



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#144)

Learning the basics about being saved:
Studying the Bible to find out (7).

1

There are many ways to study the Bible, depending on your goal.

IF YOUR GOAL IS TO "FOLLOW JESUS," you will choose a study method that: ① helps you learn what Scripture says, and ② encourages you to apply what you learn to your life.

Certain features tend to be present in study methods designed for this purpose.

COMMON FEATURES:

1. An awareness of dependency on God. Attitude is important! Prayer is important! As you study God's Word, remember who God is, and who we are ... and be teachable!

2

2. A focus on what God says. Though there may be value in what people say (= commentaries and study helps), our primary focus is to be on what God says (= the Bible)!
3. "Observing" the immediate passage you are studying. In our "Basic Bible Study Method," this would refer to the words and how they connect (Steps 1 and 2).
4. Attempting to "interpret" (understand) the passage within the context of Scripture. In our "Basic Bible Study Method," this would refer to the nearby and distant contexts (Steps 3 and 4). Our goal is to understand the verse within its context, not to invent our own "personal interpretation" (opinion) of it!
5. "Applying" what you learn to your life. How should the things you learned influence the way you live? This might not always be possible (depending on the nature of the passage); but our goal should always be to become more "Christ-like"... not just to learn a lot of facts!

3

6. Writing down one's observations. Though not *mandatory*, it is quite helpful to write down something. This is because writing involves coordination between eye, hand and brain. Doing this helps us to remember things better – and perhaps even to *think* better!

There is no specific note-taking method we must follow. Many people put their thoughts and observations in a notebook or journal. Some people even draw pictures (sometimes including the verse) that visually illustrates what they are learning.

Many people find it encouraging to look back at previous notes, to reflect on what God has done in their lives.

Some people refer to the three points about "Observing / Interpreting / Applying" as the "OIA" method of Bible Study. There are many books and websites that describe these points in greater detail.

4


A BASIC METHOD FOR UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE.

⇒ We're looking at a basic and valuable starting point for studying the Bible, using the "save/salvation" concept to illustrate it.

We need to pay attention to:

- ① The words and their meanings.
- ② How those words connect.
- ③ The context of the passage.
- ④ What other passages say.

START AT THE CENTER AND WORK OUT!



TODAY

5

Steps ③ & ④ have many similarities.

Both help us to understand the passage we are studying. The more distant passages will contain details not present in the near context.

③ The context of the passage. We could describe this as looking at the "near context."

④ What other passages say. We could describe this as looking at the "far context."

❖ Last time, we focused on ③ the "NEAR context" – the verses directly associated with the passage.

❖ Today, our focus is on ④ the "FAR context" – what the rest of the Bible says.

6

APPLYING ④ What other passages say

⇒ IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SAVE/SALVATION CONCEPT.

It's like an *extension* of Step #3 – which we looked at last time. Because of that, much of what we learned last time also applies here.

- Sometimes the nearby context will be enough for us to understand a passage.
- At other times, it will be necessary to review other Scripture passages, in order to avoid false conclusions and error.

As we increase our understanding of the *whole* Bible, it will enhance our understanding of the *individual* verses.

Other passages help us!

THEY HELP US TO AVOID GOING ASTRAY WITH "HALF-TRUTH."

- We will be accepting ALL that Scripture says.

Seeing that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I could provoke my people to jealousy and **save** some of them.
Romans 11:13b-14 (NET)

This verse focuses on *human responsibility*. It is NOT a denial of God's role in salvation – which other Scripture passages affirm! People may be saved because of what we do; but we are not the cause of their salvation. (God does the actual saving.)

In the above passage: The Jews tried to *earn* salvation, and failed; but the Gentiles were *trusting* Jesus and being saved. Paul was hoping that the Jews would see this, and want the salvation that comes by *faith* (since it can't come by works).

Other passages help us!

THEY HELP US TO AVOID REACHING FALSE CONCLUSIONS AND OTHER MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

- We will protect ourselves from wrong interpretations of what Scripture passages say.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the **Savior** of the world.
1 John 4:14 (NET)

Without the greater context of Scripture, we might reach the *false* conclusion that the term "Savior of the world" means that *all* people will be saved. *The rest of the Bible shows that this is NOT the case!*

Jesus is the world's savior. He is the only savior. But many people in the world will refuse to accept that fact. They will refuse to repent, believe and obey him. *They will remain unsaved.*

The RIGHT USE of CONTEXT.

Paying attention to context minimizes error, **★ BUT WE NEED TO APPROACH IT WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE! ★**

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE!

- ⇒ Avoid **adding to, or subtracting from, Scripture**, using one verse to distort or cancel the meaning of another.
- ⇒ Accept **all of what Scripture says**, realizing that different passages *complement*, rather than *contradict* each other.

"USING SCRIPTURE TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE."

- This can be a good principle, if used properly.
- Without the right attitude, it actually becomes "using Scripture to *misinterpret* Scripture."

Warnings about DISTORTING Scripture.

NOT AN OPTION:

- ✓ Replacing Scripture with your own opinion.
- ✓ Inventing your own "interpretation."

