

## Introduction (Session 2 of 2)

It is our belief that the Bible can be understood.

And it is our desire that you would possess the tools to allow the Bible to change your life.

- **Three Essential Components to Bible Study**

- **Observation**

- What does it say?

- **Interpretation**

- What does it mean?

- **Application**

- How does it apply to my life?



- Don't be overwhelmed: It is very likely you are already practicing these things as you read. We are introducing the rudimentary structure of proper bible study.
- Proper Bible study takes mindfulness, time, and patience to develop.

### Interpretation: What does it mean?

**Observation asks the question, What does it say?**

**Interpretation asks the question, What does it mean?**

In his book, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Dr. Roy Zuck writes, “*When many people approach the Bible, they jump from observation to application, skipping the essential step of interpretation.*”

- When we ask *What does it mean?* We are **NOT** asking, what does it mean to *me*. That will come in the application portion.
- **Interpretation seeks to understand the details we gathered from observation and asking what the text meant to the original audience.**

### Interpretation: What does it mean?

Have you ever heard, “*There are so many interpretations of the Bible, there can't be just one meaning!*”

- The reality is: Interpretation is one, application is many.
- A passage may have numerous implications but there is only **one interpretation**
  
- There was just one meaning to the original audience and it is the interpreter's job to discover that meaning.
  - *Differences in interpretation exist among the Church (baptism, eschatology, church government) but the conflict is not in the Bible, but in people's limited understanding of the Bible.*
- Andy Deane states, “*Every passage of Scripture has an intended and discoverable truth—one correct interpretation.*”

## Interpretation: What does it mean?

Interpretation discovers important information from the text:

- Understand the Genre (style of literature) of our passage
  - o **Narrative (Law & History)** *Genesis – Esther & Acts*
  - o **Wisdom literature & Poetry:** *Job – Song of Solomon*
  - o **Prophecy** *Isaiah – Malachi*
  - o **Gospel (Narrative)** *Matthew – John*
  - o **Letters** *Romans – Jude*
  - o **Apocalyptic (Prophecy)** *Revelation*
    - There are overlaps in genres: the above is a general overview of the books in the Bible.

Be mindful of your book & passage's genre of literature

You're going to read the beautiful poetry of Ps 23 differently than you will the logically framed argument of Romans or the enigmatic wisdom of Ecclesiastes.

## Interpretation: What does it mean?

**Next, we need to determine our passage's Context?**

- **Literary:**
  - **Notice the surrounding context. Use "20/20 vision"**
  - *Individual words derive meaning from the sentence. Sentences must be understood in relation to the surrounding context.*
  - **Ask:** *What's the point being made? What is the writer saying? Why does he say it right now? How does it relate to what was just said? How does it relate to what's said next?*
    - **Look at other translations – Rewrite in your own words – Try to Summarize.**
- **Historical:**
  - *When is the passage taking place? What is happening socially, politically & technologically at the time? Who is the world power at that time? What is its relation to God's people?*
- **Cultural:**
  - *Ancient cultural practices vary – Issues like head coverings, agriculture, religious practices.*
- **Geographical:**
  - *Where was Ur & Canaan? Why are people always going up to Jerusalem? What of the Sea of Galilee's sea level, Jonah-Tarshish & Ninevah, "Sealed" in 2 Cor 1:22 & Eph 1:13, 4:30*
- **Theological:**
  - *What did the author & audience know about God? What competing religions/worldviews? Where is the passage set in the biblical narrative?*

## Interpretation: What does it mean?

### **Watch out for figurative language**

- Figures of speech are words or phrases used to communicate something without using literal, natural meanings.
  - *Always take a passage in its literal sense unless there is good reason to not do so.* (Rev 7:4 “144,000” or Jesus’ “I am” statements)
  - *The figurative sense is intended if the literal were impossible or absurd.* (Jer. 1:18, Ps 57:1)
  - *Take the figurative sense if the literal demands an immoral act.* (Jn 6:53-58)
  - *Note a figure of speech’s expression when followed by literal explanation.* (1 Thess 4:13 & 16, Eph 6:17, Rev 1:16 & 20)

**There is no better method to push you to learn the overall context of a book than to outline it yourself.**

## Interpretation: What does it mean?

**Try it for yourself! Start small: (Ruth, Jonah, NT letter)**

**Take note of the book’s setting: (morality, pre-exilic, recipients, law, NT)**

- *Read the book through – Go back & outline it.*
- *THEN look at resources to see how your outline matches up.*
- *Almost all outlines are different. Make yours by Looking at the Bible to determine where & why they differ from yours.*

**Once you have a decent grasp of the overall book, study the paragraphs:**

The main unit of thought in the Bible is the paragraph.

