

STUDYING THE BIBLE

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Glad to be here with you again today
It is a beautiful day in India
At my home it is cold but here it is very nice here
It is good to see each one of you here today

INTRODUCTION

Suppose when you went home today you had an official letter at your house
The letter said you received a great inheritance
Many material riches were yours
Then the letter told you how to go about getting those riches
What would you do with that letter?
Would you throw it away?
Would you put it on a shelf and forget it?
Or would you read it and study it so that you knew exactly what it said and do
what it said to get those riches?
We have a letter from God
It tells us how to get spiritual riches that last forever
We need to read and study this book so we know how to get God's blessings
Then we need to follow those directions

TRANSITION

Yesterday we said God expects pastors to know their Bibles
We are to study it and learn what God has to say to us
I want to talk today about how we do that

PRAY

The first thing you must do when you study the Bible is to **pray**
The Holy Spirit who wrote the Bible is with you when you study
Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher
So pray for guidance and wisdom
Ask God to help you understand what you read
Ask Him to show you how it applies to your people
Then when you study He will put thoughts into your mind

It's like a light comes on and you see something that you didn't see before

You need to **ask Him and listen** to what He says
If you don't, you won't hear from Him

If there is sin in your life you won't hear Him
So if you have any sin, confess it and remove it so He will lead as you study
You pray when you start and pray the whole time you study

STEP 1. OBSERVATION

The first thing we do when we study the Bible is to observe what it says
You have to examine it

Like what a doctor does when you go to see a doctor
Suppose you were sick and went to see a doctor
So he called you into his office because you said you weren't feeling so good
He said lay here on the table; I am going to operate on you
Would that be good?
You wouldn't want a doctor to do that
What does he have to do first?
Examine you. Yes
He asks you questions
He touches the part that hurts
Maybe he takes tests or x-rays
He would have to thoroughly examine you before he did anything else

That is what we must do when we study the Bible
The doctor looks for things that you don't see right away
You must look for new things that you haven't seen when you study
When you read a passage, you say, "what does that mean?"
Don't just think of what you already knew or what somebody else says it means or
you won't see anything new
We must look very carefully

I do tricks to fool you
But that is just what they are, tricks, they fool you
If you would look carefully enough you would see what I am doing
But you only see what I want you to see
So you think I am doing something special
In the Bible we want to see new things that we haven't seen

Let me show you a picture
Look at the picture
See the picture?
Do you know what the picture is about?

Let me ask you some questions
How many women are there?

Are they wearing saris or salwars?
How many are dressed in red?
How many are dressed in green?
Is the middle woman sad or happy?
You looked at the picture but you didn't see everything

Let me show you another picture
Look at this picture
Now you are looking much more carefully, aren't you?
You are looking to see things you didn't see before
You know I'm going to ask you questions
How many people are in the picture?
What is the man doing?
What is the woman doing?
Is there any corn in the picture?

One more picture
Everybody is learning to look more carefully
You want to see everything
You want to see new things that you may not notice
That's the way you want to look when you look into the Bible
How many people are on the motorcycle?
What color shirt is the man wearing?
What is the little girl holding?
What is the color of the van in the background?
Do you see how you are learning to observe?
You are examining **carefully**
You don't just see the obvious things you look to see new things
That is the key to good Bible study
Sometimes you will hear somebody teach the Bible and you will hear things you
never noticed were there
And you wonder why didn't I see that?
You will when you learn how to look carefully

Some villages in India are getting new water wells
To find fresh, good water they have to dig down deep into the ground
It would be easier if people would just use the water setting on top of the
ground
Would that be healthy water to use?
It takes **time** and **work** to dig down deep but that is where refreshing water is found
It takes time and work to dig down deep where the blessings are in God's Word

1. READ THE PASSAGE MANY TIMES

Let's start practicing doing that with the Bible
Turn in your Bible to **First Peter Chapter 5**
Would somebody READ the first four verses?

When you read it the first time it is like **looking at a picture**
You have an idea what it is about but you don't see everything that is there
So you must read it many times
Each time you look carefully to see new things
Look at the Bible like you look at the picture
Would somebody READ those verses again?

