



# Study Guide

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

secret  church

[www.secretchurch.org](http://www.secretchurch.org)

# Shhh. Close the door behind you.

Welcome to Secret Church. There are two reasons we are here this evening. One is to know God's Word more intimately. Most of our time together is going to be spent diving into Scripture to uncover some of the timeless truths contained in this incredible living Book. You'll need a Bible, this study guide and a pen this evening. If you didn't bring a Bible, you'll find free copies available to you in the lobby. Dr. Platt will be teaching from the New International Version (NIV), but you'll be able to easily follow along with any modern translation.

There's a second, and ultimately far more important, reason that we are here tonight. We want to identify with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted around the world. Right now, in 2007, there are nearly 200 million Christ-followers worldwide who do not have basic human rights. That means they cannot have a gathering like this in public to study God's Word. In almost all cases they would be harassed. In many cases they would be arrested. In some cases they would be imprisoned, tortured or killed.

Today it's estimated there are 70 million Christ-followers in prison worldwide. They take their faith and their God very seriously. They are willing to sacrifice work, family, even their lives if necessary. And they are members of the same Church that we are. They are not asking for our pity. In fact, persecution has built their faith in ways we can hardly imagine. If anything, let us be inspired by them to know God more fully and His Word more deeply than ever before.

Many around the world gather for worship as we do tonight—under cover of darkness, quietly, in secret. They often meet for long periods of time because it's frankly dangerous to be in a large group with other Christ-followers and they want to make the most of their time together. Imagine for a moment that what happens tonight inside this room could threaten your life or the lives of your family. But these Christ-followers do not cower in fear. Instead they come together joyfully to praise God and thank Him for His grace and mercy.

Tonight we will pray for the persecuted. Each Secret Church meeting focuses on a different region of the world where Christ-followers suffer because of their faith. In the back of this Study Guide you'll find information on one particular continent that will guide your prayer time for our neighbors in these many nations. Keep this Study Guide as a reminder not only to share what you are learning from God's Word, but to pray for people and places where "Secret Church" is a reality.

*God, may we know Your Word more fully. May Your watchcare be with our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who even now meet, pray, and study in secret. Amen.*

# Program Notes

## TONIGHT'S SCHEDULE

- 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. Welcome, opening, musical worship  
Special guest from Asia
- 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Teaching Session 1
- 7:30 to 7:45 p.m. Special guest from Asia
- 7:45 to 8:45 p.m. Teaching Session 2
- 8:45 to 9:00 p.m. Break (coffee, water and snacks in the lobby)
- 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. The Persecuted Church
  - Special Guest from Asia
  - Prayer Time
  - Giving of Our Resources
- 9:30 to 10:40 p.m. Teaching Session 3
- 10:40 to 10:50 p.m. Prayer for the Persecuted
- 10:50 p.m. to Midnight Teaching Session 4 and Closing

**BOTTLED WATER ONLY** is allowed in the Worship Room. Please do not bring food or other types of beverages into the Worship Room. Complimentary beverages will be provided in the lobby for attendees during the break time.

**RESTROOMS** are located in the lobby and at the rear of the Worship Room.

**SO AS NOT TO DISTRACT FROM THE STUDY**, please turn all cell phones and pagers to the “silent” or “off” position while in the Worship Room. We realize many parents need to keep in touch with baby sitters, but if you must use your phone during the evening, please go all the way out into the lobby before calling.

**BIBLES** are available free of charge in the lobby. If you do not have your own Bible, please keep the Bible you receive as our gift. David will be teaching from the New International Version (NIV).

**SECRET CHURCH RESOURCES** are available for purchase in the lobby before and after the sessions and during the break time. Follow this evening's teaching, a four-CD audio set of the sessions will be available for purchase for \$29. A two-DVD set of videos of the sessions will be available for \$39 in the coming weeks.

**ONLINE RESOURCES**, including free MP3 audio downloads of the teaching sessions, Quicktime (MOV) videos of the teaching sessions, study and prayer guides in Portable Document Format (PDF) and links to persecuted church resources are available at the Secret Church website, [www.secretchurch.org](http://www.secretchurch.org).

# Beyond These Walls...

We're glad you've decided to attend tonight's Secret Church meeting. But even if nobody showed up, it would still be worth the effort. Actually, this Bible study will likely benefit far more people outside this room than those present. Here's why...

You'll notice video cameras in the room tonight that will be recording the teaching sessions. In the coming days, these sessions will be re-recorded and translated into many different languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic. The foreign-language versions of Secret Church will be available online as translations are completed. But that's just the beginning.

Most Christ-followers around the world don't have access to seminaries or Bible colleges. In fact, most parts of the world have no formal Christian teaching at all. Dr. Platt will be leading several more Secret Church studies in the coming year, creating 30 to 40 hours of Bible teaching on the Old and New Testaments, Covenants, Disciple-Making, Bible Study and Teaching and other topics. These sessions together will comprise a "seminary on a stick"—a mini-course in solid Bible knowledge accessible to anyone.

During the evening we'll be taking an offering. Portions of the proceeds will provide Secret Church Bible studies in multiple languages on iPods, Memory Sticks, Flash Drives and other small computer devices that are easily transported to other countries. We're excited about providing hours of Bible teaching, in people's native languages, to those who cannot attend a course like this. Imagine a house-church leader in Asia or the Middle East, now able to attend 40 hours of Bible teaching classes as he plugs in a video iPod with Secret Church teaching in his own language. With your help, this will be a reality in the coming year!

# How to Study the Bible: Session 1

## WHAT Bible We Study...

*“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.*

*The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.*

*They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

*By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”*

*(Psalm 19:7-11, NIV)*

- The Word is **perfect**.
- The Word is relevant.
- The Word is **good**.
- The Word is clear.
- The Word is eternal.
- The Word is true.
- The Word is **available**.
  - ▶ The need for translations...
    - Total world languages: 6,912.
    - Languages with no Bible: **2,286**.
  - ▶ The question of translations...
    - Which translation should I use?
    - Look at the **process** behind the translation.
  - ▶ The process of translation...
    - A **Divine** Author.
    - Human Authors.
    - Original Text.
    - **Copies** of the Original Text.
    - Critical Text.
    - Translator or Translation **Team**.
    - Translation.
    - Contemporary Reader.
  - ▶ The continuum of translations...
    - The Formal Approach: “**word**-for-word.”
    - The Functional Approach: “**thought**-for-thought.”
  - ▶ A recommendation for English translations...
    - New International Version
    - English Standard Version
    - New American Standard Bible

### WHY We Don't Study The Bible...

- "I don't see how the Bible really **applies** to my life."
- "I've **tried**, but I just don't know how to study the Bible."
- "I'm not a professional; isn't that the **pastor's** job?"
- "I just don't have **time**."
- "I'm not sure if the Bible is even **true**."
- "To be honest, it just seems **boring** to me."

### WHY We Must Study the Bible...

- Because it's essential for spiritual **growth**.

*"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk,  
so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."  
(1 Peter 2:2, NIV)*

- ▶ We need it.
- ▶ We **want** it.
- ▶ We can't grow up without it.

- Because it's essential for spiritual **maturity**.

*"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."  
(Hebrews 5:11-14, NIV)*

- Because it's essential for spiritual **effectiveness**.