- *What is the major subject of the paragraph?*
- *What is the author saying about that subject (compliment)?*
  - **The subject + the compliment = Main Theme**

**Throughout the process you’re asking your preliminary questions from observation & interpretation.**

## Interpretation: What does it mean?

**Get some good study tools**

- As mentioned last week, utilize free online software.
- **Concordance, Bible dictionary, Language Dictionary (\*free online)**
  - *\*Strong’s Concordance:*
  - *Halley’s Bible Handbook*
  - *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
  - *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
  - *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*
  - *\*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*
  - *\*Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
  - *\*Bible Atlas (Maps) through Bible Hub*

- *Complete Word Study Dictionary NT & OT* (Separate volumes)
- **Commentaries:**
  - *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (eds. J. Walvoord, R. Zuck, DTS)
  - *Believer's Bible Commentary* (W. MacDonald. Edited by A. Farstad)

### **Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?**

**We said last week that, biblical hermeneutics is primarily about making Christ known to you & through you.**

2 Tim 3:16-17 *All Scripture is **given** by inspiration of God, and is profitable **for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

- Jn 14:15 *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*
  - “keep” GK:5083 tērēō: a warden, guard. To keep an eye on, watch, and hence to guard, keep, obey...Figuratively, to obey, observe, keep, fulfill a duty, precept, law, custom, or custom meaning to perform watchfully, vigilantly.
  - True love for Jesus, as opposed to saying I love Him, will be expressed in compliance to God’s word.
    - “One step forward in obedience is worth years of study about it” – O. Chambers
  - *Sensing the Lord’s blessing in Bible study is only half the thrill...doing His will completes the relationship.*

### **Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?**

**Warning!** This Book is habit-forming. Regular use causes loss of anxiety, and a decreased desire to lie, cheat, steal, or hate. Common side effects include increased love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control!

Once you’ve discovered what the passage meant to the original audience

Now it’s time to ask helpful application questions:

Andy Deane says to make our answers, Personal, Practical & Provable

- **Personal:** Ask, *How does this truth apply to my life (think of your attitude, mindset, closest relationships w/ family, your work, neighbors, church, etc.)?*
  - Write your answers down using 1<sup>st</sup> person singular & personal pronouns.
- **Practical:** Ask, *In view of this truth, what specific changes should I make?*
  - *It should be something you can begin that day.*
  - Broad generalities will produce little action and discourage obedience.
- **Provable:** Ask, *How will I carry this out ? When will I do this?*

Be specific. Write it like a “To Do” list & check it off when accomplished.

### Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?

Andy Deane uses the acronym **S-P-A-C-E-P-E-T-S**

- **S** - Is there a **Sin** to avoid, forsake, and/or confess?
- **P** - Is there a **Promise** to believe and conditions to meet?
- **A** - Is there an **Attitude** to change or an **Action** to take?
- **C** - Is there a **Command** to keep?
- **E** - Is there an **Example** to follow or avoid?
- **P** - Is there a **Prayer** to pray or a **Priority** to change?
- **E** - Is there an **Error** to mark?
- **T** - Is there a **Truth** to memorize or meditate upon?
- **S** - Is there a **Specific** thing to thank God for?

### Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?

**Though we need to be careful to follow our rules of interpretation, the Bible applies to us more than we might think.**

- Imagine you're spending time w/ the Lord tomorrow and read in Exodus 16:18, "*...he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.*"
  - You realize this is speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness when God miraculously provided bread/manna from heaven & isn't how the Lord's providing for you today.
  - How can we find an application to this verse?
- In 2 Cor 8:15 Paul knew this was a great illustration to apply a broader principle. The way Paul handled this verse provides a model for us on how to apply seemingly irrelevant passages to our lives today.
  - Look at it step-by-step...

### Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?

- Ex 16:18 "*...he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.*"
  - 2 Cor 8:15 "*As it is written, 'HE WHO GATHERED MUCH HAD NOTHING LEFT OVER, AND HE WHO GATHERED LITTLE HAD NO LACK.'*"
1. *Understand the original situation & how God's Word applied to that situation (God's people were to take an amount of what God provided according to their family size: some more and some less).*
  2. *Determine whether God's Word in that situation reflects a specific application OR a broader principle. (In this case, God's people didn't lack necessary provisions for that day...or any day).*
  3. *Apply the broader principle to the situations you are facing (in Paul's case, NT believers need not fear lacking when they gave to God's purposes).*

As stated, interpretation is 1 while implication (application) can be many.

### **Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?**

**The Importance of Principles:** *There are principles which govern principles*

1. Principles should correlate w/ Scripture's general teaching.
2. Principles should speak to the needs, interest, questions & problems today.
3. Principles should indicate a course of action.
4. Principles should be supported by other godly people.

**Some Cautions that can hinder application**

1. Beware of substituting interpretation for application. Understanding God's Word is NOT the same as doing God's Word.
2. Beware of substituting a one-time obedience for a life & character change.
3. Beware of substituting rationalization of your sin for repentance from it.
4. Beware of Laziness: Give time to ponder & pray about what God is saying.
5. Beware of spiritual warfare: The old nature & enemy hate Jesus' Lordship.
6. Beware of selfishness: Change is difficult and often uncomfortable.

### **Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?**

- Record your findings.
- Share with a friend
- Invite a friend to study w/ you

**For Further Reading:**

- *Basic Bible Interpretation* – Roy Zuck
- *Living By The Book* – Howard & William Hendricks
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* – Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart
- *How To Study the Bible for Yourself* – Tim LaHaye
- *Learn to Study the Bible* – Andy Deane

*How To Study the Bible* – John MacArthur

### **Application: How does the Bible apply to my life?**

**Look at Romans 12:1-2**

S - Is there a Sin to avoid, forsake, and/or confess?

P - Is there a Promise to believe and conditions to meet?

A - Is there an Attitude to change or an Action to take?

C - Is there a Command to keep?

E - Is there an Example to follow or avoid?

P - Is there a Prayer to pray or a Priority to change?

E - Is there an Error to mark?

T - Is there a Truth to memorize or meditate upon?

S - Is there a Specific thing to thank God for?