



# *Mining the Treasures of Scripture*

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# MINING THE TREASURES OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible describes itself as a treasure to be sought (Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:13-15; Psalm 19:7-11; 119:72,127,162).

Why is it then that we don't dig into the Bible like one who is motivated to dig for gold?

One reason may be that we don't know what to do. Maybe you can relate to this woman's experience:

"I had been a student of the Bible for years before I learned how to become a discoverer on my own. I could follow the suggestions of others and answer the questions they asked, but I floundered when I tried to launch out for myself. I did not know where to start or what to do. The treasures of the Bible seemed locked behind abstract words. I always had to depend on someone else to open the door."

*Are you a flounderer more than a discoverer?*

The purpose of this course is to give you the tools you need to mine the treasures of the Bible on your own.

## The Basics Of Bible Study

The Bible has a lot to say about what we are supposed to do with it. We could summarize much of what we are told regarding our response to the Scriptures under three mandates. Each of those mandates leads to a question that we should ask when we read the Bible, and each question leads to a basic Bible study process.

<b>A Mandate</b>	<b>A Question</b>	<b>A Process</b>
Deuteronomy 6:6-8; Joshua 1:8 To _____ God's Word	What does the Bible _____?	
Matthew 15:15-16; Psalm 119:73 To _____ God's Word	What does the Bible _____?	
Deuteronomy 30:14; John 14:21 To _____ God's Word	What should I ___ in response to the Bible?	

During this course you will learn some tools for each of these Bible study processes.

# **OBSERVATION**

*What does the passage say?*

“The first skill you need to develop is to train your mind to see when you read a passage - to observe carefully the words, to be on the alert for details. Too many of us are in the habit of reading Scripture without seeing very much, without thinking about the words we are seeing. We read words, but we do not observe what the words are saying. Sometimes we do not even see all the words in a passage. We are lazy observers! Because of inaccurate observations, we often make faulty interpretations and shallow applications.” - The Joy Of Discovery

## **SPECIFIC THINGS TO OBSERVE**

1. Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, So What
2. Key Words - important in the passage, repetition
3. Advice, Admonitions, Warnings, Promises - imperative verbs
4. Reasons, Results, Cause/Effect - important connectives (if/then; in order that; therefore; because; for)
5. Contrasts, Comparisons, Illustrations - but; rather than; like; as
6. Grammar - verbs (tenses; main verbs); nouns; pronouns; adverbs; adjectives; articles
7. Questions - How are they used?
8. Literary Form - letter, narrative, discourse, poetic, parable, prophecy

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING OBSERVATIONS**

1. Write out your observations. Don't just write down words from the text; write down what you observe about those words.
2. Observe the same passage in different translations.
3. Diagram or chart sentences as an aid to observation.
4. Pay attention to omissions. What is not said may be important.
5. As you observe details in a passage, consider how they relate to the big picture.

## OBSERVATION

### *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

One night – it was on the twentieth of March, 1888 – I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker street. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of *The Study in Scarlet*, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. He had risen out of his drug-created dreams and was hot upon the scent of some new problem. I rang the bell and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own.

His manner was not effusive. It seldom was; but he was glad, I think, to see me. With hardly a word spoken, but with a kindly eye, he waved me to an armchair, threw across his case of cigars, and indicated a spirit case and a gasogene in the corner. He stood before the fire and looked me over in his singular introspective fashion.

“Wedlock suits you,” he remarked. “I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you.”

“Seven!” I answered.

“Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness.”

“Then, how do you know?”

“I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?”

“My dear Holmes,” said I, “this is too much. You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago. It is true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a dreadful mess, but as I have changed my clothes, I can’t imagine how you deduce it. As to Mary Jane, she is incorrigible. And my wife has given her notice; but there again, I fail to see how you work it out.”

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his long, nervous hands together.

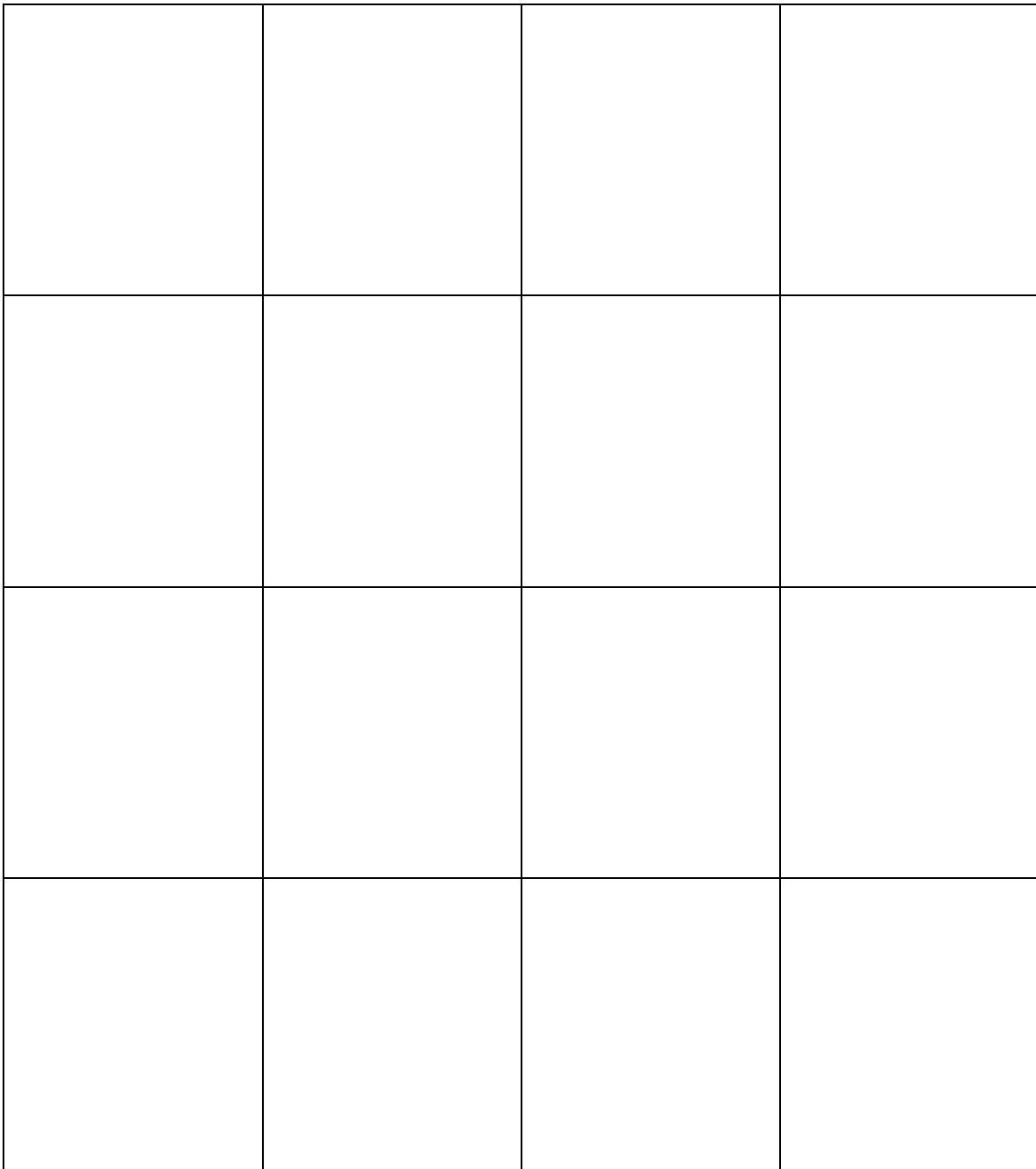
“It is simplicity itself,” said he; “my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-splitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right forefinger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull, indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.”