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."  
(2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)*

### WHO Can Study the Bible?

- **Anyone** can study the Bible.
- Only those who have the Spirit of Christ can **understand** the Bible.

*“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

(1 Corinthians 2:12-14, NIV)

- ▶ The Spirit **inspired** the Word.
- ▶ The Spirit illuminates the Word.
- ▶ The Spirit **instructs** us in the Word.

### So HOW Do We Study The Bible?

- Study the Bible Prayerfully.
  - ▶ We NEVER study the Bible alone.
- Study the Bible **Humbly**.
  - ▶ Do you really want to know Him?
- Study the Bible **Carefully**.
  - ▶ We want to understand the text rightly.
- Study the Bible Joyfully.
  - ▶ Bible study involves the thrill of personal discovery.
- Study the Bible **Simply**.
  - ▶ You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit...
  - ▶ If you can read, you can study.
- Study the Bible Confidently.
  - ▶ The Holy Spirit is in you to enable you to do this!
- Study the Bible Consistently.
  - ▶ We need to be equipped to study every text of every book.
- Study the Bible **Diligently**.
  - ▶ Learning to study the Bible will not happen overnight.
- Study the Bible Intentionally.
  - ▶ Always study with a notebook and pen/pencil in hand.
- Study the Bible **Personally**.
  - ▶ You will fall in love with the Author of the Book.
  - ▶ You will find true life under the authority of the Book.

### DANGEROUS APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY...

- The emotional approach.
  - ▶ What **feels** right to me?
- The spiritual approach.
  - ▶ What deep, hidden meaning is there for me?

- The pragmatic approach.
  - ▶ What **works** best for me?
- The superficial approach.
  - ▶ What does this **mean** to me?

## A DEPENDABLE APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY...

Imagine going on a mission trip...

- Observe their home: What do I **see**?
- Understand their home: What does it **mean**?
- Bring it back home: How does it **relate**?
- Apply it in your home: What do I **do**?

Let's take a trip into the Word...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ This step involves **exploration**.
  - ▶ Discover what the text says.
  - ▶ A question of **content**.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ This step involves **interpretation**.
  - ▶ Discover what the text means.
  - ▶ A question of **context**.
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ This step involves **implications**.
  - ▶ Discover how the text travels.
  - ▶ A question of **connection**.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ This step involves **application**.
  - ▶ Discover how the text transforms.
  - ▶ A question of **conduct**.

## OBSERVE THEIR HOME: What Do I See?

Two Revolutionary Disciplines for Reading the Bible...

- Learn to **listen**.
- Learn to **look**.

Learn to Listen...

- Listen **thoughtfully**.
  - ▶ Bible study is not a mindless activity.
- Listen thoroughly.
  - ▶ If we want to understand the Bible, we've got to bombard it with questions.

- ▶ **Who?**
  - Wrote it?
  - Originally read it?
  - Are the main characters?
- ▶ **What?**
  - Is happening in the text?
  - Is wrong with the picture?
  - Is the author saying?
- ▶ **Where?**
  - Is the writer?
  - Are the original readers?
  - Is the text taking place?
- ▶ **When?**
  - Was it written?
  - Did the events take place?
- ▶ **Why?**
  - Is the author writing this?
  - Is this included in Scripture?
  - Did the events happen the way they did?
  - Did the author say what he said?
- Listen repeatedly.
  - ▶ Read the text over and over and over and over... you get the point!
- Listen **patiently**.
  - ▶ Be patient with the text.
  - ▶ Be patient with yourself.
- Listen **imaginatively**.
  - ▶ See the sights, smell the smells, and experience the emotions.
- Listen meditatively.
  - ▶ Take time to **reflect**.
  - ▶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation.”

*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*  
(Joshua 1:8, NIV)

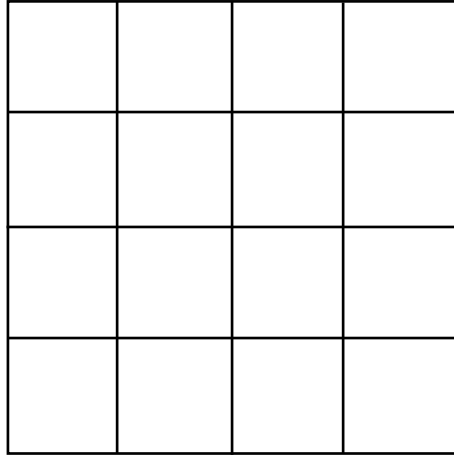
*“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*  
(Psalm 1:1-2, NIV)

*“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”*  
(Psalm 119:97, NIV)

- Listen **purposefully**.
  - ▶ We want our lives transformed by the heart of God through His Word!

**Learn to Look...**

- The art of Bible reading is **seeing**.
- How many squares do you see below? (**There are 30 squares below.**)



- Look for what the Word **emphasizes**.
  - ▶ Verbs
    - ♦ How does the author depict the action of the text?
    - ♦ Is the verb past, **present**, or future?

*“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”*  
(Ephesians 1:11, NIV)

- ♦ Is the verb **imperitive**?

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”* (Matthew 28:19, NIV)

- ♦ Is the verb active or **passive**?

*“The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*  
(Genesis 12:1-3, NIV)

*“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”*  
(Ephesians 5:18, NIV)

*“ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”  
(Colossians 3:1, NIV)*

▶ **Space**

- ✦ Is the author devoting concentrated attention to a certain theme, character, event, etc.?
- ✦ Genesis 1-11, 12-50.
- ✦ Matthew
  - Of 1,062 verses, at least **342** of them (1/3 of the book) give us teachings from Jesus.
- ✦ Ephesians
  - 1-3: Explanation of Salvation.
  - 4-6: Application of Salvation.

▶ **Purpose** Statement

- ✦ Does the author describe why he says something or why something happens?
- ✦ Look for that, in order that, so that, to, or for.

*“See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”  
(Deuteronomy 4:5-6, NIV)*

*“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”  
(Psalm 119:11, NIV)*

*““For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NIV)*

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit— fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”  
(John 15:16, NIV)*

*“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. “  
(John 20:30-31, NIV)*

▶ Order

- Is the author giving strategic importance to something by putting it in a certain order?

<b>Matthew 10:2-4</b>	<b>Mark 3:13-19</b>	<b>Luke 6:12-16</b>	<b>Acts 1:12-14</b>
<b>Simon Peter</b>	<b>Simon Peter</b>	<b>Simon Peter</b>	<b>Peter</b>
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
<b>Philip</b>	<b>Philip</b>	<b>Philip</b>	<b>Philip</b>
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
<b>James/Alphaeus</b>	<b>James/Alphaeus</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>James/Alphaeus</b>
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Judas/James	Judas/James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	(Matthias)

▶ Exaggeration

- Does the author exaggerate something for intentional **effect** or emphasis?

*“My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.”*  
(Psalm 119:20, NIV)

*“I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.”*  
(2 Corinthians 11:8, NIV)

*“You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”*  
(Matthew 23:24, NIV)

▶ Chiasm

- Does the author (especially in the Old Testament) highlight a main idea through a parallel structure in the text?

