

BIBLIOLOGY 28 – HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE PART 5

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

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 are you 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.

We also saw that we need to maintain a persistent attitude in Bible Study:

ATTITUDES

- Prayer
- Respect for the Word of God.
- Desire to learn, not prove
- Understand our Limitations
- Reduction of Presupposition

LGH IN POETRY

Goals: Maximize study with just a Bible and notebook. Gain third-person observations on God's character, human nature, and wise living. **Limitations:** Translations may miss Hebrew wordplay or acrostics (Psalm 119), so note questions for later verification.

Textual Observation

Identify the genre (lament, praise, royal, imprecatory, wisdom, etc.).

Note parallelism, repetition, inclusio, and poetic devices.

Highlight key terms and theological motifs (e.g., refuge, steadfast love, righteousness).

Grammatical Analysis

Examine sentences carefully.

Study pronouns and verb tenses to track shifts in speaker or time.

Pay attention to figurative language (similes, metaphors, personifications).

Historical Context

Determine the authorship and setting (David fleeing Saul, temple worship).

Consider if the text is about the Law or natural human behavior.

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Explore liturgical or national use (enthronement psalms, pilgrimage songs), consider the culture of the Kingdom of Israel or the Patriarchs.

Theological Synthesis

Identify attributes of God emphasized (e.g., justice, mercy, sovereignty).

Trace messianic themes (especially in royal and prophetic psalms).

Relate to dispensational distinctions (how promises and judgments align with Israel's role).

Wisdom Literature Overview

Reflective - Explores life's mysteries and questions. Examples: Job and Ecclesiastes.

Proverbial - General truths based on experience (not guarantees). Example: Proverbs.

Proverbs offer guidance, not absolute promises (e.g., laziness *usually* leads to poverty, godliness generally brings longevity, but there are exceptions).

Consequences: Detailed in text; no inferences.

Are there blessings? If so, are they tied to the Law or are they natural? Are there negative consequences? If so, are they curses under the Law, or natural consequences?

Observe Themes and Principles:

Identify overarching ideas.

Use "3 Vs": Value (positive outcome), Virtue (godly trait), Vice (folly to avoid).

Ask: Is this general truth or context-specific?

LGH EXEMPLIFIED IN POETRY

Normative (Literal) Reading vs. Allegorical

Example 1: Song of Solomon

Song of Songs 1:1-4 - We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.

Read as literal poetic celebration of human love and physical/emotional intimacy in marriage, using sensory imagery (kisses, wine, oils) to express delight in a God-honoring union (Proverbs 5:18-19 echoes literal spousal joy).

Teaches about God: Creator who designed marital love as good vs the abuse at the hands of Solomon's abuse.

About People: Value of faithful, passionate relationships. Cross-reference: The chorus's rejoicing parallels earthly weddings, not mystical union.

Example 2: Lamentations 3 "I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of His wrath..." (Lam 3:1ff). Allegorical Misinterpretation: The speaker is often viewed as Christ, with his suffering interpreted as redemptive, and the surrounding darkness as mystical spiritual testing.

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Verses 22–23 “The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease...” are lifted out as eternal salvation promises, detaching them from the historical anguish.

Literal Normative Correction: A literal poetic lament from the perspective of an afflicted witness—likely Jeremiah—grieving Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 BC. The metaphors (“He has broken my teeth with gravel,” v.16) capture the humiliation and trauma endured by the community. The structure conveys sorrow, not mystical symbolism.

The passage teaches about God: His justice in judgment and His covenant mercy even amid exile.

About People: The text models genuine lament, emotional honesty, and renewed hope grounded in real-world suffering, not abstract allegory.

Grammatical Analysis

Example 1: Proverbs 22:6 and Child-Rearing (Absolute Promise or General Principle?)

"Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov 22:6). Misinterpretation: As a guaranteed promise that godly training ensures lifelong faith, leading to guilt when children stray; ignores grammar.

Grammatical Analysis: Imperative verb "Train up" (start/initiate) in proverbial form (short, general wisdom), with conditional "Even when... will not" indicating typical outcome, not absolute (parallelism contrasts with folly paths, (Proverbs 22:5). Structure is observational, like other proverbs. Wisdom generally yields fruit, but each person is responsible to do with the guidance that is provided to them.

Example 2: Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 and Life's Meaning (Nihilism or Perspective Under the Sun?)

"'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3).

Misinterpretation: As endorsing despair/meaninglessness, overlooking repetitive structure and verbs.

Grammatical Analysis: Repetitive "Vanity" as emphasis, with interrogative "What advantage... does" (present tense, ongoing labor) and prepositional phrase "under the sun" limiting scope to earthly pursuits without God.

Parallelism builds reflection (Ecclesiastes 12:13 conclusion). Clarifies: Life apart from God is fleeting. Teaches about God: Eternal purpose beyond temporal. About People: Toil without fear of Lord is vain.

Historical Context (Cultural)

Example 1: Psalm 127: “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...” (Ps 127).

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Misinterpretation: Often reduced to a spiritual metaphor about church work or personal success, this psalm is used in devotionals to promote general trust in God's guidance. The references to children and arrows are lifted to idealize parenthood or spiritual offspring.

Historical/Cultural Understanding: A wisdom psalm attributed to Solomon, reflecting the real-world concerns of ancient Israel. Solomon was the one who built the Temple, the house of the Lord, and fortified Jerusalem, the walls and gates. Solomon recognizes that if they do not keep the covenant they cannot keep it. If the Lord does not protect them, they are not strong enough.

“Children...like arrows” reflects the cultural value of offspring as laborers, heirs, and defenders in a patriarchal, agrarian context. In Israel, without offspring, you were seen as poor and according to the Law, cursed.

Can we take general principles here about God being the source of all success and blessing?
Yes, but we miss the point for the Psalm if we generalize the text.

Example 2: Job 1:21 and Suffering (Common Confusion: God Causes All Evil for Good?)

"He said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.'"

Misinterpretation: As proof God directly causes calamities, leading to fatalism; confuses context.

Laments are not Theology. God does not cause calamity. The good is that Job in his grief still held his integrity and worshipped God even in his lack of understanding.

Psalm 51?