

12 WEEK COURSE



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

NAME:

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

Many Christians regard the Bible as a message from God, written mainly in words you know, but with a meaning that is generally not clear. So, they conclude, you need an expert to explain it to you, a trained preacher or teacher perhaps, or some Bible scholar. Or you need a two-year course of study that will enable you to understand its meaning. Maybe the Bible is a hidden, divine writing you can understand only through a special experience.

If the Bible is viewed in any of these ways, then you will not study it. You may read a short portion in the morning for a Quiet Time and not worry about the nonsense verses you have to skip over. But you will not attempt more study, for you do not have time to take a long course and you think that anything less will not do much good. So for you the Word of God is mainly unknown: It is a word that does not communicate.

Does this make sense? Why should God speak to the church in such a way that most of the people cannot understand it? The answer is that He did not do that. **CHRISTIANS CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.** It is not necessary to wait for an expert or to take a lengthy theological course or to have some strange, mystical experience that other Christians do not have.

No, you can understand the Bible, if you are willing. It is up to you. Do you want to learn? How eager are you? If you are determined to learn the Bible, to set aside a regular time, say an hour each day, and give that time to the prayerful study of the Bible, God will teach you. And then this workbook can help you in practical ways to know how to study.

WORKBOOK IS DIVIDED INTO FIVE SECTIONS

THE FIRST takes up some basic matters: discussion of quotations, dealing with an attitude, the Bible as our only authority, denominational spirit, and inspiration of scripture.

THE SECOND discusses the general principles for interpreting the Bible, what is

interpretation, four ways to ascertain the intention of the writer as his general scope and plan are concerned, how to determine the extent of each subdivision and paragraph in a book, historical setting, and the audience.

THE THIRD examines principles that apply to special types of language, such as parables, figures of speech and prophesy, understanding the words and a method for word study.

THE FOURTH give guidance to reference tools and explains how to use them.

THE FIFTH considers how to apply the Bible to our own lives, how to know what God is saying to us personally and what we should do about it. ***(Bible quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.)***

OBJECTIVES OF HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us. As Christians we believe God has given us this wonderful gift to treasure, to keep, to learn, to understand and obey. But we cannot fulfill these purposes if our Bible remains closed and hidden away, or if we do not understand what it says. God's Word is for all of us. It should light our way. It should be our daily bread.

Perhaps you have already tried to study the Bible, but without much success. So, you gave up, and settled only for a brief Quiet Time, a few minutes each day to read a short portion, get help from some notes, find a thought for the day, and spend a short time in prayer. You now look for obvious promises or commands, but anything difficult you pass over, yet you sense this is unsatisfactory and have a feeling that God wants you to get much more from the Bible.

You are right. God commands us to learn His word (**II Timothy 2:15; II Peter 3:18; Psalm 119: 9,11**). Furthermore, God tells us that we can understand the Word (**I Corinthians 2:14; Acts 17:11; John 16:13**). Christians have the Holy Spirit as their teacher (**I John 2:20, 27**). So, because you have a divine teacher, you can understand God's truth.

This does not mean that God will teach us without our doing something. God feeds the birds, as Jesus said, but the birds work hard to get that food. God has

promised to feed us on His Word. Our job is to study. The food is there, and we can get it. But you must work hard to get it.

This workbook is designed to assist students who want to know how to understand the Bible; that is, how to be sure of the author's meaning. You must not only have the right attitude and approach, but you must also use good methods and develop skills in their use. **To introduce those methods and develop skills in their use is the chief purpose of this workbook.** Many Christians lack the discipline to study regularly on their own. This workbook encourages regular patterns of Bible study. **You are afforded the opportunity to actively participate in the chief purpose of this workbook through exercises, examines, readings, etc.**

If you study with a seeking, prayerful attitude, you will be where God can teach you. And He will. May God bless you as you hunger and thirst after righteousness.

DEALING WITH AN ATTITUDE

William Barclay, in his book Daily Celebrations, says, ***"it is only when truth is discovered that it is appropriated. When a man is simply told the truth, it remains external to him, and he can quite easily forget it. When he is led to discover the truth himself, it becomes an integral part of him, and he never forgets."***

The attitude, which creates a sectarian spirit, must be guarded against with conscious effort. ***As a brotherhood of people seeking to be nothing neither more nor less than followers of Jesus Christ, we must be neither too lazy to learn nor too arrogant as to think we do not need to learn.***

Denominate means simply ***to give a name to***. Used in a religious context, a denomination ***is a part of a religious people who agree around a central tenet(s) of faith and who are distinguished from other groups by a distinguishing name.*** People become denominational in exalting one religious theme and crystallizing around it and/or by the exclusive use of some name that serves to separate themselves from other people who seek to follow Christ after the New Testament order of things.

No one has the right (your authority) or authority to set the parameters of another's faith. The practice of un-denominational Christianity insists faith comes to each person through his own study of the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**) - **IF NOT THIS IS SECTARIANISM.** Paul wanted the faith of his converts to rest in the power of God rather than the wisdom of men (**1 Corinthians 2:1-5**). Each person must

take the responsibility for drawing his or her own conclusions about the will of God if not, why not?

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is accepted as normative. We must not be allowed to become a self-centered fellowship where primary loyalty is focused on the group rather than on Christ. No preacher or group of human interpreters shall be permitted to enforce a written or unwritten creed on the other members of the body (both are sinful). **We MUST be true to the text.** If not, we are no better than *false teachers* (II Timothy 2:2, John 8:30-32, I Peter 2:2, Colossians 3:16, John 15:1-27).

Truth Is Absolute. Truth is what it is regardless of what anyone thinks about it (**Psalm 119:89**). **Truth Is Attainable.** It can be searched for, recognized, received, and stood in:

In matters of doctrine, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty.

In all things, love. (III John 9-10, Drotnephes)

Unwritten creeds and narrow standards of orthodoxy are no less sinful among us than **the written creeds** of denominations.

QUOTATIONS DISCUSSED

Our motto is: ***Wherever God, Through The Truth Shall Guide Me.***

1. Allow the Bible to be the only guide in matters of religion.
2. Is it possible to discuss issues and remain brethren?
3. The great obstacle to progress is not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge.
4. Until we are humble enough to resume learning, we are not true disciples of the Son of God.
5. Openness precedes learning and growing. What we thought was right all along may or may not be right after all; only honest investigation can settle the matter.
6. If what we have been taught is right, our personal study will result in transforming tradition into genuine faith; if anything, we have been taught is wrong, we do ourselves a favor to discover and move away from it.

