

# How to Study the Bible

## *Digging Deeper - Series 1 - Session 2*

### Session Dates

9th Oct - Brian

23rd Oct - Chris

Next Series starting November - The big picture:

13th Nov

27th Nov

### Overview

- Last session we looked at our first method to get a better insight to the meaning of some verses of scripture, which was 'context'
- This week, continuing to look at ways and methods that can help us understand the Bible
- You wouldn't use all of these methods when you come across scripture that is not clear.
- but you will come to know quickly which method or tool to use as appropriate to the need

### Scripture verse for this evening

#### **2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)**

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

# How the Bible is organised

It is helpful to understand how our Bible is organised, which is in logical groupings rather than strict chronological order.

## OLD TESTAMENT

### **Law**

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

### **History**

Joshua - Esther

### **Wisdom/Poetry**

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Eccl, Song of Solomon

### **Prophets**

#### **Major prophets**

Isaiah Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel,

#### **Minor prophets**

Hosea - Malachi

## NEW TESTAMENT

### **Gospels**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

### **History**

Acts

### **Specific Epistles**

Romans - Hebrews

### **General Epistles**

James - Jude

### **Prophecy**

Revelation

# Things that can hinder understanding the bible

Q. what things might there be, that would hinder understanding the Bible.

- **Reading too much what others say on the bible**

- It can become a problem, if you most of the time you are only reading what others have to say about the bible
- whilst you spend very little time reading the actual bible for yourself.
- you miss out on spiritual nourishment, when you don't read the actual scriptures

- **Being in a Pigeonhole**

- You can quickly find yourself being pigeonholed. Examples; are you a premillennialist or postmillennialist? pre, post or mid tribber? are you a Charismatic or Cessationist? (These labels aren't important to the discussion, they are just here for sake of example)
- When you take a position, everything you see thereafter will be influenced through that perspective, whether it's accepting or rejecting an opinion or teaching, you will evaluate everything through that filter, which is fine if it's the correct filter. Try not to let yourself get stuck in a pigeonhole.

- **Not willing to be wrong**

The only way to escape from a problematic pigeonhole is to be willing to change your mind. Sometimes we accept teachings because they are easy to accept, conversely, we will reject teachings because we they make us uncomfortable (we looked at this last session). We should always be prepared to change our minds based on our sincere reading of the bible.

- **Outside sources**

Keep outside sources of information separate from the text, don't mix the two (Chris will share more on this in the next session - so I won't say too much here, other than to be careful not to mix the two together.

## Protection from false doctrine

Here are two examples of how you can protect yourself from false teaching

### Who has heard of the 'The Bereans'?

#### Acts 17:10-13 (NKJV)

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.

Remember what we looked at last week, that reading and knowing the scriptures would protect us from those who would preach and teach falsely. The Bereans did Just that.

We need to not just accept what we hear, but to check those things for ourselves in the scriptures. This is particularly true if what you hear is new to you.

Of course you can have some trust when hearing things from people you know in your own church, whether it be Chris, Alan or myself, but we are all prone to mistakes, we have not reached the end of learning and like everyone else, we are on a biblical journey of discovery.

## Your Teacher and your guide

If you are born again, you will have the Holy Spirit living inside you. One aspect of the Holy Spirit's mission is to 'guide us into all truth'.

### **John 16:13–14 (NIV)**

**13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

**14** He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

When it comes to scriptures, God will reveal truths bit by bit, little by little. He generally does not reveal the deep things at first on any topic, but rather, layer by layer like an onion, or as the bible puts it, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little.

God will reveal things to you if you are seeking to grow in understanding, and that can only happen if you regularly read your bible. As you do and over time, God will reveal deeper things, even with scriptures you might be very familiar with.

## **More methods to help us understand the bible**

### **Word Studies**

There are different types or ways of doing word studies, but the simplest way is the most efficient and provide you with a lot of insight

So let's say, you hear somebody mention about laying something on the Altar, but your understanding of an Altar is like a big table with a white cloth on it with candles and other objects, you might decide to find out what the bible has to say.

If we did a search of the word either using a concordance or with a digital bible app using the search feature, we would get a list of results.

The first ones are generally the most important.