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. “When I hear you give your reasons,” I remarked, “the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain the process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.”

“Quite so,” he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into the armchair. “You see, but you do not observe.”

(Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Scandal in Bohemia*)

How many squares do you see in this figure?



## OBSERVATION EXERCISE

Record all of the observations you can from James 1:2-4.

1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren,

when you encounter various trials,

1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith

produces endurance.

1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result,

that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

## **INTERPRETATION**

*What does the passage mean?*

“Please note that the primary purpose of interpretation is to discover what the author meant by what he said, to discover his purpose and message. This is not easy because he is not around us to ask him . . . Thus when we are trying to interpret, we are not to think about what the passage means to us . . . but what it seemed to mean to the author.” - The Joy Of Discovery

### **THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION**

1. **PRAY**

Understanding the Bible is not just an academic exercise. (1 Corinthians 2:14) We need to ask God for help. (Psalm 119:18)

2. **ASK QUESTIONS**

What does this word mean? Why did he say that? What is the relationship between this idea and that? etc. Interpretation is basically the process of answering the questions we have when we study the Bible.

3. **DEFINE KEY WORDS**

Study important words in more depth to understand how the author uses them in the context you are studying. (The next page has suggestions for studying words in more depth.)

4. **CROSS REFERENCE**

Look at what the Bible says elsewhere about the issue you are studying. A concordance or the cross references listed in your Bible will help you find other passages that discuss the same thing you are studying. Remember, the Bible is usually its own best commentary.

5. **CONSULT COMMENTARIES AND OTHER REFERENCE BOOKS**

Consult commentaries only *after* you have completed the above steps. Different commentators often present different views. If you have not first studied the passage on your own, you will not be able to evaluate the opinions expressed in a commentary critically.

6. **SUMMARIZE**

Write a one or two sentence statement of what the passage means. (If you can't express the meaning of a passage in a sentence or two, you probably don't understand it yet.)



## **PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION**

1. Interpret a passage from the Bible . . .
  - with the goal of discovering the *author's original meaning* for his original audience
  - *literally* unless there is clear evidence the author intended the description to be figurative
  - following the normal rules of *grammar*
  - considering the facts of *history* which apply to the setting of the passage
  - in harmony with the *context*
  - in harmony with other *Scripture*
2. Avoid these errors:
  - reading meaning into the passage rather than discovering meaning from the passage
  - personalized interpretations (application before interpretation)
  - overlooking the obvious - always looking for a deeper meaning

## **PROCEDURE FOR WORD STUDIES**

### *Why study words in more depth?*

A word has many possible meanings (*range of meaning*).

Example: **TRUNK**

A *trunk* is ...

Generally, a word has only one specific meaning in a given context. To understand an author's message, we need to understand the specific meaning the author intended.

## **Tools**

1. Various translations of the Bible
2. English dictionary
3. Exhaustive concordance of the Bible
4. Bible dictionary or word study books

## **Procedure**

1. Select the word to be studied
  - words that are difficult to understand
  - words that are crucial to the meaning of the passage
2. Study the word in an English dictionary to make sure you understand the word in English.
3. Determine how the word is used throughout the Old Testament / New Testament (range of meaning). See ***Online Concordance Word Search*** below.

Observe how the word is used *a.)* in the same book *b.)* by the same author in other books *c.)* by other authors.

4. Determine how the word is being used in the passage you are studying. How does use of the word in the context you are studying compare to its use in other passages (3. a,b,c above)?

Write a brief summary of the usage of the word in the passage you are studying.

## **Online Concordance Word Search**

1. Go to [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)
2. Type in the Bible reference that contains the word you want to study. Click on “go to verse.”
3. Next to the verse, click “V” to check the word in the King James Version (KJV) that corresponds to the word in your translation.
4. Click “C” to go to the concordance/lexicon.
5. Click on the “Strong’s Number” next to the word you are studying.
6. You will find a definition for the word as well as the verses in the Old Testament or New Testament where the Hebrew or Greek word is used.

### **Errors to Avoid**

1. One meaning in all usages (“In the Hebrew/Greek this word means \_\_\_\_\_.”)
2. All meanings in one usage (Amplified Bible)

**EXAMPLE: James 1:2 - encounter**

**ENGLISH DICTIONARY**

Encounter - to meet as an adversary or an enemy; to engage in conflict with; to come upon face to face; to come upon unexpectedly.

**CONCORDANCE**

The word “encounter” used in James 1:2 is a translation of the Greek word “peripipto”. Its basic meaning is to “fall into.” It is used two other times in the New Testament apart from James 1:2.

Luke 10:30 – “fell among robbers”

Acts 27:41 – “striking a reef”

What conclusions can we draw from the way the word is used elsewhere?

**SUMMARY**

Summarize how the word *encounter* might be used in James 1:2.



## APPLICATION

*What should I do in response to this passage?*

“It is possible to teach yourself to become a profound intellectual Bible student and yet miss the ultimate purpose of all Bible study: to permit the Word of God to speak in a personal way to your heart. To observe and interpret the facts are only the first two steps in the study. There is little gained unless you apply the truths to your life in a practical way.” - The Joy Of Discovery

### WHY APPLICATION?

God’s goal in giving us the Scriptures: Deuteronomy 30:14; Joshua 1:8; James 1:22- 25

The goal of the Great Commission: Matthew 28:19-20

### WHAT IS APPLICATION?

Application is the process whereby a believer understands the purpose and message of the biblical author in a passage of Scripture and then transfers that message to his own life situation so that one or more of the following occurs:

1. his view of God changes (Jeremiah 32:17)
2. his view of himself changes (Philippians 2:3-4)
3. his behavior changes (Hebrews 13:2)
4. his values change (Psalm 73:25-26)

### PRINCIPLE-IZING: THE BRIDGE TO APPLICATION

A principle from Scripture is the broad, general, or fundamental truth taught by a particular passage.