**Psalm 76:1**

■ In Judah

- ▶ God is known.
- ▶ His name is great

■ In Israel

### Genesis 3

- Introduction of Sin (3:1-7).
  - ▶ Confrontation of Man (3:8-12).
    - ✦ Confrontation of Woman (3:13).
      - Confrontation and Promise to Serpent (3:14-15).
    - ✦ Promise to Woman (3:16).
  - ▶ Promise to Man (3:17-19).
- Consequence of Sin (3:20-24).

### Genesis 11

- The whole world (1)
  - ▶ Had one language (1)
    - ✦ Shinar, and settled there (2)
      - Come, let's make bricks (3)
        - Come, let us build (4)
          - A city with a tower (4)
            - ★ But the Lord came down (5)
          - To see the city and the tower (5)
        - That the men were building (5)
      - Come, let us go down and confuse their language (7)
    - ✦ Babel – because there (9)
  - ▶ The Lord confused the language (9)
- The whole earth (9)

### 1 and 2 Kings

- Two Chapters: Introduction and Rise (1 Kings 1-2).
  - ▶ Nine Chapters: Single Kingdom – Solomon (1 Kings 3-11).
    - ✦ Twenty-Nine Chapters: The Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17)
  - ▶ Six Chapters: Single Kingdom – Josiah (2 Kings 18-23).
- Two Chapters: Conclusion and Fall (2 Kings 24-25).
  
- Look for what the Word **repeats**.
  - ▶ Does the author intentionally repeat anything in the text?
  - ▶ Terms, phrases, and clauses
    - ✦ Psalm 136 – His love endures forever!
    - ✦ Matthew 5:34-6:34 – God is our Father!

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.*

*And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.”*

*(2 Corinthians 1:3-7, NIV)*

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

*(1 John 2:15-17, NIV)*

▶ Characters

- Barnabas in Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22; 15:36-39.

▶ Patterns

- Pharaoh hardens his heart (Exodus 7:13, 14, 22; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7, 34, 35; 13:5).
- God hardens Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17).

▶ New Testament use of Old Testament passages

- Matthew 5:21-47 – “You have heard that it was said...”

■ Look for what the Word **connects**.

- ▶ Does the author establish certain relationships between certain items, ideas, or individuals?

▶ Conjunctions

- Look for and, for, but, therefore, since, or because...

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

*(Romans 12:1, NIV)*

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

*(Hebrews 12:1, NIV)*

*“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,”*

*(2 Timothy 1:7-8, NIV)*

▶ Prepositions

- Look for by, with, from, in, on, upon, through, or to...

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*  
(Galatians 2:20, NIV)

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”*  
(Romans 5:1-2, NIV)

▶ General and Specific

- Look for times when an author introduces a general idea and then provides an explanation through specific supporting ideas (or vice versa).
- From general to specific: Galatians 5:16-23.

*“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*  
(Galatians 5:16-23, NIV)

- From specific to general: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

▶ Question and **Answer**

- Look for questions that are answered and also rhetorical questions in which the answer is implied.

*“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?  
Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.”*  
(Job 38:2-3, NIV)

*“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty.*  
*“It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.  
But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’”*  
(Malachi 1:6, NIV)

*“Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter.”*  
(Matthew 26:40, NIV)

*“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?”*  
(Romans 3:1, NIV)

*“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?”*  
(Romans 4:1, NIV)

*“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”*  
(Romans 6:1, NIV)

*“Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?”*  
(Romans 7:1, NIV)

▶ Cause and **Effect**

- Look for particular causes stated by the author which result in a particular effect or multiple effects.

*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*  
(Proverbs 15:1, NIV)

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*  
(Romans 6:23, NIV)

*“And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”*  
(Acts 8:1, NIV)

▶ Means

- When something happens in the text, look for the means that brought about that particular action or result.

*“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”*  
(Psalm 119:9, NIV)

*“For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*  
(Romans 8:13-14, NIV)

▶ Conditions

- Look for specific clauses that demonstrate certain conditions which bring about a desired response.
- Look for if (the condition) and then (the **consequence**).

*“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.”*  
(Deuteronomy 28:1, NIV)

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;  
the old has gone, the new has come!”*  
(2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

*“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,  
we lie and do not live by the truth.”*  
(1 John 1:6, NIV)

▶ Lists

- Look for any instances of two or more itemized things and observe how and **why** they are ordered in a certain way.

*“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.”*  
(1 John 2:16, NIV)

*“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”*  
(Colossians 3:5-8, NIV)

▶ Pronouns

- Look for how pronouns connect relationships in the text.

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”*

*(Ephesians 1:3-14, NIV)*

*“If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.”*

*(2 Peter 2:20, NIV)*

▶ Major Shifts

- As you read larger units of text, look for critical places where the text seems to take a new **turn**.
- 2 Samuel 11-12.

*“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’”*

*(Acts 8:26, NIV)*

*“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.”*

*(Romans 3:20-21, NIV)*

*“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”*

*(Ephesians 3:21-4:1, NIV)*

■ Look for what the Word **compares**.

- ▶ Does the author compare certain items, ideas, or individuals to others?
- ▶ Simile
  - ✦ Look for **expressed** comparisons of two things that are different.
  - ✦ Look for as and like.

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.”  
(Psalm 42:1, NIV)*

*“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,”  
(John 3:14, NIV)*

*“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk,  
so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,”  
(1 Peter 2:2, NIV)*

- ▶ Metaphor
  - ✦ Look for **implied** comparisons between two things that are different.
  - ✦ Comparison without using as or like.

*“When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”  
(James 3:3-6, NIV)*

- ▶ Allegory
  - ✦ Look for instances where the author uses a certain **image** or comparison to communicate a deeper meaning in the text.

*“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: “Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.”*  
*(Galatians 4:21-31, NIV)*

▶ Type

- Look for instances where the author uses a symbolic picture to demonstrate something to come in the **future**.

*“Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.”*  
*(Romans 5:14, NIV)*

*“So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”;  
the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.”*  
*(1 Corinthians 15:45, NIV)*

■ Look for what the Word **contrasts**.

- ▶ Does the author contrast certain items, ideas, or individuals with one another?
- ▶ Look for but.

*“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt  
for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”*  
*(Proverbs 14:31, NIV)*

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God  
is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*  
*(Romans 6:23, NIV)*

- ▶ Look for contrasting metaphors.
  - Look for implied contrasts between two things.

*“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

*(Luke 11:11-13, NIV)*

■ Look for how the Word **communicates**.

- ▶ Does the author use certain words, images, phrases, or other literary tools to communicate certain emotions, moods, or tones in the text?
- ▶ Emotions
  - ✦ Look for words that convey particular **feelings** or emotions.

*“I myself said, ‘How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.’ I thought you would call me ‘Father’ and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.”*

*(Jeremiah 3:19-20, NIV)*

*“I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.*

*Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?”*

*(Galatians 4:12-16, NIV)*

- ▶ Mood
  - ✦ Look for evidence of the author’s demeanor as he writes.

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*

*(Philippians 4:4, NIV)*

- ▶ Tone
  - ✦ After looking at individual emotional terms and instances of mood, continue on to discover the overall tone of the text and/or book.

*“I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead.”*

*(Lamentations 3:1-6, NIV)*

*“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”*  
(Matthew 23:33-35, NIV)

*“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?”*  
(Galatians 3:1-4, NIV)

Observation overall...