Each time you read it you see new things and understand things better
When you hear a new song you may like that song because of what it says
You don't know everything the first time
The more you hear that song the better you understand it
Same as if you go to a favorite movie
Each time you see it you see something new
So you must read the Bible many times
You must look for new things

2. WRITE DOWN QUESTIONS

A good way to see new things is to **ask questions**
You looked at the pictures more carefully when I asked questions about them
As you read the Bible think of questions you would like to have answered
Suppose the man who wrote the verses was sitting beside you, what
questions would you ask him?
Who wrote this in First Peter?
Yes, Peter
Suppose Peter was sitting beside you and you could ask him any questions you
wanted
Think of what questions you would like to ask him about this passage
So let's **READ** those four verses again and think of what questions you would like
to ask Peter

If **Peter** were here and you asked him questions you might ask why did he write this
Who did you write to?
Were there problems as you wrote it?
When did you write this?
You might ask him questions about what he wrote
He wrote to pastors and elders
Now we know about pastor and elders but what did Peter mean?

Then he calls pastors “shepherds”

Why does he use that term?

Is an elder a shepherd or somebody different?

What does he mean by serving for dishonest gain?

How can we know if we do that?

How can we change that?

How can we know if we are eager to serve?

There are many questions we could ask Peter to understand what he is writing

Start your Bible study by **observing** & writing down as many questions as you can

Some questions may be so simple that you already know the answer but write it down anyway

Some questions are very hard and we will never know the answer until we get to Heaven, but write them down also

The more questions you ask the better you will understand

Little children ask many questions because that is how they learn

If you don't ask questions you won't get the answer

Carefully write all your questions just as you want your doctor to do for you

If he doesn't do a thorough job of that – nothing else will be right

So **ask many questions**

Don't just do it one day, think about it and come back another day and another day

Each time you do it you will see new things which you didn't see before

The better you do this step the better your final result will be

STEP 2: INTERPRETATION

When you have asked enough questions, then you can start to answer them

That's **interpreting** Scripture

Now you want to know, “What does this mean?”

When the doctor has finished examining you he goes over all he has learned

Until he discovers your problem, he won't know what the correct solution

He may ask other doctors for advice

He must not only do a good job of observing, he must accurately interpret what he sees

That's what we do when we start answering our questions

1. CONTEXT - PASSAGE

When you start you want to look at the **whole passage** in the Bible
You must understand what all of First Peter is about before you can understand any part of it

Suppose you walked into a room and heard **two people talking**
You hear a few words of what they are saying
You have an idea of what they are talking about but you don't really know until you listen for a while

To understand what Peter is saying here we must know what he says before this and after this

We need to let the Bible interpret the Bible

Let me give you an example

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens I will come in with him"

Sometimes when we read this we think Jesus is talking to an unbeliever about coming into their life for salvation

It's true that Jesus wants to do that, but that is not what that passage says

When you read the passages before and after that you will see Jesus is talking to Christians and the Church

It's an active church but they leave Jesus out of what they do

Jesus is saying to the Church, "Let me in"

It is important to see the whole context to understand

Read all of Peter and you will see that he is writing to Jews that became Christians

They are scattered and living in many countries around the world

They are undergoing severe persecution and much suffering

In the first few chapters Peter says suffering is used by God to help them grow

He said they must submit to God and stay faithful

Then in Chapter 5 he writes telling the leaders to encourage their people

But the problem was that some of the leaders were not remaining faithful

They were deserting because they wanted more money

They liked to feel important by standing in front of the people so they said what the people wanted to hear instead of teaching God's Word

Peter tells them they cannot do that

He warns all the Christians and pastors to be faithful

And then he tells them in verse 4 that those who are faithful will be rewarded

It is important to understand the whole context of the passage

2. CONTEXT – PEOPLE, CULTURE

Also it is important to **understand the people** to whom the passage was written

This was written to Jews that had become Christians 2,000 years ago

This wasn't written to churches in India today

Now it is for you, but it wasn't addressed to you

So to understand what Peter was writing, you have to know what the people he was writing to would think