One goal of observation and interpretation is to discover the principles taught in a passage.

**observation + interpretation → a principle**

Principle-izing is the process of stating the teaching of a passage in terms of a general principle.

#### PRINCIPLE FROM THE PASSAGE



God’s Message to Ancient Man

God’s Message to Modern Man

## **An Example Of Principle-izing**

Deuteronomy 8:3      Old Testament Teaching  
Matthew 4:1-4      Jesus' Application

What is the principle that Jesus applied?

## **SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS TO ASK**

### ***Is there an example for me to follow?***

Much of the Bible records examples from the lives of people who are trying to follow God. These examples were placed in the Bible for us to follow. (Philippians 3:17; 4:9)

What examples does James present for us to follow?

### ***Is there a sin to avoid or forsake?***

The Bible contains many warnings to avoid sin as well as examples of people who sinned. These were written to show us what we are to avoid. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

What sins does James instruct us to avoid?

### ***Is there a command to obey?***

This question presents the flip side to the previous question (Is there a sin to avoid?). Much of the Scripture contains specific commands. These can often be easily identified by imperative verbs.

What are some of the commands in James' letter.

***Is there a promise to trust?***

There are a number of promises in the Scriptures that are general promises available to all of God's children. God wants us to take Him at His word and trust Him to do the things that He has promised.

What promises do you see in James?

***Is there something to thank God for?***

***Is there a verse to memorize?***

One effective way to begin the process of life-change in response to the Scriptures is to memorize verses that speak to a specific need in your life. The first step to living in a godly way is thinking in a godly way. Memorizing Scripture allows you to meditate on the key truths that God has brought to your attention through Bible study. Taking time to memorize and meditate on Scripture from your Bible study is itself a response to Scripture.

***Is there a prayer to repeat?***

Have you ever thought of the Bible as a prayer book? Many of the psalms are actually prayers addressed to God. In addition to the psalms, there are numerous other prayers recorded in the Scriptures.

Moses	Numbers 14:11-19
Hannah	1 Samuel 2:1-10
David	1 Chronicles 29:10-20
Jehoshaphat	2 Chronicles 20:5-12
Jonah	Jonah 2:2-9
Habakkuk	Habakkuk 3:1-19
Daniel	Daniel 9:4-19
Nehemiah	Nehemiah 1:4-11
Mary	Luke 1:46-55
Jesus	Matthew 26:36-42
Paul	Ephesians 1:15-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12

In his book Living By The Book Howard Hendricks suggests that as we come across prayers in the Scriptures we should ask, "***What is there in these prayers that I should be praying?***"



Hendricks makes the following comments in his book which summarize well what may happen if you begin to ask these questions as you study the Bible.

Have you ever read a portion of the Bible and felt convicted that you needed to act on the basis of what you've read? The Spirit of God will prompt that. When you read the Word, He'll challenge you to respond in some area of your life, or in some situation that you are facing. Perhaps it's a relationship that needs to be healed. Perhaps it's an apology that needs to be made. Maybe you need to get out of something that is drawing you away from God. Or maybe there's a habit you need to start cultivating. Whatever it is, the Spirit uses Scripture to promote changes in your life.

The question is, are you open to change? Are you prepared to take on His challenges? I guarantee that if you approach God's Word with any degree of honesty and teachability, the Spirit won't let you go away disappointed.

## **MORE OBSERVATION**

### *What does the passage say?*

Howard Hendricks makes the following point in his book Living By The Book:

“Our culture has made a radical shift in the last century from a word-based society of readers to an image-based society of viewers. The medium of our time is television [and now the internet], not books. As a result, unlike our forebears of a few generations ago, we don’t know how to read. To a large extent, we’ve lost the art.”

In the following chapters of his book, Hendricks gives suggestions to help us become better readers. Below I’ve summarized some of the key points from those chapters.

### **READ AS FOR THE FIRST TIME**

“The moment you come to a passage of Scripture and say, ‘Oh, I know that one already,’ you’re in trouble. Instead you need to come to every text as if you’d never seen it before in your life.”

*- Try reading from different translations.*

### **READ THE BIBLE AS A LOVE LETTER**

Think back to when you received love letters. How did you read them? Contrast the way you read those love letters to the way you read junk mail.

Read the Bible like it was God’s love letter to you.

### **READ THOUGHTFULLY**

“Apply the same mental discipline that you would to any subject in which you take vital interest. Are you a stockbroker? Then use the same mental intensity to study Scripture that you would *The Wall Street Journal*. Are you a pilot? Then pay as much attention to the Word as you would a flight plan or a weather advisory. Are you a nurse? Then look for ‘vital signs’ in the Bible text just as you would with any patient on the floor. The Bible does not yield its fruit to the lazy.”

### **READ REPEATEDLY**

There’s an old proverb that says, “repetition is the mother of all learning.”

## READ PATIENTLY

“Unless you have highly developed habits of reading, it’s unlikely that you can just dip into the Word for five minutes and come away with much of significance. In fact, highly skilled readers devote a lot more than five minutes to the task.”

“We live in an instant society. The things we used to want tomorrow, we now want right now. ... So it’s no surprise that if we do decide to open our Bibles, we expect results instantly and effortlessly.”

“But the fruit of the Word takes time to ripen. So if you are the least bit impatient, you’re liable to bail out early and miss a rich harvest.”

## READ SELECTIVELY

Go into the passage looking for specific things.

- |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>who</i>       | - Who are the people in the text?                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>what</i>      | - What is happening? What are the events? In what order?                                                                                                                         |
| <i>where</i>     | - Where is the narrative taking place? Where are the people in the story? Where are they coming from? Where are they going? Where is the writer? Where are the original readers? |
| <i>when</i>      | - When did the events in the text take place? When was the writer writing?                                                                                                       |
| <i>why</i>       | - Why is this included? Why is this excluded? Why is it placed here?                                                                                                             |
| <i>wherefore</i> | - So what? What difference would it make if I applied this to my life?                                                                                                           |

## READ IMAGINATIVELY

Try to envision what is going on or what is being described. Create pictures. Get the other senses involved. What would you hear? What would you smell or taste or feel?

- If you are reading a discourse between people, try reading out loud as the discourse would have been spoken.
- Draw pictures that express the passage.
- Rewrite the passage in your own words.

