

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 2: STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD PART 1

The Bible is the Word of God and an important armory in our Christian walk. 2Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All scripture is breathed out 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.” This two part series ‘Studying the Word of God’ will help us in becoming strong believers. There are many ways to study the Word of God, including meditating on a passage, using a concordance to study a topic, and inductive Bible study which we will examine in this lesson.

The Word of God is our guide and a lamp unto our feet. For every question you may ever have, the Bible has the answer. The Word of God is eternal and the Lord stands by His word. Matthew 24:35 says “...but my words will not pass away.”

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How frequently do you read the Word of God? Do you have a systematic reading plan or do you randomly pick out passages and read? Besides reading the Word of God, how many hours in a week do you set aside to study and meditate on the Word of God? This lesson will assist you in becoming a serious student of the Word of God.

Many Christians find it difficult to study the Word of God. There are many tools available to help us make our study systematic, enjoyable, and life changing. Let's look at one of the best methods of studying the Word of God which is the Inductive Bible Study Method.

To put it simply, Inductive Bible Study is a method to help you find out what the author meant when he wrote that passage. There is a tendency to interpret a passage based on our own understanding. This method helps us to rule out such human error and will make sure that we understand the exact meaning that the author intended to communicate.

Any Bible study involves three stages: The first stage is observation, where you read the Bible and take note of anything that stands out to you. The second stage is interpretation, where you find out what that passage means. The third stage is the application stage, where you figure out how to apply the biblical truths from the passage to your life.

Let us look into what these three stages involve:

Observation: This first stage involves reading the passage (or listening to it being read) and then asking 'what does this passage say?' This stage just deals with the text and not with the meaning of the text. So, the questions we should ask are: who, what, when, where, and why. But many Christians tend to think that this stage is not important and many a time they skip this.

When we are asking questions, we can ask: who wrote this passage, who are the people mentioned in the passage, and to whom is this passage written? To understand this let us undertake a small demonstration. Let's look at Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may

discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

So to answer the questions that we raised earlier:

1. Who wrote this passage? The answer is Paul the Apostle.
2. Who are the people mentioned in the passage? The answer would be the Christians living in Rome and Paul and Jesus Christ.
3. Who is this passage written for? The answer is Christians living in Rome.

Now let us examine the same scripture and see how we can apply the following questions: what, when, and why. We can see here that what Paul is asking the Christians in Rome to do is to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God; and that is their act of worship. Paul is asking them not to do what the world does, but change according to God’s will.

This letter was written by Paul to the Romans in Rome; we can read that in Romans chapter one. Why did he write this chapter? Because he wanted them to make sure that they understood the truths of the gospel and not get carried away by the sins around them, but to keep their minds renewed to do the will of God.

Thus we see how much information can be gleaned when we ask these simple questions as we read the Word of God.

Besides these questions, as we read the scriptures we should keep in mind to look for other pointers that can give us more information or can throw more light on the passage. So when we read we should identify whether we are reading a parable or a historical narrative or a story or a letter. Keeping the above passage in mind we know that it is a letter. You may ask how this information is going to help us. These observations help us in interpreting the passage in the next stage of our Bible study.

We will be discussing the next two stages at length in the next lesson on studying the word of God.

Happy Bible reading and observing!

Any Bible Study involves three stages:

The First stage is observation, where you listen to or read the Bible and look for anything that stands out.

The second stage is interpretation where you find out what the passage means.

The third stage is application where you figure out how to apply the Bible verse to your life.

IN REVIEW

- The Inductive Bible Study Method helps us understand what the author meant as he was inspired to write by the Holy Spirit.
- Conducting an Inductive Bible Study involves 3 stages: Observation, Interpretation, and Application
- While in the Observation stage, we ask questions such as who wrote the passage, who is the passage written for, and who are the people mentioned in the passage.
- We should also find out when, where, and why this passage was written.
- Another important part of this stage is to find out the genre of the passage, whether it is a historical text, or a parable/story, or a proverb, or a letter.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Do you set aside time to study the Word of God and which method of Bible study do you use?
- Are you part of any Bible study group and how do you intend to use the information that you have received?
- Has the Inductive Bible Study Method of studying the Word of God changed the way you hear the Lord as He speaks to you?

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