Jews 2,000 years ago think differently then you in India think today

They have a different culture and different life than you do

Peter was **writing to them** so we must understand what it meant to them

If Peter was writing to us and used the term "**elder**" you would know what it means to be an elder in your church

But to the Jews then, they knew it was a leader in the synagogue

He was a man who oversaw everything that happened in the synagogue

He didn't do everything but he made sure everything was done

When Paul wrote to Gentile churches he didn't use this word because the word they used was "**bishop**"

To the gentiles a bishop was somebody who oversaw a gathering of people

The term "elder" and "bishop" mean the same thing but were used by different groups of people

He's talking about the role of the pastor because these words mean the same thing

Then Peter also uses the term "**shepherd**"

It also refers to the pastor but heart for the people

"Elder" and "Bishop" talk about the job of leading people

"Shepherd" refers to loving and feeding the people

These are **important to know** to help answer your questions

We are giving you a book today that will help learn these things

It will help you understand how people and thought in Bible times

Remember that to understand the Bible we must understand the people to whom it was written

3. MAIN IDEA

Another important part of understanding a passage in the Bible is to look for the **one main point** the writer was saying

Peter had one main point he was trying to communicate to the Jewish Christians

A passage in the Bible can only mean one thing, not two different things

It can't mean one thing to me and something different to you

Words have meanings that don't change

God gave Peter used certain words to describe what he was writing
Understanding his meaning is important

What is the main truth Peter is communicating in these verses?

He is saying that the pastors have to be faithful so they can help their people be faithful

That's the main idea of this passage

So after you write your questions, start **answering** them

How would the people to whom Peter was writing answer the questions?

Put yourselves in the place of people who received this letter to understand those questions

Look for the writers Main Idea, that will help you answer some questions

4. OTHER RESOURCES

Another way to find answers is to use **Bible commentaries and footnotes**

Only use these after you do your own study

It takes more time to work and study yourself but it is important to do it

When you eat a meal you take time to chew your food

It has to be chewed before you can swallow it

So you spend a lot of time during a meal chewing your food

It would be a lot quicker and easier if you had someone else chew your food for you and all you did was swallow it

But you don't want to do that, you want to chew your own food

You do that when you study the Bible also

TRANSITION

So first you observe, look closely and ask questions

Then you interpret and you answer the questions

STEP 3: APPLICATION

Now that you know what a passage is saying, you can apply it

First the doctor has examines you, then he interprets what he finds

Then he can say, "this is the medicine or the operation you need"

You don't stop after interpretation, it has to be **applied**

We can't accurately apply before we observe and interpret

We must observe and interpret in order to have a true application

Remember, it told you there is one interpretation of a passage because words can only have one meaning

It only means what the writer was saying to the people he was writing to

But there are many ways that truth can apply to us today

Our interpretation tells us that pastors are to faithfully serve their people
The ones who do will be rewarded

But we can **apply that one truth in many ways**

- I can talk to pastors who are faithfully serving and encourage them to stay faithful
- I can use this passage to warn pastors who have pride and greed to repent
- I can use this to teach churches what to look for in their leaders
- I can use it when I teach men who want to be leaders what God expects of them
- I can use it to encourage pastors of churches that are being persecuted that God will reward them

You see there are many ways this passage can be applied

Pray for wisdom when you study

Ask God, "How does this apply to me" and He will give you insight

He will show you how this passage applies to you **personally**

Sometimes the passage has a command that we are to obey

Or it could be an example to follow – like this one

It might be a warning about greed and pride

It could be a promise of how God will reward those who are faithful

Sometimes we think, "There is nothing in this passage for me"

We think it is empty, there is no light in it for me

But when you pray, God will show you wonderful things in that passage

The more you study, think and pray the more He will show you

Alleluia!

CONCLUSION

Remember the letter of inheritance I told you about when we started?

Think of the Bible as your letter from God, telling you of everything you have as a Christian

Study the Bible carefully so you understand all of it

Interpret it accurately so you know exactly what it is saying

Apply it to your life to get all the blessings God has for you

And teach it to your people so they know what blessings they have as well