## **READ FOR RETENTION**

In order to use the Scriptures, you need to remember what you read. (Joshua 1:8 – “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth.”)

“Stake a claim on the text. Make it your own property.”

- Write summary statements of key ideas you learn.
- Memorize key passages.
- Draw, pictures, charts, diagrams.
- Develop acrostics to summarize key ideas.

## **READ TELESCOPICALLY**

“[The Bible] is not simply a collection of parts. It is an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That’s bad math, but its good method. Yet what happens in a lot of Bible study and Bible teaching is that we keep breaking it down and breaking it down, until we have nothing but baskets of fragments. So every time you read and analyze Scripture, every time you take it apart, realize that you’ve only done half the job. Your next task is to put it back together again.”

- Study the book as a whole first to get a preliminary picture of the overall themes of the book.
- Evaluate words in light of the sentence.
- Evaluate sentences in light of the paragraph.
- Evaluate paragraphs in light of the book as a whole.
- After studying the parts of a book, go back and study the whole again.

## **Observation Exercise**

Join with three or four other people to complete the following exercise.

### **READ REPEATEDLY**

Read James 3:1-8 a few times silently on your own. Then read it in your group out-loud from three different translations. Discuss the differences you notice in the translations.

### **READ IMAGINATIVELY**

Work together to draw a picture (or pictures) that illustrate the key points from James 3:1-8.

### **READ FOR RETENTION**

Develop a tool to help you remember the main ideas of this passage.



## MORE INTERPRETATION

*What does the passage mean?*

### Figuring Out Figures Of Speech

One question that people often ask about the Bible is, “Should the Bible be taken literally?” Of course, the answer to that question is *yes* ... as long as we understand the use of literal devices like *figures of speech*.

What is a *figure of speech*?

“Applied to words, a figure denotes some form which a word or sentence takes, different from its ordinary and natural form. This is always for the purpose of giving additional force, more life, intensified feeling and greater emphasis. ... For an unusual form is never used except to *add* force to the truth conveyed, emphasis to the statement of it, and depth to the meaning of it.” (E.W. Bullinger, *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*)

All of us are accustomed to creative verbal expression. What are some of the common figures of speech that you use or hear often? (Can’t think of one? What’s the matter, *the cat got your tongue* or are you having *a senior moment*?)

The Bible is full of figures of speech. In fact, you could probably find some kind of figure of speech on every page. We should expect to find creative language in the Bible because God is creative, and He has created us in His image.

Here are some examples of common figures of speech found in the Bible (definitions compiled from three books *Living By The Book*, *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*, and *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*.)

***Anthropomorphism:*** Describing God using human characteristics or actions

“The Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.”  
- Isaiah 59:1

***Personification:*** Addressing or describing a thing as if it were a person

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” - 1 Corinthians 15:55  
“The moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed.” - Isaiah 24:23

***Euphemism:*** A less offensive expression substituted for a more offensive expression

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

**Hyperbole:** Exaggeration to emphasize a point

“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you.” - 2 Corinthians 11:8.

**Metaphor:** A comparison where one thing represents another

“You are the light of the world.” - Matthew 5:14

“Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned.” - Hosea 7:8

**Simile:** A comparison using *like* or *as*.

“He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water ...” - Psalm 1:3

**Metonymy:** One name or noun used instead of another to which it stands in a special relationship.

“They have set their mouths against the heavens ...” - Psalm 73:9 (i.e. *heavens* in place of *God* who dwells there.)

“Then the Lord said to Noah, ‘Enter the ark, you and all your house ...’ - Genesis 7:1 (i.e. *house* in place of *family*, those who live in the house)

“... make supplication to the Lord your God, that He would only remove this death from me.” – Exodus 10:17 (i.e. – *death* in place of the *plague* which caused death)

**Idiom:** A common expression peculiar to a particular people.

“[Abraham] went in to Hagar, and she conceived ...” - Genesis 16:4

**Merism:** Contrasting parts, opposites, or extremes to describe the whole.

“You know when I sit down and when I rise up.” - Psalm 139:2

“If I ascend to the heaven, you are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.” - Psalm 139:8

**Parallelism:** Repetition of similar, synonymous, or opposite thoughts or words in parallel or successive lines. (frequent in the psalms and proverbs)

“A wise son makes a father glad.  
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.” - Proverbs 10:1

“They have made Me jealous with what is not God;  
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.  
So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;  
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,” - Deuteronomy 32:21

“I have made a covenant with My chosen;  
I have sworn to David My servant” - Psalms 89:3

**Implication:** A comparison in which a likeness is implied rather than stated clearly.

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” - Luke 12:1

There are many other types of figures of speech used in the Bible (technically there are hundreds). In general, the point is not to be able to name the types of figures that are used. The point is to recognize that figurative language is being used and to understand what is being emphasized or illustrated by that figure of speech.

How do you know when you are reading a figure of speech?

- When what you are reading clearly follows the pattern of a recognized figure of speech
- When the literal meaning seems out of character with the thing being discussed
- When a literal interpretation contradicts other Scripture

**Exercise:** Pick a page from the Bible and read it. Identify one figure of speech and explain why the author may have used this figure:

### **Proverbs and Parables – Extended Figures of Speech**

Two examples of extended figures of speech are the proverbs and parables in the Bible. Proverbs and parables each have certain characteristics which require special attention when interpreting and applying them.

- Proverbs describe the way that life usually works. (“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” – Proverbs 22:6) The proverbs are general maxims for living life God’s way. However, although the proverbs are written as universal truths, they are not always without exception. For example: “A servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully, and will share in the inheritance among brothers.” (Proverbs 17:2) does not teach that all wise servants will rule over all shameful sons and share the inheritance. Rather this proverb teaches that being wise is more profitable than one’s social standing. However, people in all generations could point to numerous examples where from the world’s perspective, wise servants did not seem to succeed in comparison to shameful sons. From an application standpoint, proverbs should not be interpreted as universal promises.



- Parables are stories that are intended to teach a lesson. Parables usually have three elements: 1) the setting that prompted the story, 2) the story itself, 3) the lesson or application. Find these three elements in each of the parables below:

Matthew 18:21-35

- The setting
- The story
- The lesson/application

Luke 15:1-7

- The setting
- The story
- The lesson/application

Some cautions when studying parables:

- “Parables normally have one main point. They do not say many things, they say one. We can look for one spiritual lesson. We do not try to find a spiritual point in the various details, but look for the central lesson of the parable. We know this because of the way Jesus applied parables.” (T.N. Sterrett, *How to Understand Your Bible*)
- “One word of caution, however, we must give: and that is concerning the object [i.e. purpose] of parables. The common idea is that they are intended to make things clear and plain. Hence every young minister and Sunday-school teacher turns to parables as though they were the simplest things in the world. Whereas they were spoken that the truth might be veiled from those who ‘seeing, see not: and hearing, hear not.’ See Matt xii. 10-17. Hence they are among the most difficult portions of God’s Word.” (E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*)

## **MORE APPLICATION**

*What should I do in response to the passage?*

“But the word is very near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.”  
Deuteronomy 30:14

What are some reasons that we fail to apply (do something in response to) what we read and study in the Bible?

