

BIBLIOLOGY 30 – HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE PART 7

INTRODUCTION

Luke 1:1-4 - Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

The Bible is the authoritative Word of God in all aspects of our lives. The Bible is the single source for our worldview and principles of life. We believe that the original autographs are perfect in form and function. We believe that we have an accurate representation of the original autographs in the Greek and Hebrew Bibles. We understand that the translations are good and useful for study, but how do we study?

REVIEW

We are settling into the Biblically mandated method for studying the Bible. We use the Literal, Grammatical, Historical approach (LGH). This approach respects the text's natural reading flow, follows linguistic rules, and preserves the historical setting while being mindful of the culture. It ensures that the author's intended meaning and the audience's understanding are maintained.

ATTITUDES

- Prayer – We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should be in prayer and be in a prayerful attitude throughout the study process.
- Respect – The Word of God is the Lord's message for the world, and all Scripture needs to be taken seriously and as His Word (Psalm 19:7-10; 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 17:17).
- Desire to learn, not prove – in other words, we learn Inductively.
- Understand our Limitations – Most of us will use a Bible and a notebook.
- Three Questions we seek to answer from every study (Not every study will answer all three questions).
 1. What does this passage teach me about God, Jesus, and/or the Holy Spirit?
 2. Is there a universal principle that I can understand from this passage?
 3. Does this challenge my theology? Do I need to change my mind?

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LGH IN NEW TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

The New Testament Narrative consists of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the Book of Acts. These books record the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, as well as the expansion of the message of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church.

Like the Old Testament narratives, they are historical accounts, written to convey real events, teachings, and miracles. The LGH method applies here by treating the text as eyewitness or investigative reporting (as Luke explicitly states), respecting its Greek grammatical structure, and anchoring it in the first-century Jewish historical context.

Goals: Maximize study with just a Bible and notebook. Gain third-person observations on God's character, Jesus' ministry, the Holy Spirit's work, human responses, and universal principles.

Limitations: Translations may miss Greek nuances like word order for emphasis or verb aspects, so note questions for later verification.

Note structure: Chronological flow, parables, miracles, dialogues, and key transitions (e.g., shifts from teaching to action, travel to mission, etc.).

Highlight key terms and theological motifs (Kingdom, Parables, Signs, Believe, Eternal Life).

Grammatical Analysis: Examine sentences carefully. Follow pronouns and verb tenses to track actions, speakers, and timing. Pay attention to figurative language (parables, hyperbole) but interpret within context.

Historical Context: Each Gospel is written for a particular purpose:

- Matthew continues the Hebrew Text, the fulfillment of where the Old Testament left off, waiting for the Messiah. It is written to Israel about their Messiah King and is about the Kingdom of Heaven: The offer, the rejection, and the future promise of its establishment.
- Mark is similar to Matthew but is written to the Hellenized Jewish Diaspora. This is a compilation of Peter's discourses as he would traverse various locations and spread the word about Jesus to the non-Hebrew speaking Jews, many of whom had lost the Judaic culture but are still waiting for the promise of the Messiah.
- Luke is written as a chronological historical investigation. This is a narrative where eyewitnesses were interviewed, and information was compiled to the best of the author's ability. Luke was not a Gentile and was written under the office of Paul when he traveled with Paul from Macedonia to Israel.
- John is the Gospel written to the world to demonstrate to the reader that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and in believing have life in His name.
- Acts is also written by Luke and is a historical narrative about God and the apostles as the message of Jesus Christ is spread from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and the ends of the Earth. Acts initially follows Peter as he continues the mission and message of the Kingdom of Heaven. Then it shifts as Gentiles begin to hear the message and believe, and Paul becomes the focus and introduces the administration of the Church.

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Method of study: The Gospels can be studied vertically (each book individually) or horizontally (as a harmony). The first three are called the Synoptics because they contain much of the same information and are in general about the same theme (Kingdom themed). John is unique but can and is good to be added to the synthesis.

When we study the narrative, we want to be good journalists.

- Read the selected section multiple times.
- Who, Where, When, What happened, Why did it happen, and What are the consequences?
- Who – List the characters in the narrative and identify attributes.
- When and Where – provides tactile historical context that helps in appreciation for the events. Also, the historical context may impact another account.
- What happened – Summarize the events considering the cultural history of the people.
- Why did it happen – Is there a lead-up to the situation? Does the text indicate if God controlled the circumstances?
- What are the consequences – The consequences are not inferred; they must be detailed in the greater context.
- Observe the historical arc of God's plan through the revelation of Jesus Christ and the life of the apostles.

In the Gospels, there are parables, and they are as wisdom literature in story form.

1. If it is explained, limit the parable to the explanation
2. Understand the imagery
3. Identify the single lesson of the parable

For this kind of study, I prefer you study John and Luke/Acts. Matthew and Mark can be difficult if you do not understand the historical background.

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LGH EXEMPLIFIED IN NEW TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

Normative (Literal) Reading vs. Allegorical

Example 1: Feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-15)

Misinterpretation: Often allegorized as a symbol of spiritual nourishment only, with the bread representing "eternal life" detached from the miracle, or the boy's lunch as a metaphor for sharing resources.

Literal Normative Correction: A literal historical miracle where Jesus multiplies five loaves and two fish to feed a crowd, demonstrating His divine power over creation. The narrative uses sequential verbs ("took... gave thanks... distributed") to describe real events, not symbols.

Teaches about God/Jesus: Compassion for physical needs, authority as Creator (echoing manna in Exodus), and messianic sign (crowd's response in v.14).

Example 2: Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Misinterpretation: Allegorized as Jesus (Samaritan) rescuing humanity (traveler) from sin (robbers), with the inn as the Church—ignoring the lawyer's question about neighborly love.

Literal Normative Correction: A teaching story responding to a legal expert's query about loving one's neighbor. The grammar uses imperative ("Go and do likewise") for practical application, not hidden meanings.

Teaches about God/Jesus: Mercy and Love as central to the Law's fulfillment.

Universal Principle: Active compassion for those in need defines love for one's neighbor.

Grammatical Analysis

Example: Walking on Water (Matthew 14:22-33)

Misinterpretation: As a metaphor for 'rising above' life's storms, with Peter's sinking symbolizing doubt in general faith journeys.

Grammatical Analysis: Narrative uses past tense verbs ("made... go... dismissed") for sequence, with Peter's plea ("Lord, save me!") in imperative, emphasizing immediate rescue. Structure contrasts fear (disciples) with worship (v.33).

Clarifies: Literal miracle affirming Jesus' deity ("Truly You are the Son of God").

Historical Context (Cultural)

Example: Jesus' Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1-11)

Misinterpretation: Generalized as a call to personal praise.

Historical/Cultural Understanding: Set in first-century Jerusalem during Passover, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 (king on donkey). Crowds' "Hosanna" echoes Psalm 118, a Messianic cry amid Jewish expectation of deliverance.