Some things in [Paul's] letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable **twist to their own destruction**, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures.
2 Peter 3:16b (NET)

But stop using this phrase, 'prophecy from the LORD.' For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, **turning upside down the words of our God**, the living God, the LORD of Heaven's Armies.
Jeremiah 23:36 (NLT)

"You have let go of the **commands of God** and are holding on to human traditions."
Mark 7:8 (NIV)

EXAMPLES: "USING SCRIPTURE TO MISINTERPRET SCRIPTURE."

#1: AN EXAMPLE FROM EARLY CHURCH HISTORY:

Group 1: "[THIS VERSE]" SAYS THAT JESUS IS **GOD**. THIS PROVES HE IS NOT A **HUMAN!**

Group 2: "[THIS VERSE]" SAYS THAT JESUS IS A **HUMAN**. THIS PROVES HE IS NOT **GOD!**

Reality: NEITHER GROUP WOULD ADMIT THAT SCRIPTURE DESCRIBES JESUS AS **BOTH** GOD AND MAN!

INSTEAD, EACH GROUP USED **ITS OWN** SELECTED VERSES TO "REINTERPRET" THE VERSES THE **OTHER** GROUP USED.

#2: A DEBATE BETWEEN TWO CHURCH DENOMINATIONS:
(Regarding the significance of 2 chapters in one of Paul's letters.)

Group 1:

CHAPTER 2 SAYS: "[BIBLE VERSES QUOTED]."
THIS PROVES WE ARE RIGHT AND YOU ARE WRONG!

Group 2:

CHAPTER 3 SAYS: "[BIBLE VERSES QUOTED]."
THIS PROVES WE ARE RIGHT AND YOU ARE WRONG!

MY reaction:

WHY THEY CAN'T SEE THAT **BOTH** CHAPTERS ARE IN THE BIBLE? **BOTH** CHAPTERS ARE TRUE! IT SEEMS THAT **BOTH** GROUPS NEED TO CHANGE THEIR VIEWS!

EXAMPLE: Tearing Scripture out of CONTEXT

The following verse was used by someone to "prove" that "God thinks you're beautiful" (emphasizing physical appearance).

WHAT DOES IT REALLY SAY?

Psalm 45:11, taken out of context.

Let the king be enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.
Ps 45:11 (NIV)

ISSUE 1: It *doesn't* apply to us (with one possible exception).

- ✓ The immediate context shows us that it is a reference to the marriage of a king, probably in the line of David. The verse describes the soon-to-be queen. (Sorry, but that's not referring to you!)

✓ With further research, we discover that this is a "messianic" psalm. Part (or all) of this psalm applies to Jesus, the "Messiah" (or "Christ"). In fact, verses 6-7 are quoted in the New Testament in reference to Jesus.

OLD TESTAMENT

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.
Ps 45:6-7 (NIV)

NEW TESTAMENT

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."
Hebrews 1:8-9 (NIV)

✓ What application is there to "God thinks you're beautiful"?

- if you are referring to the church, the "Bride of Christ" (as in Revelation 19:7) then *maybe* it does have an application.
- As far as any reference to your own individual physical appearance... There is **NONE!** None at all!

ISSUE 2: This claim *lies* about God.

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE WIDER CONTEXT, WE DISCOVER:

- Using this as a "proof text" about physical beauty is a lie about God! Scripture tells us that **God does NOT focus on your physical appearance!!!**

People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7b (NIV)

- Scripture warns us that even the *best* of physical appearances is *temporary* and will pass away. Appearances can also be *deceptive*.

ISSUE 3: It promotes a false emphasis that *contradicts* Scripture.

- ⇒ **THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT** shows us: It is NOT referring to us, as individuals!
- ⇒ **THE WIDER CONTEXT** shows us: Physical appearance is NOT to be our preoccupation!

WHAT SCRIPTURE TELLS US TO DO:

- ✓ Focus on our heart condition, not our external appearance! *
- ✓ Focus on the beauty of godliness!
- ✓ Focus on Scripture passages that remind us:
 - God uses all our circumstances (including our appearance) to accomplish good!
 - Our #1 priority is to be God's kingdom and his righteousness.

* (Even if we look as ugly as a train wreck... it doesn't matter to God!)

"WHAT I LOOK LIKE, FIRST THING IN THE MORNING!"

IT'S OK!



If we really look this bad in the morning (and perhaps many of us do!), God isn't going to *pretend* it's "beautiful"!

We should focus on letting God display his strength through our weakness – and honor him in all circumstances!

Your MISSION:

⇒ *Focus on GROWING in knowledge.*

(God will take care of the "growing in grace" part.)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2 Pe 3:18a (NET)

We NEED to understand Scripture.

- It's a *lifelong growing process*. ⇒ So we should *never* reach the arrogant conclusion that we "know it all."
- It's also *guided by the Spirit of God*. ⇒ So we should never despair over the fact that we *don't* "know it all"! We can trust *God* to get us to where we need to be!

19

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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20