### **ONE METHOD OF A-P-P-L-Y-ING THE SCRIPTURES**

One tool to help you apply the Scriptures can be outlined by the acrostic **A-P-P-L-Y**.

#### **A - ANALYZE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**

Observation: What does the passage say?  
Interpretation: What does the passage mean?  
Principle-izing: What principle does the passage teach?

#### **P - PERSONAL INVENTORY**

How does my behavior, perspective, etc. match up with the principle the passage teaches? Am I doing what the passage says? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer these questions.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalms 139:23-24

#### **P - PLAN STEPS**

“There is the danger that application may occur in the realm of concepts, and yet never be realized in the realm of deeds. One should be on one’s guard against such temptation, for to succumb to it will result in mere lip service to the Scriptures which is not only worthless but detrimental.” Methodical Bible Study

“If we are alert enough to hear God’s voice, we must not content ourselves with merely ‘believing’ it. How can any man believe a command? Commands are to be obeyed, and until we have obeyed them we have done exactly nothing about them.” A. W. Tozer

## **L - LIABLE TO OTHERS**

The Bible teaches that we need each other's help (Hebrews 10:24,25; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). If you are serious about applying God's Word, get someone to help you, pray for you, or hold you accountable.

## **Y – YARDSTICK**

*“How am I doing?”* Measure your progress.

### **Example Of An Application Using A-P-P-L-Y**

**PASSAGE:** Mark 4:35-41

#### **ANALYZE THE TEXT**

In this passage the Lord displays His power over nature by calming a storm at sea. The disciples responded to the storm in fear and accused Jesus of being indifferent to their needs. Jesus calmed the storm and asked the disciples why they were so timid and why they had no faith. The disciples really didn't know who Jesus was. This was evident when they asked, 'Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

***Principle:*** When we do not understand who Jesus is, it is difficult to live by faith.  
(To live by faith we must understand who Jesus is.)

#### **PERSONAL INVENTORY**

I've found myself responding to some events in my life with fear. I've been worrying about whether I will lose my job. Even though I prayed for a long time about the last two contracts, they didn't come through. When that happened twice, I began to wonder if God really heard or if He cared. I need to take a fresh look at what God is like so I can start trusting Him again like I used to.

#### **PLAN STEPS**

As I read through the gospel of Mark I will keep a list of the characteristics of God that I observe. (Examples: God is greater than nature. God cares about individual people.) After writing these things down, I'll use my list to pray about the things that concern me for the day ahead and ask God to allow me to experience the things I am observing in His word.

#### **LIABLE TO**

I'll share my plan with Ted in our mid-week Bible study and ask him to pray for me and to check with me periodically about how my plan is helping me deal with fears about my job.

#### **YARDSTICK**

I'll keep my list of God's characteristics in my journal and list the passage from Mark and the date next to the characteristics I list. I'll continue this plan until I finish reading Mark and then evaluate my progress with Ted.

## **APPLICATION EXERCISE**

### **JAMES 2:1-9**

#### **ANALYZE THE TEXT**

Record your observations from James 2:1-9.

Write out one principle taught in this passage.

#### **PERSONAL INVENTORY**

In what ways are you applying this principle already?

In what ways do you still need to apply this principle?

#### **PLAN STEPS**

What are some practical steps you could take to apply this principle?

#### **LIABLE TO**

Who could pray with you about your plan and help you grow in this area?

#### **YARDSTICK**

Is your plan measurable? How will you know whether or not you have accomplished your plan?



## **STILL MORE OBSERVATION**

### *Getting the big picture*

Most of what we have studied about the skills of observation thus far has centered on observing the details of a passage of Scripture. In addition to observing the small details, we also need to observe the “*big picture*.” Early on in the study of a book of the Bible we should try to get a handle on the overall message of the book. What is the main message of the entire book? What is the “whole” that all the parts relate to?

### **MAJOR THEMES**

The starting point for determining the “big picture” is determining the major themes. One way to find the author’s major themes is to look for words or ideas that are *repeated often*. Another way to recognize a major theme is to note the topics which receive more *volume of writing* than others.

It is important to try to figure out what themes are most important *to the author*. At this point you are not looking for those ideas that are most important to you. It is possible that something that is a minor theme to the author has a major message for you, and because of this, you think this is a major theme. Such an observation is obviously important *to you for application*. However, you also need to be able to determine what the author highlighted as important, regardless of how applicable it might be to you at the moment.

### **RELATING THE MAJOR THEMES**

Once you have identified the major themes of a book, investigate how these themes relate to each other. As you identify the relationship between the major themes, you’ll also begin to discover the major message of the book.

### **SUMMARIZE THE MAJOR THEMES IN AN OUTLINE OR CHART**

Once you discover what the major themes are, summarize what the author says about each theme. Organizing your summary in an outline or a chart can help you review the overall content of the book in a brief period of time.

### **SUMMARIZE THE MAJOR MESSAGE**

Summarize the major message of the book in a sentence or two. In addition you might note if there are any particular verses that summarize the overall message.

## **MAJOR THEMES IN JAMES**

### **Enduring Trials**

God rewards those who patiently endure trials.

1:2-4 - Enduring trials leads to maturity.

1:5-8 - God gives wisdom to those enduring trials.

1:9-12 - God glorifies the one who endures trials.

5:7-11 - God is full of compassion and mercy toward those who endure suffering.

5:13-18 - Pray in the midst of suffering.

### **God's Perspective On The Rich And Poor**

God honors the poor who follow Him and opposes those who want to be rich but ignore Him.

1:9 - The poor are honored by God.

1:9-11 - The pursuits of the rich are fleeting.

2:1-13 - The rich are not to be preferred over the poor.

4:13-16 - Profit in business comes from the Lord.

5:1-6 - The rich will be judged if they take advantage of the poor.

### **Be Doers Of God's Word**

True religion is doing what God's Word teaches, not just knowing what it says.

1:21-25 - Be doers of the word and not hearers only.

2:1-26 - Faith is shown through good deeds.

3:13 - Wisdom is shown through good deeds.

4:1-12 - The one who speaks against another is not a doer of the law (4:11).