### **Genesis 8:20–21 (NKJV)**

**20** Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

**21** And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

So we see the first time we come across the word Altar, it is in reference to animal sacrifices to God, which in this case, please the Lord.

Later in Exodus we get a description of how an altar is to be made and out of what:

### **Exodus 20:23–25 (NKJV)**

**23** You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.

**24** An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.

**25** And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.

### **Observation**

When you simply read through your bible, you may find yourself seeing patterns and connections; between people, places, objects, events.

You might not fully understand these connections at first, but it's simply something you are aware of them.

It's worth taking the time to write the scripture reference down, under a general heading that describes the connection you think is there. Then the next time you come across another scripture that has that same/similar connection, you can add it there, and over time a picture will form.

You could just go to Nave's topical reference, but this is *your* reference to things that, to all intents and purposes, may be God highlighting something to you.

If you only ever read portions of scripture from here and there and you never just read the bible through, using a loose example, it's like reading a murder mystery novel and just selecting random chapters to read at a time, eventually you might get to read the whole book and even understand it, but you will lose out on the painting of the background, character development, situations that led up to the murder, and then the process of that mystery being solved and the drama of it's conclusion.

### **Had I not read the bible for myself**

An example for me would be the connection between Jesus and the throne of David, which I would not have realised was so often mentioned in scripture unless I simply read through the Bible.

### **Is it Literal, symbolic or poetic?**

The biblical text is best understood from one of three different perspectives:

- Literal
- Symbolic
- Poetic

There is a preferred priority, most scripture should be understood primarily as literal, followed by historical, then symbolic (including prophetic writings), and then poetic.

So if a book in the bible or a portion of it is not clearly symbolic or poetic, it should be taken to have a literal meaning.

### Revelation 13:1–3 (NKJV)

**1** Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

**2** Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

**3** And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

Found in the book of Revelation, we read about a dragon with seven heads and ten horns. Do we actually expect to see such a dragon on the Earth shortly before the return of Christ? No, this is clearly symbolic language, and indeed, almost the entire book of Revelation is symbolic in nature.

## Mini Study

Back to our opening scripture

### 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth.

Whilst different versions render this text differently, I choose the NKJV because we come across this phrase ‘rightly dividing’ which may not be all too clear as to its meaning.

## Context

### 2 Timothy 2:14–19 (NKJV)

**14** **Remind them** of these things, **charging them** before the Lord **not to strive** about **words** to no profit, to the ruin of the **hearers**.

**15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the **word** of truth.



**16** But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

**17** And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,

**18** who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

**19** Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Verse 15 is often used to promote the study of scripture, but in context, it is not solely about the study of scripture but our understanding of it, and how we then communicate our understanding with others. Look how many times speaking or hearing is referenced in the surrounding verses.

Your understanding and communicating Gods word should be clear and concise

Not talking about God's word when you are unsure of its meaning and so communicate confusion.

### **Summarising**

- We should not engage in talking about God's word when you are unsure of its meaning and so communicate confusion.
- studying God's word so we know it well enough to speak that word with certainty and clarity
- rather than bumbling in a debate, with a lack of understanding

In the our text, two persons ' Hymenaeus and Philetus 'did not understand about the resurrection, and in debating with other saints, they had the effect of squashing the faith of some.

## Out of context

How many Christians does it take to become a legitimate church gathering?

Matthew 18:20 (NKJV)

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

We shall include a little Word study to help us understand and reinforce the meaning of this verse.

**Matthew 18:15–20 (NKJV)**

**15** “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

**16** But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’

**17** And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

**18** “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**19** “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

**20** For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The context of the verse often quoted and used in a context of a church gathering, we find the phrase ‘where two or three are gathered’ is in reference to church discipline.

**2 Corinthians 13:1–2 (NKJV)**

**1** This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”

**2** I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare—

**1 Timothy 5:18–20 (NKJV)**

**18** For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

**19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

**20** Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

**Hebrews 10:28–29 (NKJV)**

**28** Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

**29** Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

So we have here three additional pieces of scripture that speak to similar circumstances using the phrase ‘two or three’, namely establishing the truth and judgement and not really about numbers needed for a legitimate church gathering.