7. Must lay aside prejudice and study for yourself.
8. He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study will no longer reap in the pulpit, family, etc....
9. It is the text which challenges the interpreter.
10. It has been well said ***“that God has given us two ears and two eyes, but only one mouth, so that he obviously intends us to look and listen twice as much as we talk.”***
11. A wise old owl lived in an oak. The more he saw, the less he spoke: the more he heard; why can't we all be like that bird?
12. We first must listen before we can have a message and before people will listen. **(I Samuel 3:9; 4:1, Ephesians 3:1)**

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE: STUDENT GUIDE

CONTENTS And DATES

INTRODUCTION / OBJECTIVE.....	JUNE 5 TH / 12 TH
SESSION ONE: Binding of Interpretations: A Denominational Spirit ..	JUNE 19 TH
SESSION TWO: Panoramic View	JUNE 26 TH
SESSION THREE: Historical Setting	JULY 3 RD
SESSION FOUR: The Audience	JULY 10 TH
SESSION FIVE: The Smaller Context	JULY 17 TH
SESSION SIX: Method of Word Study	JULY 24 TH
SESSION SEVEN: Figurative Language and Linguistic Peculiarities ...	JULY 31 ST
SESSION EIGHT: Analyzing the Grammar	AUGUST 7 TH
SESSION NINE: Beginner's Guide to Reference Books	AUGUST 14 TH
SESSION TEN: Guided Tour of The NIV Study Bible	AUGUST 21 ST
SESSION ELEVEN: Examples Of Word Study Summaries	AUGUST 28 TH

(USING WORD STUDY TOOLS: HANDOUT)

SESSION ONE

THE AUTHORITY AND INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible Our Only Authority. *If the Bible contains God's messages to man, man's most important task is to interpret the various books of the Bible as their authors intended for them to be understood.* If it is God's work, revealing His will, nothing could be of greater importance than understanding it. If the Bible was given to reveal the truth and not to hide it, God must intend that we understand it. If we do not, the fault must be with us, not with Him. If we do not understand His communication, it is imperative that we determine the reason (**II Timothy 2:15; II Timothy 3:16-17**).

The purpose of divine revelation is the salvation of individuals. For the Bible to be effective in man's salvation, the first step understands the author's intended meaning. The next step is to apply that meaning to the contemporary setting for faith and obedience. Only then will the purpose of divine revelation be fulfilled, and Scripture is fully authoritative in the lives of people.

Views Of Inspiration Interpretation Govern

The Bible is not written in a special Holy Spirit language. If it were, man could not understand it unless God gave him the key for decoding that language or a miraculous, superhuman wisdom that would enable him to comprehend it. In other words, **God communicated with men in languages they already knew and were using.** In interpreting the biblical text, it is essential to use the same method and tools that are used in approaching other types of literature. The Bible, of course, is unique among all the world's literature. But man, still must strive to ascertain and employ a responsible method of study if he wishes to understand the Scriptures correctly.

One's approach to the Bible, as well as the method he uses to try to understand it, is governed partially by his view of inspiration. Therefore, we must know ourselves. Each of us approaches Scripture with his own, or her own pre-occupations.

If the Bible is accepted, in any sense, as a communication from God, a logical place to begin would be to inquire if the Bible itself tells us what approach we should take in seeking to understand its meaning. Does the Bible in one part interpret the meaning of statements in another part? It could almost be said that the whole New Testament is an interpretation of the Old Testament. Whether or

not the methods employed by Christ and the apostles in determining the meaning of the Old Testament passages models for us to follow, certainly the presuppositions they held should be a model for us. What presuppositions, then, did Christ and the apostles hold about interpreting the Old Testament?

Christ and the apostles viewed the Bible as a document written by men, to be sure, but at the same time as a document whose source was God himself. Let us examine the implications of those **Two Basic Presuppositions That The Bible Is A Divine Book, The Word Of God; And A Human Book, The Word Through Men To Men.**

Our presuppositions shape what we understand. It is not necessary to argue here for any one set of presuppositions, but to insist that we become aware of our own so that when we understand and interpret, we know how we are being influenced by them. The Bible claims to be inspired of God. (II Timothy 3:16) There is no way to prove or disprove this claim absolutely, although arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue. **It must be accepted by faith or rejected by unbelief.**

Four General Approaches Are Held Concerning Scripture

1. Scripture can be viewed as a **Supernatural Book** so that the interpreter's task is to seek several meanings or hidden meanings. Since God is the author, the Bible is authoritative. The message of the Old Testament is seen by Christ and the apostles to be a single message of redemption.
2. The opposite approach emphasizes that the Bible is of **Human Authorship**. If that naturalistic approach is taken, supernatural elements must be minimized or eliminated in interpreting the meaning of Scripture, especially in applying that meaning to present day doctrine and behavior.
3. The third approach is **Dogmatic**. All specific interpretations are made to confirm to a predetermined system of doctrine. It attempts to harmonize all the teachings of Scripture on a given subject or to compose a comprehensive systematic arrangement of all the teachings of the Bible as valid. They interpret all passages of Scripture based on their systems. It can replace the independent authority of Scripture with the authority of man-made systems.
4. The fourth approach could be **A Combination Of Two Or All Three Of These.**

Three different approaches **super naturalistic, rationalistic, or naturalistic, dogmatic** all yield totally different interpretations.

Is there a correct biblical approach? Can we know for sure? If so, is it one of these or is it a combination of two or more?

The Bible Is Both Divine And Human.

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

Inspiration is a work of God terminating not in the men who were to write Scripture, but in the actual written product. Scripture has a double authorship and man is only the secondary author.

Inspiration, therefore, guarantees the truth—all that the Bible asserts, just as the inspirations of the prophets guarantee the truth of their representation of the mind of God. Man's part in the producing of Scripture was merely to transmit what he had received.

Each biblical book is in one sense the literary creation of its author. From the standpoint of content, man contributed nothing. II Timothy 3:16 says, ***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*** Paul here states that the written Word of God is God-breathed ***theopneustos***. This does not mean that all writings are inspired, but that all that Paul regarded as sacred writings (vs. 15) are inspired of God.

To Paul there was a definite canon of writings, which were regarded as sacred or holy. The writings, which Timothy had been taught from his infancy, were the Old Testament manuscripts kept in sacred trust in the Synagogues where people gathered to hear men read aloud from God's word. The scriptures Paul refers to here are of the Old Testament. From these sacred writings Jesus and his apostles, and other evangelists, preached salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (Jesus in Luke 24:25-27, 32, 43, cf Luke 4:16-21, Matthew 21:42; Philip in Acts 8:32-35; Paul in Acts 17:2, 11; Apollos in Acts 18:24-28; also note Roman 15:4).

Historically, the church has always agreed that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. But it has not always been agreed that inspiration came via **mechanical**

dictation in which the writers were simply secretaries who merely recorded what they were told to write down. In this view, scripture is verbally inspired in inerrant. Another view, which avoids mechanical dictation, believes in verbal inspiration and insist upon an inerrant Scripture but allows for the freedom of the writer to use his own style and manner while preserved from error through the superintending power of the Holy Spirit.

Both views usually limit inerrancy to the original manuscripts (the autographs), recognizing that errors have crept into present day manuscripts since God has not guaranteed infallibility in transmission.

Still others accept the Bible as inspired but do not regard its uniqueness as extending to freedom from error in all matters of science and history. Those who hold this view do not believe that the existence of minor historical and scientific errors, or minor alterations of any kind, damages the essential message of the Scriptures or destroys Christian faith.