4:17 - To know and not do is sin.

### **Control The Tongue**

A godly person controls his speech and avoids using his tongue to hurt others.

1:19 - Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

1:26 - If a person is religious but does not bridle his tongue, his religion is worthless.

2:12 - Speak as one who will be judged himself

3:1-12 - The tongue is capable of great destruction and needs to be controlled.

4:11 - Do not speak against one another.

5:12 - Be careful what you say (re: making an oath).

## **SUMMARY OUTLINE**

God rewards the humble person (poor) who perseveres through trials. (1:2-18)

The truly religious person shows his faith by doing what God's word says (1:19-2:26).

The truly religious person shows his faith by looking after the needs of the poor. (1:19-2:26)

The truly religious person controls his tongue (3:1-12).

The truly religious person controls his anger and pride (3:13-4:17).

God will judge the unjust rich and reward the poor who persevere. (5:1-11)

The right response to suffering includes prayer. (5:13-18)

## **MAJOR MESSAGE**

In the midst of the trials that come from the inequities of life

- the poor are to patiently endure and
  - pray
  - avoid slander and accusing
  - avoid greed and jealousy
- those who are not poor are to
  - meet the needs of the poor
  - avoid courting the favor of the rich
  - avoid slandering others and arguing with them
  - avoid greed and jealousy
- those who are rich are to
  - be humble
  - avoid taking advantage of the poor
  - avoid arrogance and boasting

In a church comprised of a variety of financial and social strata, in a society full of inequities and suffering, true religion is evidenced by actions which meet the needs of people and controlled speech which builds others up rather than tearing them down.



## JAMES: TRUE FAITH ON TRIAL

The truly religious person demonstrates his faith by doing what God's Word says (1:19-27) even in the midst of the hard times (1:2-4) and the inequities (1:9, 2:1-4) of life.				
Rich in Trials 1:2-18	Quick to Hear / Do 1:19-2:26	Slow to Speak 3:1-12	Slow to Anger 3:13-5:11	Pray In Trials 5:13-18
<p>1:2-4 Enduring trials produces godly character.</p> <p>1:5-8 Pray for wisdom in trials.</p> <p>1:9-11 Eternal perspective in trials</p> <p>1:12-18 Passing the test of trials (God is not the source of temptation.)</p>	<p>1:19-27 Faith in action: <b>DO</b> what God's Word says.</p> <p>2:1-4 Faith in action: honoring people based on God's value system.</p> <p>2:14-26 Faith in action: faith, if it has no works is dead.</p>	<p>3:1-2 Our speech is an indicator of our character.</p> <p>3:3-6 A tongue that is out of control will do a lot of damage to <i>us</i>.</p> <p>3:7-8 Our little tongue is too big to tame. (This is a problem we will always need to watch.)</p> <p>3:9-12 Born-again people should have born-again mouths.</p>	<p>3:13-18 A truly wise person has the humility to control his anger.</p> <p>4:1-10 The root of anger is pride; the solution to anger is humility.</p> <p>4:11-12 Angry words stem from judging people.</p> <p>4:13-5:6 <b>Warning</b> against the arrogance of the rich</p> <p>5:7-11 <b>Warning</b> to the poor to be patient and not complain</p>	<p>(5:12 Accountable to speak the truth)</p> <p>5:13 Whatever the circumstance, <b>PRAY</b>.</p> <p>5:14-17 Prayer for the sick:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for the elders</li> <li>• Anointing with oil</li> <li>• Confession of sins</li> <li>• God heals</li> <li>• How we pray makes a difference</li> </ul> <p>(5:19-20 Accountable to each other to live out the truth.)</p>
<p>Just hanging in there is making progress.</p> <p>Trials are just another chance to excel.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Memorize 1:2-4</b></p>	<p>What have I <b>done</b> lately in response to the Bible?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Memorize 1:22</b></p>	<p>Bite your tongue before it bites you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Memorize 3:2</b></p>	<p>All interpersonal conflict is rooted in pride in one way or another. The solution to conflict is to humble ourselves before God.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Memorize 4:6-8</u></b></p>	<p>Serious prayer by people who are serious about God can accomplish much.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Memorize 5:16</u></b></p>



## STILL MORE INTERPRETATION

### *Asking questions*

Read James 5:13-18

These verses contain a number of things that are difficult to understand. What questions do these verses raise for you?

### **THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION**

1. **PRAY**
2. **ASK QUESTIONS**

To answer the *big question* “What does this mean and how does it apply to me today?” we have to first answer a number of smaller questions such as these:

- What type of sickness is James referring to? (vs. 14-15)
- What does anointing with oil have to do with this? (vs. 14)
- What is “the prayer offered in faith”? (vs.15)
- What does sin have to do with this (“if he has committed sins”)? (vs. 15)
- What do we learn from the lesson of Elijah? (vs.17)

Answering these questions may help us understand the overall message of this passage.

3. **DEFINE KEY WORDS**

#### *sick*

What kind of *sickness* does James have in view? The word translated *sick* in verse 14 is the Greek verb “*astheneo*” (review lesson 2, page 9 for the procedure for studying a word using an online concordance). This Greek word is translated in a variety of ways throughout the New Testament. Review how “*astheneo*” is translated in the verses below. What do you observe about the range of meaning of this word. What does the range of meaning add (if anything) to your understanding of the type of sickness to which James is referring.

Matthew 10:8

Mark 6:56

Luke 4:40

John 4:46; 11:3

Acts 19:11-12

Acts 20:35

Romans 4:19

Romans 8:3

Romans 14:1-2

1 Corinthians 8:11

2 Corinthians 12:10

Philippians 2:26-27

In James 5:14, “*astheneo*” probably refers to ...

4. **CROSS REFERENCE**

*anointing with oil*

The word *anoint* (*Greek – aleipho*) is a common word. Its general meaning in Greek is what we think it would mean – to rub a substance (usually oil) over something. In the Bible, people anointed other people for a variety of reasons. Review the examples of anointing listed below. (The New Testament references contain the other instances of the Greek word *aleipho* used in James 5:14.)

Leviticus 8:10-12	Psalm 23:5
Psalm 45:7	Psalm 133:1-2
Matthew 6:17-18	Mark 6:13
Mark 16:1	Luke 7:38,46
John 11:2; 12:3	

There are two other words for *anointing* used in the New Testament, *chrío* and *chrisma*, both from the same root (Christ – *christos* – the anointed one). Notice how these words are used.

*Chrío* – Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; Acts 10:38 refer to Jesus being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit (either stated or implied) for His ministry. Hebrews 1:9 quotes Psalm 45:7, a reference to the Messiah being anointed by God. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 refers to God anointing us with His Spirit.

