if extra-biblical material is supportive or necessary to derive an accurate interpretation of a biblical text.

- 1.) Extra-biblical information consists of archeological, historical, and cultural research pertaining to the biblical text being examined.

- 2.) Extra-biblical information can be supportive of an accurate interpretation.

- 3.) Extra-biblical information is not necessary for an accurate interpretation.

- 4.) Bible students who desire accuracy must avoid the temptation to “wow” others and authenticate the extra-biblical information satisfactorily.
- 5.) Understand and master figures of speech.
- 6.) Examples:
 - a.) 153
 - b.) “carpenter”/ “builder”
 - c.) Cockcrow
 - d.) Pool of Bethesda
 - e.) Camel and eye of needle
 - f.) “Sound the trumpet”

Principle #4. There is only one absolutely correct/accurate interpretation of any communication, including each biblical text. That interpretation lies within the author’s intent.

A. The Contribution of E.D. Hirsch

“For, once the author had been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text’s meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging the validity of an interpretation. By an inner necessity the study of ‘what a text says’ became the study of what it says to an individual critic...Thus, when critics deliberately banished the original author, they themselves usurped his place, and this led unerringly to some of our present-day theoretical confusions. Where before there had been but one author, there now arose a multiplicity of them, each carrying as much authority as the next. To banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.”
(Validity In Interpretation, Dr. E.D. Hirsch, University of Virginia, p.3 & 5)

B. The Contribution of Walt Kaiser

“To interpret we must in every case reproduce the sense the Scriptural writer intended for his own words. The first step in the interpretive process is to link only those ideas with the author’s language that he connected with them. The second step is to express these ideas understandably...In human conversation, the speaker is always the author; the person spoken to is always the interpreter. Correct understanding must always begin with the meanings the speaker attaches to his own words.” (“Legitimate Hermeneutics”. Dr. Walt Kaiser, p. 118, 120)

C. The Contribution of Haddon Robinson

“Sometimes we apply the text in ways that might make the biblical writer say, ‘Wait a minute, that the wrong use of what I said.’ This is the heresy of a good truth applied in the wrong way.” (“The Heresy of Application”, Leadership Journal, Fall-1997, p.21)

Principle #5. Biblical narratives are not intended to only communicate historical events and sequence, but to communicate a theological message in story form.

- A. Look for a theological message (“Golden Thread”) woven within the narrative.
 - 1.) Look for a thematic statement. (i.e., John 20:30-31)
 - 2.) Look for repetitious terms. (I.e. Luke—“repentance”, Matthew—“Kingdom”, Kings---"Jeroboam, the son of Nebat")
 - 3.) Look for the prophetic. (Jesus called the OT, “The Law and the Prophets)
 - 4.) Value progressive revelation, yet with caution. (i.e., Four Gospels, not one)
 - 5.) Research information to determine original audience and interpret accordingly.
 - 6.) Use the “Jeopardy Principle” to determine authorial intent.

- B. Look for Jesus. Luke 24:27, John 5:39

Principle #6. The treasures are in the details.

- A. Do not overlook any detail as small details can have significant implications in interpretation.

- B. Examples:
 - 1.) Matthew 22:31-32

 - 2.) Matthew 5:26

 - 3.) 2 Peter 1:10

 - 4.) 1 Peter 1:9

 - 5.) John 18:18, 21:9

- C. Master figures of speech. (i.e., hyperbole, litotes, metaphors, etc.)

Principle #7. Context, context, context!

- A. Chapter and verse divisions are helpful yet hindering.

Arch Bishop Stephen Langton, 13th century: Chapter divisions in Latin Vulgate
Robert Estienne, 16th century: Verse divisions within chapters.

- B. Various contexts are crucial to accurate interpretation.
 - 1. Cultural

 - 2. Dispensational

3. Historical

4. Grammatical (i.e., 1 Timothy 5:8)

Concluding Exhortation:

Be open: Just because it's new, does not mean it's wrong.

Be humble: God has a wide array of those He uses to channel His truth.

Be teachable: The Word of God is forever, therefore inexhaustible.

Recommendations Regarding Resources

1. Pursue recommended commentaries by precise exegetes.
2. Pursue recommended and reputable resource books. (i.e., Bible encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, concordances.)
3. Consider learning the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, opening standard resources for your use. (i.e., standard lexicons and concordances)
4. Bible study principles and practices: *Living By The Book*, Howard & Bill Hendricks, Moody Publishers
5. Basic hermeneutics (with a great summary of figures of speech): *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Roy Zuck, David C. Cook Publishers
6. Reading the Bible: *How To Read the Bible As Literature*, Leland Ryken, Zondervan Academic