John 20:30 claims to be selective, so that much material may have been purposefully omitted. The selection is based on the needs and purpose. Was God involved and to what extent? This is based on faith judgments. The Spirit was involved, brought things back to the Disciples minds after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (John 14:26) Also Luke selected his materials. God is concerned about the final form or products. This is where our faith comes in or lies. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God. (**II Peter 1:16-21, II Timothy 3:16**)

Faith demands that one go to the Bible itself to learn how God did this. Man is in no position to dictate to God how he must have done it. Texts like **Luke 1:1-4, John 20:31-31, I Kings 11:41**, and many others show that at least much of the time God did not dictate words mechanically to men who wrote the Bible as an employer would dictate a letter to his secretary. Rather, the various biblical authors wrote to people with real needs and problems in living situations. They were personally involved in the lives of their readers and often told them how they felt about them. When Paul says to his brethren in Colossae, ***I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face (Colossians 2:1)***, he is relating his own feelings, and not a word that God is forcing him to say by mechanical dictation. A warm, intimate, personal relationship usually existed between biblical authors and their audiences.

The Holy Spirit superintended the writings of the various biblical books. As Luke did

research in preparation for writing his gospel to Theophilus, as he scrutinized the narratives in his possession and the oral reports that he had received. God superintended his work so that those things he selected were the most relevant to the needs of his audience and so that he presented them in the most suitable fashion for that audience. But Luke still used oral and written sources and did research in preparing his gospel.

Perhaps a theoretical example would best demonstrate the point. If some early Christian preacher related to Luke Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, and if he did so accurately with proper emphasis and meaning, there would be no point in God dictating this story to Luke mechanically. And when Luke himself declares he gained his information through reading earlier narratives and through hearing oral reports of eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word (**Luke 1:1-4**), it would be a denial of God's inspiration of Luke to argue that God dictated it to him.

SESSION TWO

THE PANORAMIC VIEW

It would be presumptuous to think that any person or group could construct a method for studying the Bible that would be flawless or that would stand the test of all archeological, linguistic, and literary discoveries that present and future generations of scholars will make. ***This session suggests certain principles that are generally recognized as basic in understanding a biblical passage.***

The various books of the Bible contain the message of God delivered to man on different occasions over a period of approximately one thousand three hundred

years. That message was always relevant to the intended audience, even when it announced events in the distant future. The first task of the student is to ascertain the way an author (or authors) of a biblical book intended to speak to the needs of the audience to whom his (or their) book was addressed. This puts one in a position to evaluate modern problems and needs and to apply the message of the Bible to contemporary situations.

PANORAMIC VIEW

Panoramic view refers to the **larger picture** in which an **event** occurred, a **statement** was made or a **book** was written.

Four Ways To Ascertain The Intention Of The Writer As His General Scope And Plan Are Concerned

FIRST Search to see if the writer himself clearly set forth his purpose in the **Preface, Conclusion, or Body** of the text.

Examples:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Ecclesiastes 12:13 | 2. Luke 1:1-4 |
| 2. I John 1:1-4 | 4. John 20:30-31 |

SECOND, study the **parenthetical sections** (the hortatory aspect), particularly of the New Testament Epistles, to determine what applications the author himself has made for the factual and doctrinal portions of the text. **Usually, an author's exhortations will flow out of his special purpose for writing his book.**

Examples:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Hebrews 4:1 | 2. Hebrews 4:11 |
| 3. Hebrews 6:1 | 4. Hebrews 10:35-36 |
| 5. Hebrews 12:1 | 6. Hebrews 13:15 |

The overall purpose must be ascertained by the contents and the transitions from section to section and paragraph to paragraph.

THIRD, as a clue to the writer's overall purpose in collecting and editing history or narrative observe what details he **selected** for inclusion and how he **arranged** them. The most difficult pattern of all is to determine if in those cases where the major portion of a book, if not its entire text, is made up of narrative materials.

Example:

1. The book of Ruth (**must look at what details were selected for inclusion and how they were arranged by the writer**).

FOURTH, recurring **words, expressions, or ideas** and an author's own **summary of events** provide clues to these thoughts.

Example:

1. Judges 2:11-23

FIFTH, in attempting to comprehend an author's purpose, it is important to determine whether he **approves or disapproves** the words or actions of people in his account. Sometimes the author makes this clear by his own statements or by the way he relates an event.

Example:

1. Judges 14:2-3, 13:5

SIXTH, **personal** references to the readers usually indicate a book's purpose.

Example:

1. Titus

SEVENTH, when no other clues are available, the interpreter must work out his own statement of the author's purpose. The interpreter will begin by studying how the **topic sentences** of individual paragraphs work together to explicate the theme of a given section then he will proceed to study the **themes** of all the sections and to evaluate the connections between and within sections.

Example:

1. I Corinthians 1:11; 3:4; 4:6; 5-6; 7:1, 18; 12:1; 16:1-2

2. II Corinthians 2:3-4; 7:5-8; 10-13

EXERCISES

1. **Proverbs 1:1-6:** How does the purpose stated here affect the meaning of other passages?
2. **In Ecclesiastes:** The phrase ***under the sun*** may be the key to this book. Does knowing this help with puzzling verses like **2:17, 20, and 24, 9:4?**
3. **In Galatians 1:** Consider Paul's purpose considering his repeated use of the word "**Gospel**" and his abrupt beginning (without thanksgiving).
4. **In Colossians:** Study 2:4, 8, 16, and 20-22 for suggestions regarding Paul's purpose.

SESSION THREE

HISTORICAL SETTING

The Bible is **revelation** in history. We must understand it in the context of its history. Therefore, you need to try to find out what was going on in the world at that time. Particularly, you need to try to find out what was going on which might have influenced the **author** or **audience**, and the **world** around him. This can become rather involved, but it is very necessary if you are going to find out what a passage really meant. Furthermore, you may discover that the historical background of words, which were spoken, or have events that happened, might have been different from the background when the words were written down.

Example: The book of Ruth

SEVEN WAYS TO DISCOVER THE HISTORICAL SETTING:

1. Personal Situations Of The Author.

One's meaning of **Psalm 51:4** influences one's interpretation of the entire Psalm. Is David speaking of some inward, spiritual offense that does not involve other people?

Example: Philippians 4:4-7; 1:13-14; 2:17-18

2. Historical References Within Scripture.

The Old Testament history is essential to the understanding much of the New Testament.

Example: John 3:14-15

Not only is Old Testament history essential to the understanding of much of the New

Testament, but it is also needed to understand many passages in the Old Testament itself.

Example: Ezekiel 37: 1-6

New Testament history often helps in understanding New Testament passages.

Example: Acts 28:30-31; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philippians 1:20-21, 24-25; 4:22.

3. Physical setting

Example: Ezekiel 47, the river flows east, not west. What sea is it having reference to?

4. References to animal life.

The Bible is full of references to sheep, lost sheep, found sheep, sacrificial sheep and the Lamb of God. Sheep are helpless, unable to care for themselves, non-resistant, unprotected, and dull.

Example: Psalm 23; Isaiah 53

3. References to plant life.

Example: Mark 11:12-14

6. **Cultural setting**

The way people lived, social, religious customs, legal requirements are the context from which writing comes.