- Observe individual verses.
- Observe paragraphs.
- Observe entire discourses.
- And remember... be **patient!**

Observation in action...

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*  
(Acts 1:8, NIV)

## UNDERSTAND THEIR HOME: What Does It Mean?

### Moving from exploration to interpretation...

- From what the text says to what the text means.
- From questions of content to questions of context.

### Context, context, context...

- The definition of context...
  - ▶ Context = that which **goes with** the text.
- The dilemma created by context...
  - ▶ The Bible communicates eternal content.
  - ▶ The Bible communicates through **specific** contexts.
  - ▶ How do we go from then and there to here and now?
- The dedication to context...
  - ▶ We work to step into the author's shoes and determine his **original** intent.
  - ▶ A biblical text can never mean what it never **meant**.
  - ▶ Context **shapes** meaning.
  - ▶ The rule of context: CONTEXT **RULES!**
- The diversity of contexts...
  - ▶ **Our** context.
  - ▶ **Their** context.

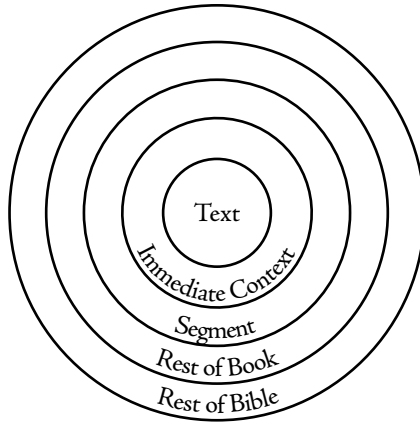
### Consider our context...

- Our preunderstandings:
  - ▶ All of our preconceived **notions** that we unconsciously or consciously bring to the text.
  - ▶ Our **pride**.
    - ✦ Pride knows before listening.
  - ▶ Our **agenda**.
    - ✦ Two options:
      - Stand over the meaning of the text.
      - Kneel **under** the meaning of the text.
  - ▶ Our familiarity.
    - ✦ Don't skip over a text just because it's familiar.
  - ▶ Our **culture**.
    - ✦ Language.
    - ✦ Customs.
    - ✦ Stories.
    - ✦ **Family**.
    - ✦ Values.
    - ✦ Economics.
    - ✦ Politics.
    - ✦ Ethnicity.

- ✦ **Gender.**
- ✦ Religion.
- ✦ Arts.
- ✦ **Images.**
- ▶ Our goal: **Minimize** subjectivity!
  - ✦ But not completely...
- Our presuppositions:
  - ▶ The Bible is inspired.
  - ▶ The Bible is reliable.
  - ▶ The Bible is **unified.**
  - ▶ The Bible is diverse.
  - ▶ The Bible is **supernatural.**
    - ✦ Thus the Bible has tension and **mystery** to it.
  - ▶ The Bible is **purposeful.**
- So how can we best understand their context?

### Consider their context...

- Never forget that Scripture was God's Word to other people **before** it became God's Word to us.
  - ▶ God cared deeply about **them.**
  - ▶ God cares deeply about us.
- Literary Context:
  - ▶ Genres.
    - ✦ Different forms or kinds of biblical texts.
    - ✦ We need to know the **rules** involved with different genres.
    - ✦ Old Testament...
      - Narrative
      - Law
      - Poetry
      - Prophets
      - Wisdom
    - ✦ New Testament
      - Letters
      - Gospels
        - Parables
      - Acts
      - Revelation
  - ▶ **Grammar**
    - ✦ Individual words, phrases, clauses all find meaning in context.
  - ▶ Surroundings.
    - ✦ The Bible contains an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



*“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”  
(Matthew 18:20, NIV)*

*“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I  
overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”  
(Revelation 3:21, NIV)*

■ **Historical-Cultural Context:**

- ▶ The time and culture of the author and his readers, including the social, geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author’s setting.
- ▶ Get to know the **author**...

*“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.  
We know that his testimony is true.”  
(John 21:24, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the **audience**...

*“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,  
the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”  
(John 20:31, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the geographic conditions...

*“When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.  
Now he had to go through Samaria.”  
(John 4:3-4, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the **social** conditions...

*“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water,  
Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’”  
(John 4:7, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the religious conditions...

*“The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)”  
(John 4:9, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the **economic** conditions...

*“‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?’”  
(John 4:11-12, NIV)*

- ▶ Get to know the political conditions...

*“The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’”  
(John 4:25-26, NIV)*

## ■ **Theological Context.**

- ▶ Where does this passage fit into the unfolding revelation of God in Scripture?
- ▶ J. I. Packer: “The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini, each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively, to play his notes just as the great conductor desired, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole... The point of each part only becomes fully clear when seen in relation to all the rest.”

## **Basic Principles for Bible Interpretation...**

- Remember that context **rules**.
  - ▶ Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say something that is contrary to the text.
- Always seek the **full** counsel of the Word of God.
  - ▶ The more you study, the more you will be able to discern what Scripture means.
- Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture.
  - ▶ Compare Scripture with Scripture... use **cross**-references!
  - ▶ The best interpreter of Scripture is **Scripture**.
- Avoid basing your doctrine on an **obscure** passage of Scripture.

*“He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”*  
(2 Peter 3:16, NIV)

- Interpret Scripture **plainly**.
  - ▶ Use the **literal** sense unless there is some good reason not to.
  - ▶ Use the figurative sense when the passage **tells** you to do so.
  - ▶ Use the figurative sense if the expression is an obvious figure of speech.
  - ▶ Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes **contrary** to the context of the passage, the context of the book, or the purpose of the author.
  - ▶ Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation involves a contradiction of other Scripture.
  - ▶ Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning is impossible, absurd, or **immoral**.
- Conclude the process of interpretation by describing the author’s intended meaning in the passage.
  - ▶ The major question: “What’s the **point**?”
  - ▶ In one or two sentences, write out what the author is saying to the original readers and why he is saying it.
  - ▶ Be responsible.
    - ✦ Remember - A text cannot mean what it never meant.
  - ▶ Be concise.
    - ✦ Keep it simple.
  - ▶ Be **specific**.
    - ✦ The author communicated this text at that time for that purpose.
- Check your conclusions by leaning on the **church**.

### Interpretation in action...

- Acts 1:8 – What’s the point?

---

---

---

---

---

## BRING IT BACK HOME: How Does It Relate?

The goal...

- Identify the **timeless** truth(s).
- This is the theological principle that applies to **all** people of all times.

The guidelines...

- The timeless truth is **biblical**.
- The timeless truth is **compatible** (with the rest of Scripture).
- The timeless truth is **eternal**.
- The timeless truth is **cross-cultural**.
- The timeless truth is **applicable** (both here and there).

Implication in action...

- Acts 1:8 – What is (are) the timeless truth(s) in Acts 1:8?

---

---

---

---

---

## APPLY IT IN YOUR HOME: What Do I Do?

The differences between interpretation and application...

