

# How to Study the Bible

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## 2 Timothy 3:16–17

*All Scripture*

*is inspired*

*by God*

*and is profitable*

*for teaching,*

*for rebuking,*

*for correcting,*

*for training*

*in righteousness,*

*so that*

*the man of God*

*may be complete,*

*equipped*

*for every good work.*

# Roadblocks to Understanding of the Bible

## 1. Differences in culture:

- We've never had a king
- We've never performed an Old Testament sacrifice
- We don't live in tribes
- We've never lived under the oppression of the Philistines
- We don't live in houses made of mud, straw, and brick
- We don't live in a Hellenistic (Greek) culture
- We don't have a formal priesthood
- We don't travel by camel or donkey
- We don't write on papyrus or clay tablets

## 2. Differences in language.

- Hebrew (Old Testament)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד: -Deuteronomy 6:4  
Deuteronomy 6:4- "Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One.

- Aramaic (Parts of Ezra and Daniel)

עָנָה דָּנִיֵּאל וְאָמַר לַהּוָא שְׁמָה דִּי-אַלְהָא קְבֹרָךְ: -Daniel 2:20  
קַדְשֵׁי-עַד-וְעַד-עַלְמָא דִּי חֲכֻמָּתָא וְגִבּוֹרָתָא דִּי לַהּ-הִיא:  
Daniel 2:20- and declared: May the name of God be praised forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.

- Greek (New Testament)

John 3:16- οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

John 3:16- "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

## 3. Differences in common knowledge.

## 4. Our own assumptions.

The key to understanding the Bible is to first understand it in its own context and then bring that truth into today.

## Step 1: Observation

### 1. Read it...

Prayerfully

Repeatedly

Audibly

Expectantly

Multi-translationally

Literal (NASB, ESV)

Balanced of both word and thought accuracy

(HCSB, CSB)

Paraphrases (NLT, Message)

Older (1611 KJV) and Newer (NIV)

Contextually (Book, chapter, periscope, paragraph, sentence)

Meditatively (Ask and answer yourself questions as you go)

Imaginatively

- Imagine the author's point of view
- Imagine the original reader's point of view

Purposefully

- Who wrote it?
- To whom?
- Where and when was it written?
- Why was it written?
- What type of language is used?
- What are the repeated or key words or phrases?
- What are the historical and cultural facts mentioned?

Patiently

Intermittently

Personally

### 2. Outline it:

Chart, diagram, or outline the passage looking for word/phrase and sentence/paragraph relationships.

(See example of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 above.)

**3. Ask it:** What does the author actually say?

# Exploration (Exegesis vs. Eisgesis)

## 1. Consider it...

### Literary Context

Genre (Narrative, Poetry, Parable, Prophecy, etc.)

Figures of Speech (Symbolism, Hyperbole, etc.)

### Historical/Cultural Context

Author (Who is he, where is he, what is he like?)

Subjects (What or whom is being written about?)

Audience (Who is the author writing to?)

Geography (Where did it take place?)

Politics (Who's in charge & what's the political climate?)

Religious (What is the spiritual climate?)

Economic (What is the role of money?)

Legal (What is the role of the laws of the land?)

Agricultural (What customs of rural life are involved?)

Architectural (What is the role of building science?)

Domestic (What details of everyday life are involved?)

Clothing (What part might the clothing of the era play?)

Military (Do military customs impact the text?)

Athletic (What is the role of athletic games?)

### Words of the Text

Grammar (Word forms & Word Relationships)

Vocabulary (What do the words mean?)

Linguistic Context (Relationship with surrounding text)

### Doctrinal Context

How are these topics, themes, or doctrines addressed elsewhere in Scripture?

“Interpret Scripture in light of Scripture”

Basic tools that can help you along the way:

- Bible Handbook
- Bible Dictionaries
- Bible Commentaries and Word Studies
- Study Bible and Concordance
- Sermon and Teaching Notes

## 2. Ask it: What did the author originally mean?

**"A passage of Scripture cannot mean what it never meant."** -Unknown Seminary Professor

### **Step 3: Application**

#### **1. Determine it..**

What is the original intent?

What is the scope of the original intent? Some possibilities:

- a) For a specific people, a place, time, or circumstance
- b) For all time but to a specific audience i.e. directed toward believers, husbands, elders, etc.
- c) For all time and for all people

What universal principles taught elsewhere in Scripture are described or illustrated?

Even if the scope of the original intent is narrow, there are truths and principles that are as relevant today as ever.

#### **2. Ask it:** What does it mean for today?

#### **3. Apply it:** What should I believe, think, or do in response to God's Word?

#### **Sources :**

The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention  
Baker Bible Encyclopedia by Walter A. Elwell  
Bible Institute by Matt McGill and Doug Fields  
The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary  
A Journey through the Bible (CD Series) by Jerry Vines  
Inductive Bible Study developed by MP Seminars  
Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

### **Notes**

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