Example: Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3-4

7. **Extra Biblical Sources**

Example: Revelation 1-3 and its constant reference to Babylon can be understood in the light of the history of Rome at the time of its writing. The churches at Asia Minor were historical places where we can learn about historical and archaeological studies. Who were the Nicolaitians? What was **the Synagogue of Satan in Smyrna?** What was Satan's throne in Pergamus? Who was Jezebel in Thyatira?

EXERCISES

1. **Ezekiel 37:1-6** is usually spiritualized. Yet, for an understanding of that passage, knowledge of its historical setting is of vital importance. How does an understanding of the historical setting help us to properly interpret this passage?
2. In **Matthew 16:14**, Jesus is referred to as Elijah, and Jeremiah. What characteristics in Jesus evoked the memories of these two characters?
3. **Judges 4-5** is about the story of Deborah. The drama is between those who helped the Lord and those who did not. The geographical references determined who fought for the Lord and who did not fight?

4. **Judges 11:30-40** are about vows, vow or no vow, not a commitment to celibacy. However, the entire passage seems to indicate a common practice in that culture. What is it? Notice Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:30-31; Psalm 106:37.

5. Using **extra biblical sources** determine what the phrase *Seed passed through the fire* signifies.

SESSION FOUR

THE AUDIENCE

In some instances, the biblical writers had specific readers in mind. This is especially true of the New Testament epistles, i.e., **I and II Timothy and Titus**. As you read a book the first time, try to discover:

1. The kind of persons to whom the author was writing.
2. What seemed to be their problems and characteristics?
3. Try to identify with those people who would receive the author's letter.
4. You should not only know the audience for whom the passage was written but also the historical setting in which they need to read that passage.

EXERCISES

1. What kind of persons was Peter writing to in I Peter?
2. What seemed to be their problems and characteristics?
3. What is the historical setting of the Book? How are the audiences being affected? Is their problem from within or without or both?

SESSION FIVE

THE SMALLER CONTEXT

It is essential to a correct understanding of the Bible to begin with a whole book in its larger historical and theological setting and then move to the **smaller subdivisions, paragraphs, verses, lines and words** in that book.

Without the benefit of knowing the connection between the paragraph under consideration and the section of the book in which it is found, the exegete will often be at sea in interpreting a passage. The primary work of the exegete is identifying the context, which is the most important.

The word **context** is composed of two Latin elements, **con** (together) and **textus** (woven). Hence when we speak of the context, we are talking about the connection of thought that runs through a **passage**, those **links** that **weave** it into one piece.

The author has explicitly stated in his preface, conclusion, and/or constant refraining throughout the book what his intention is. The rest of the work can be systematically skimmed to note how this explicitly stated purpose and plan have been worked out.

Seams That Mark Off Specific Section Of The Book (S)

1. ***After determining the major theological emphasis in a book, it is necessary to determine the extent of each subdivision and paragraph in that book.***

Example:

The famous passage on love in **I Corinthians 13:4-7** is part of Chapters **12-14**, as Paul's recurring introductory phrase **Now concerning** (12:1) and the subject matter demonstrates. It is also part and parcel of the entire book of I Corinthians. If one studies these verses apart from their larger contexts, it is possible that he will miss the emphasis Paul had in mind.

In chapters 12-14, Paul is discussing the problem involving tongue speakers and prophets in the Corinthian church. Throughout the book of I Corinthians he is endeavoring to build bridges between brethren that feel superior to their fellows.

The commentator must try to understand how Paul intended for the admonitions in 13:4-7 to speak to the immediate situation involving tongue speakers and prophets and to the more general problems as envy and arrogance, but also how these admonitions fit together with the rest of this book to convey a relevant divine message to his Corinthian brethren. Only then is one in a position to decide how the message in these verses apply to situations in the modern church and world. If one isolates 13:4-7 from Chapters 12-14, or Chapters 12-14 from the spirit and message of the whole book, he runs the risk of misunderstanding the passage itself. At the same time, of course, the way in which one determines the larger theological thought of the book is by carefully doing exegesis of the different passages in that book.

2. ***A repeated term, phrase, clause or sentence may act as the heading to introduce each part.***

Example:

The skeleton of Genesis protrudes most visibly in the often-repeated phrase, **these are the generations of**. Ten times the phrase appears as a **heading** for the section, which follows (Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 27; 25:12 19: 36:1, 9; 37:2). Each time a new name is inserted, content or section (that is genealogy, personal history, etc.), length of section.

Various facts will come to light as you study. For example, Genesis has two parts: the first, up to Abraham; and the second, Abraham and the patriarchs that follow him. The first part gives mainly genealogies, the second tells stories of individuals. The whole book shows God's plan working out through the godly **seed or line**.

3. ***But this phenomenon of a repeated term, phrase, clause, or sentence can also appear at the end of a section.***

Example: Five times Matthew closed major teaching blocks of material with the refrain, *and it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings*. (Matthew 7:28; 1:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1)

4. Often there may be grammatical clues such as transitional conjunctions or adverbs; for example, *then, therefore, wherefore, but, nevertheless, meanwhile, and the Greek words ouv, de, kai, tote, dio.*

Example: The conjunction **for** is found in these three verses: Luke 12:15, 23 and 32. It is not hard to see how this connective word links the commands not to be greedy, to worry or to fear, to a strong reason for obeying them.

5. A rhetorical question could signal a switch to a new theme and section. It may be that there also will be a series of such questions that carries forward the argument or plan of a whole section.

Example: Romans 6:1, 15; 7:7.

6. A change in the time, location, or setting is a frequent device, especially in narrative contexts, to indicate a new theme and section.

Example: II Kings 4:1-7; Exodus 1:22 - 2:10

7. A vocative form of address deliberately showing a shift of attention from one group to another constitutes one of the most important devices. It is often used in the epistolary type of literature.

Example: Nowhere is this clearer than in the introductory word to the three sections of Micah **Hear.** (Micah 1:2; 3:1; and 6:1)

8. A change in the tense, mood, or aspect of the verb perhaps even with a change in the subject or object may be another clue that a new section is beginning.

Example: Ephesians 1:3-11

9. Repetition of the same key word, proposition, or concept might also indicate the boundaries of a section.

10. In a few cases, the theme of each section will be announced as a heading to that section. In those unusual cases, the interpreter need only make sure that all the contents of the section are judged in light of the stated purpose of the author.

Example:

In I Corinthians 12:1: Now concerning spiritual gifts. In fact, almost all of I Corinthians uses the **Now concerning** construction to introduce the next item that Paul wishes to address (e.g., I Corinthians 7:1, 25; 8:2; 12:1; 16:1). Paul has apparently organized his material in the form of a series of responses to questions the Corinthians had asked of him in a letter.

11. Transitional sections composed of several indictments indicate a new section.

Example: Amos 5:18; 6:1, 4; 5:21.

12. Visions can conclude an author's section.

Example: Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1; 9:1.