- Interpretation focuses on meaning.
  - ▶ Application focuses on **action**.
- Interpretation involves a singular meaning.
  - ▶ Application involves **multiple** actions.
- Interpretation is the same for all Christians.
  - ▶ Application is **different** for specific life situations.
- Interpretation involves getting into the Word.
  - ▶ Application involves the Word getting into **us**.
- Interpretation asks, “What does this text mean?”
  - ▶ Application asks, “How does this meaning apply to **my life?**”

Three steps to responsible, biblical application...

- **Meditate** on the timeless truth(s).
- Relate the timeless truth(s) to today.
  - ▶ See the timeless truth in its **original** situation.
    - ✦ Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) in the original situation.

- ▶ Identify a contemporary situation that **parallels** the original situation.
  - Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) that parallel the original situation.
- ▶ Relate the timeless truth specifically to that contemporary situation.
- Practice the timeless truth.

*“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.”*

(2 Timothy 3:14-4:2, NIV)

- ▶ Five questions...
  - Who should I **be**?
    - Any application of the text is dependent on Christ in you.
  - How should I **think**?
    - We need to learn from the Word how to think Christianly.
  - What should I **do**?
    - Is there a sin to avoid?
    - Is there a verse to memorize?
    - Is there a promise to claim?
    - Is there a prayer to repeat?
    - Is there a command to obey?
    - Is there a condition to meet?
    - Is there a challenge to face?
  - Where should I **go**?
    - All of Scripture is intended to be understood in the context of mission.
  - Who will I **teach**?
    - The best way to learn is to give it away... this is what disciple-making is all about!

Application in action...

- Identify the key elements involved in the timeless truth(s) in Acts 1:8:

---



---



---



---



---

- Identify any situations, i.e., real-world scenarios that contain those key elements:

---

---

---

---

---

- Now write out how the timeless truth(s) in Acts 1:8 affects this particular real-world scenario:

---

---

---

---

---

- Finally, ask the five questions and write out any response you need to take to the Word based on them...

- Who should I be?

---

---

---

---

---

- How should I think?

---

---

---

---

---

- What should I do?

---

---

---

---

---

- Where should I go?

---

---

---

---

---

- Who will I teach?

---

---

---

---

---

*Missing teaching notes?*

*\*\*\**

*This complete teaching guide, including all  
the blanks filled-in, is available for download  
in PDF format at [www.secrechurch.org](http://www.secrechurch.org).*

# How to Study the Bible: Session 2

## JOURNEYING THROUGH DIFFERENT GENRES The Unique Challenges of Various Types of Literature In The Bible

- Difficulties involved in reading certain genres...
- General guidelines for reading certain genres...
- A practical process for reading certain genres...
- Examples of reading certain genres...

## JOURNEYING INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT The Letters

### Difficulties involved in reading the letters...

- What in the world does that mean?

*“Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?”  
(1 Corinthians 15:29, NIV)*

- What in the world are we supposed to do?

*“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.  
Honor one another above yourselves.”  
(Romans 12:10, NIV)*

*“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities,  
for there is no authority except that which God has established.  
The authorities that exist have been established by God.”  
(Romans 13:1, NIV)*

*“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.”  
(Romans 16:16, NIV)*

### General guidelines for reading the letters...

- New Testament letters are occasional documents.
  - ▶ Written to a specific audience.
  - ▶ Written at a specific time.

- ▶ Written to address a specific **situation**.
  - ✦ Behaviors that needed to be corrected.
  - ✦ **Doctrines** that needed to be straightened out.
  - ✦ Misunderstandings that needed to be clarified.
- ▶ We have the answers, but we don't always have the **questions!**
- ▶ We are **careful** not to conclude too much from only one letter.
- ▶ We are **confident** that God has clearly communicated to us what is most important.
- New Testament letters are **NOT** theological treatises.
- Overall, New Testament letters have a common form:
  - ▶ Introduction
    - ✦ Identification of the **author**.
    - ✦ Identification of the audience.
    - ✦ Greeting.
    - ✦ Prayer or Thanksgiving.
  - ▶ Body
  - ▶ Conclusion
    - ✦ Final **greeting**.
    - ✦ Farewell.
    - ✦ Various elements...
      - A number of different elements including:
        - Travel plans (Titus 3:12; Philemon 22).
        - Commendation of workers (Rom. 16:1-2).
        - Prayer (2 Thess. 3:16; Hebrews 13:20-21).
        - Prayer requests (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18-19).
        - Greetings (Rom. 16:3-16, 21-23; Heb. 13:24; 2 John 13).
        - Final instructions and exhortations (Col. 4:16-17; 1 Tim. 6:20-21a).
        - Holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14).
        - Autograph (Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17).
        - Benediction (1 Cor. 16:23-24; Eph. 6:23-24).
        - Doxology (2 Peter 3:18; Jude 24-25).
- ▶ Differences in form are often **clues** to meaning.

### A practical process for reading the letters...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ **Read:** Begin by reading the letter aloud through in one setting.
  - ▶ **Reconstruct:** As you read, reconstruct the original situation behind the letter.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Think **paragraphs!**
  - ▶ For each paragraph and series of paragraphs, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What's the **point?**

- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - ✦ Focus on truths that are **central** to the message of the text and all the Bible.
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
    - ✦ Focus on truths that are **consistently** taught in Scripture.
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
    - ✦ Focus on truths that are inherently **true** in all situations.
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
    - ✦ See the timeless truth in its original situation.
      - Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) in the text.
    - ✦ Identify a contemporary situation that parallels the original situation.
      - Look for key elements (people, places, relationships, ideas, items, etc.) that parallel the original situation.
    - ✦ Relate the timeless truth specifically to that contemporary situation.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading the letters...**

- Hebrews 12:1-3

**STUDYING THE BIBLE**  
**From Their Home To Our Home**

**Observe their home: What do I see?**

*Write down significant notes concerning who, what, where, when, why, and how. What does the Word emphasize, repeat, connect, compare, or contrast, and how does the Word communicate?*

- **Hebrews written to encourage Jewish Christians facing threat of persecution to trust in Jesus.**
- **"Therefore" - connects text with preceding chapter - "Hall of Faith" amidst trials**
- **Followed by instruction to persevere in discipline: obviously talking about endurance in faith.**
- **Imagery - running a race with effort and endurance toward the finish line.**
- **"Let us" - Verb mentioned three times - Throw off, run, fix our eyes...**
- **Throw off two objects: "everything that hinders" and "sin that entangles"**
- **Run with endurance (a prevalent theme in all of Hebrews and this particular context)**
- **Fix our eyes on Jesus - He has run the race ahead of us - He endured and enables me to endure.**
- **He endured for joy - he was motivated by joy!**
- **He scorned the shame of the cross - Even the most brutal shame could not stop him.**
- **"At the right hand of the throne of God" - Romans 8:34 - He is interceding for us there.**
- **Purpose Statement - We look at Jesus so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.**

**Understand their home: What does it mean?**

Taking into account literary, historical-cultural, and theological contexts, identify in one or two sentences the primary meaning of the text for its original readers.

**The author of Hebrews encouraged these Jewish Christians to endure in their faith despite opposition.**

**He reminds them that the only way they can endure is by focusing on Jesus Himself.**

**Bring it back home: How does it relate?**

Identify the timeless truth(s) in this passage that relates to both the original readers and us. (If studying an Old Testament passage, filter theological principles through the New Testament.)