*Chrisma* – 1 John 2:20,27 seem to be references to us being anointed by God with His Spirit (implied).

What, if anything, do these examples tell you about the purpose of the elders anointing a person when they prayed for his healing?

Evaluate the view that anointing with oil in James 5 refers to using medicine to heal a person (as oil was used in Luke 10:38). Thus, an application today might be to apply appropriate medical care along with praying.

In James 5:14, the purpose of anointing sick people with oil was to ...

### *the prayer of faith*

James says, "... the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick ..." (Literally "prayer of faith")

What is the connection between the faith of the one praying and the answer to his or her prayers?

Matthew 17:19-20

Matthew 21:21-22

Mark 11:24

James 1:6

What factors determine whether or not a person can pray in faith?

What other factors impact answered prayer?

1 John 5:14-16

Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:1-2

According to James 5:15-16, what difference does it make who does the praying?

**[a note about the translation in 5:16:** The NASB reads "*the effective prayer of a righteous man*"; The KJV reads, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.*" The Greek verb "*energeo*" means to effect, put into operation, to be active. The word James uses here is "*energoumené*" which is a present participle of the verb. The question is how is "*energoumené*" used in this sentence. The NASB and KJV take this word to be used as an adjective modifying the word "*prayer*". It seems more likely that the participle amplifies the main verb of the sentence rather than the subject. So, a better translation would be (literally) "*The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its operation*" or "*The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in what it is able to do.*" Thus James is not talking about the **kind of prayer** (effective prayer vs. ineffective prayer) that the righteous person prays but rather about the effect that the righteous person's prayer has.]

James says, "the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up." What if a godly person prays and the person is not healed?

***if he has committed sins...***

One view on James 5:13-18 is that James is addressing situations where a person has become ill as a temporal punishment for a sin which he or she has committed and not confessed and repented of. Review the following cross references and then evaluate the view that James is talking about illness as a punishment for sin in this instance.

John 5:14; 9:1; Mark 2:5  
Acts 5:1-11  
1 Corinthians 11:27-34  
1 John 5:16-17

What issues need to be considered if one of the issues in view here is praying for an illness that is the result of an unconfessed sin?

**Elijah ...**

What does the story of Elijah praying for rain add to our understanding of what James says here? (See 1 Kings 17:1-6; 18:1-2,41-46)

5. CONSULT COMMENTARIES AND OTHER REFERENCE BOOKS

Read and evaluate the two commentary excerpts on the following pages.

6. SUMMARIZE

Write a one or two sentence statement of what the passage means.

## STILL MORE APPLICATION

It is a bit discouraging that even though the average “mature” evangelical believer has spent hundreds of hours hearing, reading, and studying the Scriptures, he or she rarely goes to the Bible first when dealing with the issues of life.

Somehow, few Christians make the connection between what they have learned from the Bible and real life. When problems confront them, most people will talk to a friend or see a counselor or consult another source book before they even think about looking at the Bible. Even our Christian culture is one of “I think” or “He/she says” rather than “the Bible says.”

In order to help break this trend, when you study a book of the Bible, take the time to make a list of all of the practical issues that are addressed in that book. This exercise will help you to catalogue the practical instruction in the Scriptures so that when you or others you know confront issues in everyday life, you will know where to look in the Bible for answers.

### **EXERCISE:**

With the help of one or two people in the class, make a list of practical life issues that you might face which could be addressed from the book of James.

<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Reference In James</u></b>
Facing hard times	James 1:2-4

## Ministering to others from the book of James:

Consider how you would address the following situations using the book of James as your source. (What verses would you look at? What would you say?)

1. You have been witnessing to a friend at work during the past year. She is now interested in becoming a Christian. As you discuss this with her she says, “I really want to believe in Jesus, but I’m not sure what I need to do to believe. How do I know if I really believe?”
2. A friend in the church has been going through an extended illness. One day while you are visiting him at home he confides in you that he really doesn’t understand why God would allow him to go through such a difficult time.
3. You know of a family in the church who is struggling financially because the husband lost his job a few months ago and has not been able to find new employment. Some friends from your small group ask you to join them to pray for this family.
4. You are in a Bible study group with a number of other couples. One evening you suggest inviting another couple to join your group. As the rest of the group responds, one of the members of the group mentions that he doesn’t think this couple would “fit in” with the others in the group.
5. The man you previously employed to take care of your lawn has left the area. So you ask a friend from the church for a recommendation for a replacement. He mentions to you during your conversation that he usually hires undocumented workers or recent immigrants for such tasks because he can pay them a lot less.
6. You have just sat through this Bible study discussing what *could* be done from the book of James. It is likely, however, that you will leave this room and go on to other things today (dinner with family or friends; recreation; projects at home; etc.) and before the day is over you will forget about much of what we have discussed today.



## WHAT ABOUT ALL OF THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE?

One of the objections people often present to the inspiration of the Bible is “There are too many contradictions in the Bible.” Often what people claim to be contradictions prove not to be so when the passages in question are studied in context and in light of the rest of Scripture. However, to be fair and honest, we must admit that there are some passages in the Bible which do seem to contradict each other.

What do we do about the contradictions in the Bible?

### EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

		<i>Explanation</i>
Matthew 9:18-25	Mark 5:21-43	
Matthew 28:1-10	Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-18	
Isaiah 2:4	Joel 3:10	
2 Samuel 24:1	1 Chronicles 21:1	
Matthew 1:1-17	Luke 3:23-38	
Matthew 27:3-5	Acts 1:16-25	

### WHAT DO THESE EXAMPLES TELL US ABOUT THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE?

2 Peter 1:20-21

Dual authorship: “men ... spoke” “moved by the Holy Spirit”

Men wrote using their own knowledge, vocabulary, and style. Luke did research (Luke 1:1-4). Paul wrote personal letters. David and others wrote poetry. Several biblical authors recorded visions they saw.

The differences among numerous parallel passages in the Bible remind us that the influence of the Holy Spirit on the biblical authors did not negate their personal influence on their writings. The biblical writers were not just *human typewriters* through whom the Holy Spirit wrote. On occasion, different authors described the same events differently, as we would expect people to do. It is also clear that the New Testament authors did not always give 100% direct verbatim quotes either of the Father, Jesus or the Old Testament (compare Matthew 3:17 and Mark 1:11 – both cannot be verbatim quotes). Thus, we

need to be careful that we do not require a standard of the Scriptures that neither the authors nor the Holy Spirit intended to adhere to.

We need to be careful that we do not confuse *truth* with *precision*. The two are not the same. Some people will question the truth of Scripture because certain parallel passages written by different authors are not treated with equal precision.