EXERCISES

1. Solomon used a repeated refrain as a colophon to mark the four sections in Ecclesiastes. What is his repeated line and where is it found?
2. The most celebrated of all cases where the rhetorical question is used to structure a whole book is in Malachi. Repeatedly, in a unique conversational style, Malachi begins each major section with a bold declaration from God only to have the audience reaction be that pretended, innocent and hurt look which asks a rhetorical question throughout the book, what is it and where are the places in the Book they can be found?
3. Isaiah 40-66 is divided into three large teaching blocks; each composed of an ennead (nine addresses roughly corresponding to our present set of nine chapters each); locate the three colophons that Isaiah uses and give their locations.
4. Observe Amos 5:16; 6:7; 5:21 and make note of all the transitional conjunctions or adverbs.

5. Think of a simple sentence: *I eat vegetables and I am strong*. Now think of the sentence with other connecting words in place of **and**. For example, *I eat vegetables because I am strong*. Then, *I eat vegetables when I am strong*. Substitute in turn yet, **therefore and although**. Think about how the meaning changes in each sentence.

SESSION SIX

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

There is one more aspect that must be considered here, and that is paragraph analysis within the section. The investigation of the context of a paragraph can be as illuminating as the discovery of how the various sections of a book relate to one another. Without the benefit of knowing the connection between the paragraph and consideration and the section of the book in which it is found, the exegete will often be at sea in interpreting a passage. Once again, the primary work of identifying context is most important.

Example: Exodus 6:14-25: By skipping this paragraph, exegetes miss several rather interesting but helpful points. What are they?

EXERCISE

1. Galatians 3:4: *You have fallen away from grace* is an illustration of the importance of knowing the immediate context. How is *grace* understood in this context?
2. Romans 14:13-15:1: The strong and the weak. We might think that a strong person is one who is strong in his opinions, his convictions, his character, or his spirituality. One who is weak is weak in one or more of those areas. That view is legitimate. But is that what Paul was contrasting in Romans 14 when he spoke of the strong and the weak?

3. I Thessalonians 5:2: The day of the Lord. Here, Paul tells us that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. How does a thief come in the night? Many have taken this passage to indicate that the Lord will come stealthily or secretly. Once again, what does it mean in context?

SESSION SEVEN

OUTLINING A BOOK

To discern the plan of the book, it is necessary to outline. How does one go about outlining a passage or a book of scripture?

1. Do not use the **chapter and verse** divisions. Those are not authoritative divisions of thought. They were not in the original text but were added much later. Their great advantage is that they enable all people who are dealing with Scripture to identify the same passage. But in outlining the flow of thought, chapters and divisions are not uniformly helpful.

Example: The wonderful passage on love beginning with I John 4:7 does not end with the conclusion of Chapter 4. Where does it end?

2. Simply put, one must look for change. If there is a change in **events** so that one story is concluded and another begun, the outline is simple. In the Gospels, however, one must be careful to include the preceding or following commentary on the events as well as the event itself.
3. Change in **thought** is of much greater importance than change of events.

Example: In the book of Ephesians, the break between Chapter 3 and 4 is very clear. Paul had been dealing with doctrinal matters, particularly with the church. In 3:21 his benediction concludes. The next verse (4:1) shows Paul has clearly shifted from doctrine to practice, leaving the two major divisions of the book clear.

4. Less radical changes of thought, in which one idea may gradually flow into another idea, are more difficult to discern. Those would constitute the subdivisions under the main outline.

Example: In the case of Ephesians, one might be tempted to make a break between chapters 5 and 6 because chapter 5 is dealing with husbands and wives, whereas chapter 6 begins with the relationship between children and parents. However, it is very important to see the relationship between those two.

EXERCISE

1. One can begin at any point in the text and work backward or forward in looking for a change of thought. If you begin at the end of chapter 5 of Ephesians and work backward, what will you find the subject centering on?
2. There is a clear break between verses 21 and 22, for verse 21 speaks of subjecting ourselves to one another in the year of Christ. And so most versions make a paragraph break at that point. The paragraph break is no doubt legitimate, but what is the connection between verse 21 and verse 22?
3. When we return to 6:1 and begin looking in the opposite direction for a change in thought, we immediately find another example of what?
4. Following the flow of thought further; there is obviously a break between 6:4 and 6:5 where the subject changes from children and parents to servants and masters. Nevertheless, the thread of thought continues in that servants are to be in subjection to their masters. At what point is there a complete break with the original thought of being in subjection one to another in the year of Christ?

SESSION EIGHT

METHOD FOR WORD STUDY

Guideline: Research each unclear and important word. In seeking the author's intended meaning, we must consider the meanings of individual words. Their meanings, in many cases, are not always self-evident.

Example: Genesis 24:27 (KJV), *I being in the way, the Lord led me.* Is this expression referring to one's own resistance to the will of God? Although one often stubbornly obstructs God's purposes (being in the way), is one to feel that God is leading him despite his obstruction because he is God's child? Through misunderstanding of words, the interpreter can come to an opposite meaning of that intended by the author.

Why Are Words So Troublesome?

Because they seldom have a precise meaning that is **identical** in all contexts. Rather, they have a **range** of meanings, so that in one context an **emphasis**, or even a **word** differs from that intended by the use of that same word in a different context.

1. Words change their meaning over a period of time.

Example: In 1611 when the authorized version of the Bible was translated, the word **prevent** meant **go before**. But over 360 years later, its common meaning is **hinder** or **stop**. The Authorized Version in I Thessalonians 4:15 says, *we, who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them, which are asleep.* True, we will not hinder them, but that is not Paul's point. In 1611 when people read, *shall not prevent them*, they understood it to mean *will not precede them*. Verse 16 confirms this meaning: *The dead in Christ shall rise first.*

2. Different words may have the same or similar meaning.

Example: We often use synonyms simply for variety, and the Bible does this too. We should not think that every time the Bible uses different words the meaning must be different. See the way Matthew 20:21 and Mark 10:37 uses *Kingdom and glory*; and Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:47, *Life and Kingdom of God*.

3. On the other hand sometimes we change a word in order to mean something else. We may want to use a word with a stronger or more definite meaning than one similar to it. The second word may be a synonym of the first, yet somewhat different.

Example: In Galatians 6:2, 5 the Authorized Version burden in both cases, but the Revised Standard Version changes the second to load. The context shows that there is a difference: *Each person should carry his own responsibility but should also help others with their problems.*

4. The same word may have different meanings.

Example: Ezekiel 44:5-6 (Authorized Version) illustrates this well. In verse 5 the house is the literal temple as the Revised Standard Version translates it. But in verse 6 the nation is called the house. The difference is between what we call **the literal and figurative** uses.

5. In translation, the problem is compounded since a word in one language rarely means precisely what a word means in another language.

Example: In Ephesians 6:8, Paul exhorts us to pray *always*, he literally said, *all the time*. Does he mean, *without interruption* or *consistently*? One must discern which of the possible meanings Paul had in mind when he gave that exhortation.

6. Some basic problems are inherent because we are not studying Scripture in its original language. Different words in the original may be translated by the same English word.

