

## How Should I Study the Bible? (Part 2)

### *Practical Steps for Bible Reading*

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What was Pastor Steve wearing today during the prayer and announcements?
2. How many worship team members were on stage today?
3. What instruments did they play?

#### ***REVIEW: A Suggested Approach***

I suggested this approach: 4 Questions of the Interpretive Journey (Much of this is adapted by *Grasping God's Word* by Duvall and Hays, chapter 1)

Duvall and Hays use the image of two towns: the town of the biblical audience, and the town of the contemporary audience. Let me illustrate this for you.

Step 1: Grasping the text in their town.

Question: What did the text mean to the biblical audience?

Step 2: Measuring the Width of the river to cross (between our towns)

Question: What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

Step 3: Crossing the Principaling Bridge

Question: What is the theological principle (or timeless truth) in this text?

Step 4: Grasping the text in our own town.

Question: How should people apply the principles today?

Four images: their town, a river, a bridge, and our town...

#### ***Question 1: What did the text mean to the biblical audience?***

The first part of this step is to look at the text and make observations. Look, look, and look at the words, sentences, structures, arguments in the text. Consider the historical context, literary context (genre), and cultural context. Basically, how was the original audience supposed to respond to the text? You must know how they were to respond in order to accurately know how we should respond. Then boil this down into one or two complete sentences using past tense words and referring to the biblical audience.

Step 1: Make observations

Step 2: Study the context (historical, literary, cultural)

Step 3: Figure out how the biblical audience was to respond.

Step 4: Boil this down to one or two sentences.

Do not try to apply, generalize, or "make it relevant" to us.

***Question 2: What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?***

We reading the Bible today are separated from the original audiences in many ways:

- language
- culture
- time
- situation
- “covenant”
- Etc.

***Question 3: What is the theological principle in the text?***

You can't get away from it and it's not something we should avoid. The Bible gives us theology. That word “theology” may scare some, bore some, or anger some. But that's what it does. Theology is truth about God and the world we live in. And in each passage there's a theological principle that is true for all times, all places, and all cultures. (That sentence may offend many people!) The key is discerning what that is from the text.

***Question 4: How should people apply the principle today?***

Often, this is what people want from a Bible study: how do I apply this to my life? We've said in earlier lessons why this is an unhelpful starting question. (See previous lesson “How do I get more from the Bible?”) But can you see how starting Bible study with this question not only may not get you the correct application, but even the wrong application?

***Practice Assignments:***

Find at least 30 observations in Matthew 6:1-4

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Find at least 30 observations in Matthew 6:5-8

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Find at least 30 observations in Matthew 6:16-18 (and in connection with previous paragraphs).

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**Next time: surveying the Old and New Testaments**

## ***How To Read and Make Observations***

Here's a list of things to look for when making observations: (adapted from Duvall & Hays, pp.57-8)

Observation for words & sentences.

1. **Repetition of words**
2. **Contrasts** – ideas or individuals that are contrasted. Look for differences.
3. **Comparisons** – ideas or individuals that are compared. Look for similarities.
4. **Lists** – more than 2 items.
5. **Cause and effect** – there may be more than one cause or one effect mentioned in text.
6. **Figures of speech**
7. **Conjunctions** – look for “but”, “and”, “for” and see what they’re connecting.
8. **Verbs** – consider if the verb is past, present, or future, active or passive, a command.
9. **Pronouns** – identify who is being talked about (the antecedent)

Additional Observation for paragraphs

1. **Questions & answers**
2. **Dialogue** – identify who is speaking
3. **Means** – Note if sentence indicates something was done by means of someone/something. You can insert phrase “by means of” into sentence.
4. **Purpose/result statement** – A specific type of “means” statement. Purpose and result statements sometimes indistinguishable. For purpose statement, you can insert phrase “in order that.” For result statement, you can insert phrase “so that.”
5. **General to specific and specific to general** – Find the general statements that are followed by specific examples or applications of the general. Also find specific statements that are summarized by a general statement.
6. **Conditional clauses** – a clause presenting condition by which some action or consequence will result. Often use “if... then...” pattern.
7. **Actions/roles of God** – what actions or roles does text ascribe to God?
8. **Actions/roles of people** – what actions or roles does text ascribe to people or encourage people to do/be or not to do/be?
9. **Emotional terms** – using terms with emotional energy and flavor, like “pleading” or have kinship (father, son).
10. **Tone of passage** – What’s the overall tone of the text: happy, sad, encouraging, rebuking, warning, and so on.