**The Christian life is like a race that requires effort and endurance.**

---

**The saints who have gone before us provide valuable examples of endurance that encourage and inspire us.**

---

**To run the race successfully, Christians need to reject things that hinder their progress and focus completely on their relationship with Jesus.**

---

**Apply it in your home: What do I do?**

Identify parallel situations between the biblical context and ours. Make specific application of the timeless truth to our life today by asking five questions:

Who should I be?

**I want to be completely focused on Jesus in every facet of my life, especially in the trial I am going through right now.**

---

How should I think?

**I need to think about the trials I am facing right now in light of Jesus' endurance. I need His perspective on my troubles.**

---

What should I do?

**I will go back and read about others in the Bible who have faced difficult challenges and see how God provided in their lives. I will also repent of selfishness that is entangling me and keeping me from Christ.**

---

Where should I go?

**Even though I do not understand why I am going through this trial and I am struggling in my faith, I will continue to gather together with the church for worship (Hebrews 10:24-25).**

---

Who will I teach?

**I will look for opportunities to intentionally show the supremacy of Christ in suffering to my co-workers who do not know Christ. I will also be honest with my small group about the trial I am going through so that the strength God gives me might encourage them to endure.**

---

*The preceding pages are an example of a STUDYING THE BIBLE workbook page, which can be used for exercises throughout Session 2 of this study. Each time you see “An example of...” at the conclusion of each of the following teaching segments, it’s an opportunity to use this format to guide your study of the suggested passage of Scripture.*

*Blank copies of these workbook pages are available tonight at the resource table in the lobby, or you can download a printable blank from the Secret Church website, [www.secretchurch.org](http://www.secretchurch.org), to use in your own personal Bible study.*

## JOURNEYING INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT

### The Gospels

#### Difficulties in reading the Gospels...

##### ■ Unexplained differences:

*“But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ‘Yes, it is as you say,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”*

*(Matthew 26:63-64, NIV)*

*“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”*

*(Mark 14:61-62, NIV)*

*“‘If you are the Christ,’ they said, ‘tell us.’ Jesus answered, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.’ They all asked, ‘Are you then the Son of God?’*

*He replied, ‘You are right in saying I am.’”*

*(Luke 22:67-70, NIV)*

##### ■ Apparent discrepancies:

*“The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again.’ And his disciples heard him say it.... In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!’ ‘Have faith in God,’ Jesus answered. ‘I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.’”*

*(Mark 11:12-14, 20-25, NIV)*

*“Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’ Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. ‘How did the fig tree wither so quickly?’ they asked. Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*

*(Matthew 21:18-22, NIV)*

General guidelines for reading the Gospels...

- The Gospels are written about the **same** person.
  - ▶ Two components at work in the Gospels:
    - ✦ The **teachings** of Jesus.
    - ✦ The stories about Jesus.
- The Gospels are written by **different** authors.
  - ▶ Two **settings** at work in the Gospels:
    - ✦ The historical setting of Jesus.
    - ✦ The historical setting of the authors.
- The Gospels are written for different audiences.
  - ▶ Three principles at work in the Gospels:
    - ✦ Selectivity.
    - ✦ **Arrangement**.
    - ✦ Adaptation.

A practical process for reading the Gospels...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Think in terms of stories and discourses.
    - ✦ Individual stories and discourses: Look for answers to the standard questions...
    - ✦ Collective stories and discourses: Look for **connections**...
  - ▶ Look for special literary forms in the Gospels.
    - ✦ Exaggeration.

*“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

*(Matthew 5:29-30, NIV)*

*“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”*

*(Luke 14:26, NIV)*

*“The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”*

*(Mark 10:24-25, NIV)*

✦ Irony.

*“And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool!*

*This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”*

*(Luke 12:16-21, NIV)*

✦ **Rhetorical Questions**

- Questions designed to make a point rather than to retrieve an answer.

*“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?  
Are not even the tax collectors doing that?”*

*(Matthew 5:46, NIV)*

*“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”*

*(Matthew 6:27, NIV)*

*“He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”*

*(Mark 4:40, NIV)*

*“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.”*

*(Luke 12:51, NIV)*

✦ Parallelism.

- When certain lines are structured to be read together.
- Synonymous.  
The lines say basically the same thing in a similar way.

*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;  
knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

*(Matthew 7:7, NIV)*

*“For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is  
concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.”*

*(Mark 4:22, NIV)*

✦ Contrastive.

- The second line contrasts with the first line.

*“Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have,  
even what he has will be taken from him.”  
(Mark 4:25, NIV)*

*“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man  
brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”  
(Matthew 12:35, NIV)*

- Developmental.
  - The second line repeats part of the first line, then advances the thought of the first line to a **climax**.

*“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.”  
(Matthew 10:40, NIV)*

*“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”  
(John 6:37, NIV)*

- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Two challenges for interpretation:
    - Think vertically.
      - How the Gospels represent Jesus.
    - Think **horizontally**.
      - How the Gospels relate to one another.
  - ▶ For each story/discourse and series of stories/discourses, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What’s the point?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - See how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament **law** (Matthew 5-7; 22:37-40; Luke 24:13-35).
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
    - See how Jesus teaches and demonstrates the **Kingdom** of God (see Old Testament and New Testament Secret Church notes on the Kingdom).
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
    - See the larger **context** of the individual stories in order to identify the timeless truths.
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - Who should I be?
    - How should I think?
    - What should I do?
    - Where should I go?
    - Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading the Gospels...**

- Mark 4:35-41

## JOURNEYING INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT

### The Parables

#### Difficulties in reading parables...

- The distance between the original audience and us.
- The **depth** of meaning intended by Jesus in the parable.

#### General guidelines for reading parables...

- The main point of the parable is **crucial**.
- The main purpose of the parable is to lead hearers to **respond** in a certain way.

#### A practical process for reading parables...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Read the parable over and over again from the hearers' perspective.
  - ▶ Identify the key points of reference that are **familiar** to Jesus and his hearers.
  - ▶ Determine how the original hearers would have responded to the parable.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ At most, look for one main point for each main **character** or group of characters in the story.
  - ▶ In one or two sentences, write down the main point(s) intended by Jesus when he shared this parable with his original hearers.
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - ✦ In our efforts to tie the parable into overall truths in Scripture, avoid looking too **deeply** into the parable.
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

#### An example of reading parables...

- Luke 10:25-37

## JOURNEYING INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT

### Acts

#### Difficulties in reading Acts...

- Is it precedent or **principle**?

*“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*  
(Acts 2:4, NIV)

*“When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”*  
(Acts 8:15-17, NIV)

*“Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.”*  
(Acts 20:9-12, NIV)

- Consider a **both-and** approach...

#### General guidelines for reading Acts...

- The book of Acts is a sequel.
- The book of Acts is a story with a **specific** purpose.
- The book of Acts is organized both thematically and geographically.
  - ▶ Central themes:
    - ✦ The Gospel
    - ✦ The Holy Spirit
    - ✦ The **Church**
    - ✦ The World
  - ▶ Central geographic structure:
    - ✦ The Witness of the Church in Jerusalem (1-7)
    - ✦ The Witness of the Church in Judea and Samaria (8-9)
    - ✦ The Witness of the Church to the Ends of the Earth (10-28)
- The book of Acts is a **model** for how God intends the church to take the Gospel to the world under the power of the Holy Spirit.