Example: Perhaps the word translated *love* in John 21:15-19 is the most famous illustration of that problem. When Christ asked Peter if he *loved* him, and Peter answered with a different word that difference is indeed difficult to translate into English and, as a result, not normally translated. Yet it is important to study the two words that are used. In Jesus *three questions of love* one has **Agapas, Agapas and Phileis**.

7. A word in the original may be translated by different English words.

Example: Matthew 4:21 says, *mending their nets*. The same Greek word is found in Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; Galatians 6:1; and I Peter 5:10 but translated by so many different English words.

EXERCISES

1. A word in one language rarely means precisely what a word means in another language. When Christ said He would be with us *always*, the literal words are *all the days* (Matthew 28:20). Does this mean that Christ is with us without interruption (all the time)?
2. English words change their meaning since the publication of the Authorized Version in 1611. For example, Paul uses the word *simplicity* in II Corinthians 11:3. Occasionally modern humans use this passage to show that the Bible is *simple* (i.e., easy to understand). Now, if this is true, explain II Peter 3:15-16. Is there a contradiction? Explain your answer.
3. We often use synonyms simply for variety, and the Bible does this too. Give three examples of two English words, which the meanings are not exactly the same, but are so nearly alike that the difference does not matter.
4. Sometimes we change a word in order to mean something else. The second word may be a synonym of the first, yet somewhat different. The different words for *prayer* in I Timothy 2:1 are synonyms. Do they express different kinds of prayer, or are they simply strengthening the exhortation by repetition?
5. Does the word *righteousness* in the Old Testament mean the same thing as *righteousness* in the New Testament?
6. Different words in the original may be translated by the same English word. The word *new* is in this category. What are the Greek words for *new*? Which word does John use in Chapter 13:34.

SESSION NINE

HOW TO STUDY WORDS

The above facts show us that if we are to understand the Bible we must understand the words, and to do this we must study them carefully. The Word of God is too important for us to treat in a careless way. So what are the ways to study Bible words?

1. **Look up the word in the Bible dictionary.** These are necessary for looking up difficult biblical terms, getting a quick summary of the history of a city, person or nation, or otherwise defining a difficult or unclear concept.

Example:

- A. **In Revelation 1-3**, who were the Nicolaitans? What was the *synagogue of Satan* in Smyrna? What was Satan's throne in Pergamum?
- B. **Word that has only one meaning words like *unicorn*** (Numbers 23:22; Psalm 92:10 Authorized Version), *rue* (Luke 11:42, and *Provender* (Genesis 24:25), a dictionary will clear up the meaning of such words.
- C. **For general words, not special ones like the above, a dictionary gives two or more sometimes quite a few more meanings.** That is because these words are used in different ways. A dictionary rarely tells which meaning is used in the Bible; it only helps us to know the possible meanings of the word.

2. **Study the word in its context. The Bible is full of words whose meaning is made clear by the context.**

Example:

- A. **For the Lord knows the way of the righteous**, proclaims Psalm 1:6. We might think this means only that God, since he knows all things, is aware of what righteous people do. But when we look at the near context, the second part of the verse, we learn that *know* has a stronger meaning. God knows one way; another way perishes. The contrast shows that God's knowledge includes protection and care.

3. **The most important tool for studying words is a good concordance.** This enables the interpreter not only to study a word or passage in its own context, but in relation to other Old and New Testament passages. The concordance should be one, which is analytical. That is, it should give the word in the original language from which the English word is translated.

Example:

- A. **The word *furnished* appears only four times in the New Testament** (all four of the words are based on the Authorized Version), yet is translated of three different Greek words. Strong's Concordance lists this as follows:

Furnished

Matthew 22:10 the wedding was <i>f.</i> with guests	- 4130
Mark 14:15 large upper room <i>f.</i> and prepared	- 4766
Luke 22:12 shew you a large upper room <i>f.</i>	- 4766
II Timothy 3:17 thoroughly <i>unto all good works</i>	- 1822

The three different numbers tell us automatically that three different words are employed in the original. By turning to the Greek dictionary in the back of the concordance, we will be able to determine what these three words are.

- 4. Most reference Bibles have marginal references that list some other verses in which a significant word occurs.**

The task of the translator is to define as precisely as possible the meaning of a word in the way the author used it in its specific context, and then search for a word or expression in his language that gives as nearly as possible the same meaning.

The author had a specific meaning in mind, and a careful word study will identify that meaning. If God the Holy Spirit took the care to inspire the very words, we must be careful to search out the intent of the author in his choice of words.

IN A NUTSHELL

1. Immediate context.
2. Other occurrences within the book.
3. Occurrences in other writings by the same author.
4. Usage of the word by other author.
5. Old Testament root concept of New Testament words.
6. Non-biblical usage.
7. Historical root meanings found in lexicons and commentaries.
8. Synonyms and antonyms that may throw light on the range of meaning.

CLASS EXERCISE

Word Study Example: Covetous

SESSION TEN

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES

Figurative language refers to any words or phrases that are used with a meaning other than their common, literal sense. When **dog** is used of a human being (e.g. Philippians 3:2), the ordinary, literal designation of an animal is not intended.

The Bible is filled with that kind of figurative language, and such nonliteral picture-talk is one of the greatest problems of interpretation. To treat figurative language as if it were literal, and to treat literal language as if it were figurative, constitutes two of the greatest hindrances to understanding the meaning of the Bible. Therefore, we shall first consider the reasons for using figurative language then consider the necessary guidelines for understanding the meaning of non-literal passages and identify kinds of figures.

Reasons For Figurative Language

1. Figurative language is used because all human language contains non-literal talk.

Example: *I see your point*, but he does not mean that a pointed object has appeared in his visual field.

2. Figurative language is often used to emphasize a point.

Example: *To say, Tell that Fox* (Luke 13:32) is considerably more forceful than to say, *Tell the King*.

3. Figurative language can be used to move one to action.

Example: *Behold I stand at the door and knock* gives an emotional impact far beyond the impact of simply saying, *I am waiting for you to respond*. In the east where dining together is the seal of friendship, great is the emotional impact of being shut out awaiting the invitation to come in.

4. Figurative language may help the memory.

Example: *Don't hide your light under a bushel or bury your talent; he is a Good Samaritan, or she is the salt of the earth.* These demonstrate the fact that figurative language emphasizes a point in such a way that it is not easily forgotten.

5. Figurative language is effective in illustrating.

Example: When Christ said, *I am the bread of life* (John 6:48), he was illustrating a basic truth concerning his relationship with those who belong to Him. He satisfies and nourishes.

6. Figurative language is useful in clarifying.

Example: It is said that God *breathed life into Adam* (Genesis 2:7). How could God, who is infinite and without material being, explain to us His activity in creating a being that is limited, material and yet designed on the pattern of His own nature?

7. Figurative language may be used as a code.

Example: In the case of Christ's parables, we are told that parables were chosen as a medium for the very purpose of obscuring, Mark 13:10-17. There are many reasons, then, for the use of figurative language in Scripture, and it is our responsibility to study diligently that we may handle that kind of Scripture in an appropriate way.

Guidelines For Interpreting Figurative Language

1. Biblical language should be taken as literal unless there is one of three compelling reasons for considering it non-literal:

Reason One: If the statement is irrational, unreasonable or absurd if taken literally. ***I am the door and you are the salt*** are obviously irrational if taken literally.