D.A. Carson offers this example in his book *Exegetical Fallacies*. Consider these three sentences:

- a. My home is not far from my office.
- b. My home is about one and a half miles from my office.
- c. My home is 1.6 miles from my office.

Carson points out that “Each of these three statements is true; but they are not equally precise.” And then he notes that none of these statements is untrue “unless the text gives the unmistakable impression that a higher degree of precision is being supplied than is in fact the case.” This is often the issue with the testimony of Scripture, especially in the New Testament gospel accounts. Different authors communicate the accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry with differing levels of precision. Thus it is frequently the case that we will find an author’s description in the Bible to be less precise than we might wish it to be.

An orthodox evangelical theologian named René Pache summarized the doctrine of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures this way:

The doctrine of plenary inspiration holds that the original documents of the Bible were written by men, who, though permitted the exercise of their own personalities and literary talents, yet wrote under the control and guidance of the Spirit of God, the result being in every word of the original documents a perfect and errorless recording of the exact message which God desired to give to man.

Since that is the case, we can conclude that God desired to give us His message without harmonizing every passage and solving every difficulty in a way that would suit every person’s liking. Thus, God has left us with problems in the text of Scripture itself that we cannot solve definitively. As a result, we cannot always arrive at a full understanding of every passage of the Bible.

## TEACHING WHAT YOU STUDY

The ministry of making disciples is primarily a teaching ministry:

Matthew 28:20 - "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you"

2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2 - "retain the standard of sound words you have heard from me . . . the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

One of the reasons for studying the Scriptures is to pass on to others what we learn.

Ezra 7:10 - "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."

### EFFECTIVE STUDY - THE FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

No one can be an effective Bible teacher unless he is first a good Bible student. Being a good Bible student alone will not guarantee one will be a good Bible teacher. However, being a poor Bible student will insure one will *not* be a good Bible teacher. The first step to effective Bible teaching is good Bible study.

The elements of effective Bible study that you have learned in this course are the same elements you should use when teaching people from the Bible.

### TEACHING FROM THE BIBLE

One simple way to teach from the Scriptures is to lead the one you are teaching through the Bible study process:

1. **OBSERVATION:** Tell them what the Bible says.
2. **INTERPRETATION:** Explain what the Bible means.
3. **APPLICATION:** Explain how to put the Bible into practice.

The following discussion presents a simple outline for teaching from the Bible. It is explained from the perspective of teaching in a one-on-one setting.

### Passage From The Bible

Whenever you are teaching someone how to live out the principles of the Christian life, open up the Bible and draw your principles from the Bible. Your goal is not primarily to tell people what *you* think; it is to help them discover what *God* thinks.

Choose a passage from the Bible that addresses the issue you want to discuss with the person you are helping.

*Example:* A friend you are helping is having difficulty giving his work the effort he knows he should give. A passage that relates to this issue is Colossians 3:22-24. Turn to the passage with the person.

### Observations From The Passage

After choosing the passage, read it and point out what the passage says that applies to the situation you are discussing.

*Example:* Point out that the passage begins with the word "whatever." Anything we do is an opportunity to serve Christ. He cares about everything we do. So, even our daily work is an opportunity to serve the Lord.

### Interpret Key Ideas

At times it is necessary to explain the meaning of key words or ideas. You want to make sure that your friend understands what the passage means in addition to seeing what it says.

*Example:* Explain that "do your work heartily" means to give your work the maximum effort you can. The word "heartily" means the same thing as "whole hearted" (as opposed to "half hearted").

### The Key Principle

Summarize the key principle in the passage that applies to the situation you are discussing. State the principle in a way that is clear and easy to understand.

*Example:* "So, the Bible teaches us that everything we do is an opportunity to serve the Lord, and since we serve Him, we should give every job a wholehearted effort."

## Illustration or Example

It is often helpful to give a real life example or illustration to help your friend understand exactly what you are talking about.

**Example:** "Once when the Navigators had their office in Pasadena, one of the men who worked in the office put a new front door and a new back door onto the office. He did a superb job on the front door, but since the back door opened into an alley filled with trash cans, he didn't finish the back door as nicely. When Dawson Trotman returned to the office he noticed the front door and praised the man for the fine job. Later that day Dawson saw the back door and noticed that it was not done as well as the front door. So he asked about it, 'John, what's with the back door?' 'Daws, it only opens into an alley; no one will ever see what it looks like,' John replied. Daws responded, 'John, when you are working for the Lord, you make the back door look as good as the front door.' God sees our "back doors" just like He does our "front doors." We need to do all of our work like the Lord will inspect it.

## Application

Finally it is good to help your friend decide on one way he can apply the things you have discussed. It is important for you to help him develop *his own* application rather than just giving him your application. A good question to ask after discussing the key points of the passage is, "what is one thing you could do to begin to apply some of the things we observed in this passage?"

You can use this basic format in any type of teaching - formal or informal - group or one to one:

1. Refer to a Bible passage.
2. Observe what the passage says.
3. Explain what the passage means.
4. Summarize the key principle.
5. Give an illustration or example of how to apply the principle.
6. Discuss how he or she can begin to apply the principle.

## **PRACTICE**

Review each of the examples below. Choose one of these situations and simply outline what you might share from the Bible regarding the situation. (Use the outline listed below.)

1. A friend from your Bible study really wants to develop his relationship with the Lord through having a consistent time of Bible reading and prayer each morning. You want to motivate him to do this and provide some helpful instruction from the Scriptures. Take a few minutes to outline what you could share with him.
  
2. A member of your Bible study is having difficulty focusing on other members of the group. He consistently looks out for his own interests, and he frequently overlooks the needs of others when you are together. You want to help him with this problem and motivate him to live for others. Take a few minutes to outline what you could share with him.

- Passage from the Bible
  
- Observations from the passage
  
- Interpret key ideas
  
- Key principle
  
- Illustration or example
  
- Question for application

## ONE BIG QUESTION REMAINS

Are you still where this person was?

“I had been a student of the Bible for years before I learned how to become a discoverer on my own. I could follow the suggestions of others and answer the questions they asked, but I floundered when I tried to launch out for myself.”

*Have you started to become a discoverer?*

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

James 1:22

### **DO YOU HAVE A PLAN TO STUDY THE BIBLE ON YOUR OWN?**

**A TIME?**

**A PLACE?**

**A BOOK OF THE BIBLE TO BEGIN STUDYING?**

**DETERMINATION AND DISCIPLINE?**

**A GROUP TO SHARE WITH?**

In this course you have learned all that you need to know to get started . . . **THE REST IS UP TO YOU.**