## A practical process for reading Acts...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Ask questions about characters (both negative and positive examples).
  - ▶ Ask questions about **speeches**.
  - ▶ Ask questions about commentary from Luke.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Look for what Luke **intended** in each episode of the book of Acts.
  - ▶ Look for repeated **patterns** and themes throughout Acts.
    - ✦ The filling of the Spirit and proclamation of the Word (1:8; 2:4; 2:17-18; 4:31; 8:15-17; 9:17-20; 10:44-46; 19:6).
  - ▶ The spread of the Gospel throughout the world (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).
  - ▶ Then look at every episode and summarize by asking, "What is the main point?"
  - ▶ Write down the point of the episode in one or two sentences, making sure that your interpretation falls in line with the larger narrative of the book of Acts.
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
    - ✦ Filter all implications from the book of Acts through the lens of Luke's **intent**.
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

## An example of reading Acts...

- Acts 6-7

## JOURNEYING INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Narratives

#### Difficulties in reading Old Testament narratives...

- A variety of stories.
  - ▶ Over 40 percent of the OT is narrative.
  - ▶ Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jonah, and Haggai.
- A variety of **characters**.
- A variety of challenges.

#### General guidelines for reading Old Testament narratives...

- On a whole, Old Testament narratives ARE NOT...
  - ▶ Allegories filled with **hidden** meanings.
  - ▶ Intended to teach **moral** lessons.
  - ▶ Intended to teach **doctrine**.
  - ▶ **Man**-Centered.
- On a whole, Old Testament narratives ARE...
  - ▶ Stories with a specific purpose.
  - ▶ Accounts of what happened, not what **should** have happened or ought to happen every time.
  - ▶ **Selective** and incomplete.

#### A practical process for reading Old Testament narratives...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Read the passage carefully.
  - ▶ Look for five basic parts:
    - ✦ **Plot**
      - The development, the conflict, and the resolution.
    - ✦ Scene
      - Focus on time and place.
    - ✦ Characters
      - The characters in Old Testament narrative are **central**.
      - Look for comparison and **contrast**.
    - ✦ Dialogue
      - Dialogue contributes greatly to character development.
    - ✦ Narrator
      - Look for the implicit meaning he conveys.
      - Look for **irony**.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Interpret each Old Testament narrative on three levels:
    - ✦ Level One – **Individual** History
    - ✦ Level Two – National History
    - ✦ Level Three – **Redemptive** History

- ▶ Pay close attention to **literary** context.
  - ✦ At a minimum, read three chapters:
    - The entire chapter.
    - The preceding chapter.
    - The following chapter.
- ▶ Avoid these common errors in interpretation:
  - ✦ Allegorizing.
    - Trying to find the hidden meaning beyond the text.
  - ✦ Decontextualizing.
    - Ignoring the full historical and literary contexts.
  - ✦ Selectivity.
    - Picking and **choosing** the parts of the story you like!
  - ✦ Moralizing.
    - Asking, “What is the **moral** of this story?” at the end of every individual narrative.
  - ✦ Personalizing.
    - Thinking that these narratives are all about **you**.
  - ✦ False appropriation.
    - Misapplying the narrative in contemporary culture.
  - ✦ False combination.
    - Combining elements in the narrative that are not directly connected by the narrator.
  - ✦ Redefinition.
    - Redefining the story to accommodate what you **wish** it had said.
  - ✦ Imitation
    - Looking to narratives for permission and/or obligation to act in a certain way.
- ▶ For each story and series of stories, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What does this story mean?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - ✦ Identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context.
    - ✦ **Filter** that theological principle through the New Testament.
    - ✦ Ask two primary questions:
      - Does the New Testament **add** to that principle?
      - Does the New Testament **modify** that principle?
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.

- ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
  - ✦ Who should I be?
  - ✦ How should I think?
  - ✦ What should I do?
  - ✦ Where should I go?
  - ✦ Who will I teach?

**An example of reading Old Testament narrative...**

- Joshua 2

## JOURNEYING INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Law

#### Difficulties in reading Old Testament law...

- We wonder about some laws:

*“Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.  
Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”  
(Exodus 34:26, NIV)*

*“Keep my decrees. ‘Do not mate different kinds of animals.’ ‘Do not plant your field with  
two kinds of seed.’ ‘Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.’”  
(Leviticus 19:19, NIV)*

*“When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean.”  
(Leviticus 13:40, NIV)*

*“A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing,  
for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this.”  
(Deuteronomy 22:5, NIV)*

- We violate some laws:

*“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.”  
(Leviticus 19:32, NIV)*

*“Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.”  
(Leviticus 19:28, NIV)*

*“The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud.  
You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.”  
(Deuteronomy 14:8, NIV)*

- We obey some laws:

*“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people,  
but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”  
(Leviticus 19:18, NIV)*

*“You shall not murder.”  
(Exodus 20:13, NIV)*

*“You shall not commit adultery.”  
(Deuteronomy 5:18, NIV)*

- How do we know when to wonder, when to violate, and when to obey?

### General guidelines for reading Old Testament law...

- The Old Testament “law” in the Bible...
  - ▶ Over **600** specific commandments (Exodus 18:20).
  - ▶ All of these commandments put together (Matthew 5:18).
  - ▶ The first **five** books of the Old Testament – the Pentateuch (Joshua 1:8).
  - ▶ The entire Old Testament religious system.
  - ▶ The rabbis’ interpretation of the Old Testament law (Acts 10:28).
- The Old Testament law is a **gift** from God to His people.
- The Old Testament law is a **covenant**.
- The Old Testament law is **not** our Testament law.
  - ▶ The general rule:
    - + Unless an OT law is somehow restated or reinforced in the NT, it is no longer directly **binding** on God’s people.
  - ▶ Laws that ARE NOT reinforced:
    - + The Israelite civil laws.
    - + The Israelite **ritual** laws.
  - ▶ Laws that ARE reinforced:
    - + Laws renewed or restated in the context of the new covenant.

*“All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”  
(Matthew 22:40, NIV)*

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all  
your soul and with all your strength.”  
(Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV)*

*““Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against  
one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”  
(Leviticus 19:18, NIV)*

- All of the OT law is still the Word of God **for** us even though it is not still the command of God **to** us.

*“When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not  
bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof.”  
(Deuteronomy 22:8, NIV)*

*“If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today. But if your servant says to you, ‘I do not want to leave you,’ because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life.*

*Do the same for your maidservant.”*

*(Deuteronomy 15:12-17, NIV)*

### **A practical process for reading Old Testament law...**

#### ■ Observe their home: What do I see?

- ▶ Look at the laws **collectively**.
- ▶ Look at the laws carefully according to two basic forms:
  - ✦ General **guidelines** - the apodictic law.
  - ✦ Specific **cases** - The casuistic law.
    - **Food** laws.

*“And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you.”*

*(Leviticus 11:7, NIV)*

- Laws about the shedding of blood.

*“Bring the bull to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter it in the Lord’s presence at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Take some of the bull’s blood and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar.”*

*(Exodus 29:10-12, NIV)*

- Unusual prohibitions.