Reason Two: The context may indicate that language is figurative or literal, but in the context the author indicates that he does not intend the meaning to be taken as literal. When Paul said, *I wrote* not for the sake of the offender (II Corinthians 7:12), the immediate context clearly shows that he was exaggerating for effect.

Reason Three: If there is a contradiction with clearer and more enduring emphasis of Scripture, it is legitimate to ask whether the

passage is to be taken as literal. For example, to hate your mother and father (Luke 14:26) contradicts both Old and New Testaments in their plain, strong and enduring teaching that parents are to be loved and honored. So it is not only permissible, but it is necessary to look for a figurative meaning.

2. **The viewpoint of the author and the original recipients, not our own perceptions, must control our understanding of what is appropriately literal or figurative.** The first task of the interpreter is to discern what the author had in mind by way of comparison, not what our own experience in another culture or our own ingenuity may devise.

IDENTIFYING KINDS OF FIGURES

1. **SIMILE** is a comparison using *like* or *as* and clearly indicates a figure.

Example: *All of us like sheep have gone astray* (Isaiah 53:6).

2. **METAPHOR** is a comparison not using *like* or *as*.

Example: *We are* the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100:30).

3. **HYPERBOLE** is intentional exaggeration used for the sake of emphasis.

Example: When a hunter says, *I missed that deer a mile*, everyone knows that he does not mean this, but that he is exaggerating to show disgust because he missed his game.

4. **METONYMY** is the use of one word for another with which it is strongly associated.

Example: Paul writes, *"As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"* (I Corinthians 11:26). But it is obvious that he does not really mean for Christians to drink the cup. (i.e., the container) but the wine contained in the cup.

5. **SYNECDOCHE** is the figure of speech in which part of an object is used in the whole object or the whole is used for a part.

Example: When Paul says, *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news* (Romans 10:15), both the context and common sense show that he has in mind the whole person, and not just his feet.

6. **IRONY AND SARCASM** are methods of expression in which a speaker or writer means exactly the opposite of what he says.

Example: If a child rushes into the house covered with dirt and mud and his mother says, "**Billy, you look beautiful,**" everyone realizes she is being sarcastic and means the opposite of what she actually says.

7. **LITOTES** is the use of an understatement in order to increase the effect.

Example: The Psalmist declares, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). But it is clear that he is not concerned with God's not despising his penitent heart, but with his enthusiastically welcoming it.

8. **PERSONIFICATION** is speaking of an object or an abstract concept as if it were a person.

Example: I Chronicles 16:33 says that **trees will sing for joy**, and in Psalm 98:8 **the poet summons the floods to clap their hands**.

9. **EUPHEMISM** is the substitution of an inoffensive expression for one that might be offensive.

Example: The King James Version of I Samuel 24:3 (following the Hebrew text literally) says that Saul went into the cave to cover his feet. This is a Hebrew idiom meaning to have a bowel movement (see also Judges 3:24), not to take a nap, as the casual reader might think.

10. **ANTHROPOMORPHISM** is speaking of God as through men with human passions.

Example: Jonah 3:9; 4:2 says that **God repented**. This is not to be taken literally. Rather, the Bible is using language common to men to convey a great truth concerning God (v.2, he is compassionate and forgiving).

11. **APOSIOPESIS** is the sudden breaking off of a thought before it is completed.

Example: When Moses prayed to the Lord in behalf of Israel, he cried: But now, if you will forgive their sin and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book that you have written. (Exodus 32:32)

12. HENDAIDYS is the use of two words occurring together or joined by “**and**” to express one idea.

Example: The phrase translated my rock and my salvation in Psalm 62:2, 6 appears to be a hendiadys meaning my rock of salvation or my mountains of triumph.

13. MERISMUS is the expression of totality by using the two extremes in a class.

Example: The expression good and evil in II Samuel 14:17 means all things that are on earth, as the parallel line in verse 20 shows.

14. PROVERBS are **way side sayings**, trite expressions, or common remarks, proverbs.

Example: John 4:37, and herein is that saying true; One soweth, and another reapeth.

15. PARABLE is a placing beside for the purpose of comparison; a story told with the purpose of giving some moral or spiritual truth. It is true to life but not usually an actual occurrence.

Example: Often in the Gospels Jesus begins parables with the words, the Kingdom of heaven may be compared to. (Matthew 22:1)

16. ALLEGORIES are continued comparison by representation or implication. Each detail of the story has its counter part in the meaning of the story, a description in the code to the deciphered point by point.

Example: Isaiah 5:1-6, what is spoken of a vine refers to Israel; but in Genesis, what is stated of Israel and Ishmael, Sarah and Hagar is all true history, yet in Galatians 4 it is made to speak of and set forth other truth, and hence there it is, and is called an Allegory.

17. Any Time The Word Of Occurs In An Expression, One Must Decide Whether The Author Intended For The Word After Of To Be The Subject (Subjective Genitive) Or The Object (Objective Genitive) Of The Word Before Of.

Example: The love of Christ in II Corinthians 5:14 must mean Christ's love for us (subjective genitive), and not our love for Christ (objective genitive), as the following line and the whole context show.

Figures Of Speech Add Beauty, Vividness And Emphasis To Language. In Recognizing And Interpreting Them May Help Us To Understand Verses That Otherwise May Appear To Be Contradictory.

EXERCISES

Match The Following Figurative Phrases With The Appropriate Scripture

Statements:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ Hyperbole | A. Ezekiel 19:1-9 |
| _____ Simile | B. I John 1:5 |
| _____ Metonymy | C. Romans 12:20 |
| _____ Synecdoche | D. Genesis 3:22-23 |
| _____ Irony and Sarcasm | E. Acts 17:30 |
| _____ Litotes | F. Amos 1:2; 3:4, 7, 8 |
| _____ Personification | G. Psalm 36:8 |
| _____ Euphemism | H. Ezekiel 18:2 |
| _____ Anthropomorphism | I. Revelation 13:3 |
| _____ Aposiopesis | J. I Peter 5:8 |
| _____ Hendaidys | K. John 3:16 |
| _____ Merismus | L. John 3:16 |
| _____ Proverbs | M. Hosea 4:13 |
| _____ Parable | N. Psalm 62:2, 6 |
| _____ Allegories | O. II Corinthians 11:21 |
| _____ Metaphor | P. Proverbs 8:22-31 |

SESSION ELEVEN

ANALYZING THE GRAMMAR

Individual words are not in isolation but linked together with other words to form a thought structure. Since the initial goal of Bible study is to determine the single meaning intended by the author, we have considered guidelines for discovering the historical, physical, and cultural setting of the passage and for defining the individual words that have special importance are difficult to understand.

We now turn to guidelines for understanding meaning through the analysis of thought structure. There are two elements in thought structure: the sentence and the context. The basic unit of thought in the grammatical structure is the sentence, but sentences are linked together. So, to trace the flow of thought, the context of each sentence must also be considered. The context has been subject to our study in the previous chapter.

We study sentence structure to analyze the flow of thought and gain insight on the meaning. More than any other part of biblical study, grammatical analysis depends on a knowledge of the original language. The flow of thought is not determined by the structure in English, but by the structure in the original language. Because English is not structure like those languages, it is difficult to translate with clarity.

The words of one language are never precisely the same in meaning as those of another, and it is for this reason impossible for an English translation of the New Testament exactly to reproduce the Greek text. Their forms and idioms differ, the corresponding words of each language are never exactly the same, and a translation from one to the other can only approximate the meaning of the original statement.

Although an authoritative analysis of the grammatical structure may not be made without a knowledge of the original language, in the vast majority of passages in Scripture, it is quite possible to analyze with confidence the flow of thought in a good English translation.

In following the thought flow, it is helpful to ask the following questions about each unit of thought.

1. What or who is the main subject of thought? The subject will be a noun, or a pronoun or a phrase standing in place of a noun.
2. What action does the subject do? The verb indicates the action, state or condition, and is called the predicate.
3. What or who is the object of the action? This can be either a direct object or an indirect object.
4. How have the parts of the thought been modified by a word or a phrase? Modifiers include adjectives and adverbs.
5. What are the relationships among the various parts of the thought? Prepositions and conjunctions are words indicating relationship.
6. How does the key idea or thought relate to those before and after it?

Let us look at some examples in which the flow of thought and sentence structure affect the meaning of the text. I will not attempt to solve each problem in each text but will simply demonstrate how it is essential to analyze the grammatical structure if one is to be certain of the meaning.

SUBJECT:

The subject may **be a noun, a pronoun, a phrase, or a clause, and their modifiers.** It is used to identify the actor, or with passive verbs, the one (or thing) acted upon. Also, the subject may identify anything or anyone about whom a statement is made, or a question is asked.

The pronoun especially needs to be identified. Who or what is doing the action? When he, she, it, this, that, and other substitutes are used, it is important to know who or what is referred to, and whether the subject is singular or plural, male, female or neuter.

Example: John 1:11, Jesus came to His own, those who were His own did not receive Him. Notice the different ways that verse has been translated in King

James Version, New International Version, Revised Standard Version, English Bible, and the Living Bible. It can be seen from these versions that it is not altogether clear what the subject of the thought is. Who or what are His own? Is the phrase His own **a neuter** (His own things) or **masculine** (His own people)?

VERBS (or PREDICATE)

To help determine **the action of the subject**, ask these questions: What action does the subject do, or what state or condition is it in? Is the action past, present, or future? Is it a continuing action or a completed action? Is it an imperative, demanding action?

It Is Particularly Important To Notice The Change Of Tense Of The Greek Verbs.

Example: Romans 12:1-2.

The first verse speaks of a **simple action that can be completed**: *I plead with you to make a great presentation.* **The verbs in verse 2** are in the form of **a continuing action**.

Conformed has the idea of **stop** being molded by the influences of this world, and keep or resisting the pressure to conform. Again, being **Transformed** is not something that is done at a church altar, once for all, or in an instant decision. The force of the verb is **a continuous action**: **Keep on being transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

A verb usually refers to either **past, present, or future time**: **I ate, I eat, I will eat.** But because it is not that simple, let us look more closely.

PAST TENSE. The past tense may show that something happened once in the past.

Example: Romans 7:9; Sin revived, and I died. It may also show something that happened many times, something repeated or habitual.

I Corinthians 13:11, I spoke I thought I reasoned like a child.

PRESENT TENSE. The present tense may show a universal truth, one not limited to any time.

Example: John 4:24: God is Spirit. The point is not that God is Spirit just now or that He goes on being Spirit, but that **this is His nature**. The present may also

express what is permanent, true, continuous or habitual. **Luke 12:54 and Matthew 23:1** The present can even express the future, usually what will happen very soon. **Matthew 26:2**

FUTURE TENSE. The future tense normally tells what will happen in the future.

Example: John 14:3, I will come. But it may also imply **a command**. Matthew 5:21, **You shall not kill. Though the form is future, the meaning is timeless.**

OBJECT:

In most cases, the subject takes action on some object either directly or indirectly.

Example: Matthew 16:19, I will give you the keys of the kingdom. The keys were directly acted upon, being given, with you as the direct object receiving the result of the action. **But Who Is You?** Is you singular or plural? Is Christ addressing Peter and his successors, as the Roman Catholic Church would hold? Is He addressing the leaders of the church, or is He addressing all Christians?

CONDITIONS: Modifiers such as adjectives and adverbs modify or qualify the meaning of other words. Adjectives may tell us the answer to questions such as, Which one? How many? and What kind? Adverbs will answer questions such as, When? Where? How? and To what degree?

RELATIONSHIP: A word that shows relationships among other words that come before and after it must be given special attention.

PREPOSITIONS: Prepositions have the pre-position: they stand before nouns or pronouns for the purpose of showing the relationship of that noun or pronoun to some action or state, or to some other word in the sentence.

Example: THE GOD OF HOPE could mean that God is a hopeful God, the - hope - is one of His attributes; or the God is the source of our hope and the reason why we are hopeful.

CONJUNCTIONS. Conjunctions are often the key to understanding, for they join thoughts. Those thoughts may be words, short parts of the sentence, or larger units of thought. Conjunctions often indicate the relationship of the thoughts

they join. The connective words used in identifying those relationships are as follows:

1. Temporal or chronological: after, as, before, now, then, until, while.
2. Local or geographical: where, in.
3. Reason or causal: because, for, since, as, whereas.
4. Result: so, then, therefore, thus.
5. Purpose: in order that, so that, that.
6. Contrast: although, but, nevertheless, however, yet, otherwise, whereas.
7. Comparison: also, as, so, just as, likewise, so also, moreover, than.
8. Emphatic: indeed, only.

EXERCISES

1. Study Ephesians 1:3-11 in the New International Version. Here the meanings of the pronouns are not so clear. Sometimes He refers to God the Father and sometimes to Christ. Where does the meaning change?
2. Study Deuteronomy 32:15-16 to see whether you, he, and they are three groups or one. And Mark 5:18; who would be with whom?
3. Pronouns affect the meaning very much. AT times, especially in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, close study is needed to see the referents of pronouns. Try Exodus 1:12; Isaiah 10:27 (His, cf. v. 26); and Isaiah 33:3-6 (he and his).
4. Psalm 14:1: To what does the pronoun they (plural!) refer?
Conditions imposed by adverbs and adjectives must be carefully noted. For example, there is an incredibly significant debate concerning the meaning of the **term Apostle**. Does it refer only to the twelve or does it refer to church-starting evangelists as well? Are there other uses of the word Apostles? One of the key passages speaks of Adronicres and Juias, Who

are outstanding among the apostles (Romans 16:7). Does "among mean that they were two prominent apostles among (many) others, or does it mean that among the twelve apostles, those two were highly thought of? How does either interpretation affect the meaning of the use(s) of the word "Apostle"?

5. How a conjunction is used is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "That there should be no division in the body, that the members should have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25). Does the word "that" (in order that) refer only to verse 24, or to the entire preceding thought?