*“Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to an alien living in any of your towns, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. But you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”*

*(Deuteronomy 14:21, NIV)*

- Laws giving blessing to those who keep them.

*“At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”*

*(Deuteronomy 14:28-29, NIV)*

- ▶ Look at the laws in their **context**.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Understand the law as God's inspired Word for you, not God's direct command to you.
  - ▶ Understand the **character** of God in the law, including His justice, holiness, mercy, and love.
  - ▶ Understand the law as a gift, not as a limitation.
  - ▶ Understand the law as a basis for the old covenant and not binding in the new covenant.
  - ▶ Understand the **essence** of the law that is repeated in the New Testament.
  - ▶ For each law and series of laws, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What do these laws mean?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - Identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context.
    - Filter that theological principle through the New Testament.
    - Ask two primary questions:
      - Does the New Testament add to that principle?
      - Does the New Testament modify that principle?
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
    - Remember that the **value** of the OT law is eternal.
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths), using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - Who should I be?
    - How should I think?
    - What should I do?
    - Where should I go?
    - Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading Old Testament law...**

- Leviticus 5:2-6

# JOURNEYING INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Poetry

### Difficulties in reading Old Testament poetry...

- Old Testament poetry is **bi-directional**.
  - ▶ Some poetry includes God's word to us.
  - ▶ Some poetry includes our words to God.
- Old Testament poetry is blatantly **honest**.

*"Why, O Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?"  
(Psalm 88:14, NIV)*

### General guidelines for reading Old Testament poetry...

- Old Testament poetry is **emotional**.
- Old Testament poetry is metaphorical.
- Old Testament poetry is **variable**.
  - ▶ Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Lamentations, and the prophetic books.
  - ▶ Even the Psalms alone...
    - ✦ Laments.
      - Individual (3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 88, 120, 139, 142).
      - Corporate (12, 44, 80, 94, 137).
      - Thanksgiving psalms (18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 65-67, 75, 92, 107, 116, 118, 124, 136, 138).
      - Hymns of praise (8, 19, 33, 103-104, 111, 113-114, 117, 145-150).
      - Salvation-History Psalms (78, 105-106, 135-136).
      - Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation (2, 18, 20-21, 24, 29, 45-48, 50, 72, 76, 81, 84, 87, 89, 93, 95-99, 101, 110, 132, 144).
      - Wisdom Psalms (36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133).
      - Songs of Trust (11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131).

### A practical process for reading Old Testament poetry...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Notice the **brevity** of Old Testament poetry.

*"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths;" (Psalm 25:4, NIV)*

- ▶ Notice the **structure** of Old Testament poetry.
  - ✦ Parallelism.
    - One thought expressed by two-four lines of text.
    - Synonymous.  
Close similarity between lines.

*"The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes."  
(Psalm 19:8, NIV)*

- **Developmental.**  
Second line develops first line.

*“He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;”*  
(Psalm 121:3, NIV)

*“Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.”*  
(Psalm 31:21, NIV)

- **Illustrative.**  
The first line conveys the idea and the second line illustrates it.

*“O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle—”*  
(Psalm 140:7, NIV)

- **Contrastive.**  
Employs the use of contrast.

*“For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”*  
(Psalm 1:6, NIV)

*“Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.”*  
(Proverbs 10:12, NIV)

- **Acrostics.**
  - Each successive line of poetry starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
  - Psalms 25, 34, 11, 112, and 145.
  - Proverbs 31:10-31.

אֶשׁ תִּחַדּוּ לְמַיִם מֵצָרָה וְתִקַּמְפוּ בַּיּוֹמִים מִכָּרָה׃  
בְּטַח בַּיהוָה לֵב בְּעֵלְהוּ אֵשׁ לִלְאֵי יָתוּסָה׃  
גַּיְמָלְתָּ הוּא פָּרֹב וְלֹא יִרְעָה כִּלְאֵי מִי תִּחַדּוּ יָהּ׃  
דְּרֹשׁ הַצֶּמֶר וּפִשׁוּ תַיִם וְתִשְׁעֵבֵב תִּפְפֹּץ כֹּפֵי יָדַי׃  
הָיִתְהָ כִּי אֶגְלוֹת סוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי תִקַּח תִּבְיָא לְחַמְמָה׃  
וּתְקַסּוּבֵי עֹד לִלְלוֹת תִּתְנוּ טַרְף לְבִיתְהוּ וְחָק לְגַעְרֹת יָהּ׃  
זַמְּפָה שֶׁ דָּהוּת יִקַּח תַּהוּ מִפִּי יִרְכָּפֵי יָהּ גִּטְעֵב כִּי רָם׃  
חֲגֹרֶה בְּעֹז מַחְבִּייהוּ אֲתִמְצֵן דְּרֵעוֹת יָהּ׃  
טַעַמְהָ כִּי יִפְרֹב סוֹתֵרְהָ לֵאמֹר כִּבְבֵלְהוּ לְגִרְהוּ׃  
יָדַיָה שֶׁ לֹא יִתְבַכּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּפְיָהּ תַמְמֵבוּ פִלְדָּה׃  
כִּי פִי־הָ פִירֵשׁ הָלַעַבְיָדַיָה שֶׁ לֹא יִתְהַלַּא בְּיָרֵךְ׃  
לֹא יִתְיָא לְבִיתְהָ מִשֶׁן לֵגְכִי כִלְבִי יִתְהַלַּבֵּשׁ בַּיּוֹם׃  
מִרְבֵּד יָם עֵשׂוּ תִהְלֶה־שֶׁ שׂוֹאֵר גִּמְלוֹ בּוֹשׁ׃  
נִדְעָבֵשׁ יִעָרְסוּ בְעֵלְהוּ בִישׁוּ בְתֵרוֹ עִסְדָּק גִּיּא רָחֵן׃  
סִתְרוּ עֵשׂוּ תִהְיוּ יִמְכְרוּ וְתִגְרוּ גִתְהָ לְכִי גַעְבֵי׃  
עֲזוּהָ דָרְלוּ בּוֹשׁ־הָ אֲתִישׁ חָק לְיָם אֲתִרְוּ׃  
פִי יָהּ פִּי־תִתְבַהֵב כִּמְהוּת וְרִתְהוּ סֵד עֲלִיל שׂוֹגֵה׃  
צֹרְפֵי־הָ הִלְיָכּוֹת בְּיָתְהוּ וְלִתְמַעַצְלוֹת לֹא תִאֲכַל׃  
קָמַבְגִּייהוּ וְרִאשׁוֹתֵיהוּ בַעֲלֵהוּ וְיָהּ לֵלְהוּ׃  
רַבְרוּחַ בְּנוֹת עֵשׂוּ תִילְאוּ אֲתִי עֲלִית עֲלִי לְגֵה׃  
שֶׁקָּרְהוּ חֲנוּ וְהִלְיָפִיא שֶׁ יִרְאֵהוּ הוֹהֵה תִיא תִתְהַלֵּל׃  
תִּנְוִי־לֵה מִפִּי רִי יִדְעִיהוּ וְיִתְלֹהֵי בִשׁוֹ עֲרִים מֵעֵשׂוּ יָהּ׃

- ▶ Notice the figurative **imagery** in Old Testament poetry.
  - Simile.

*“Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.”*  
(Proverbs 11:22, NIV)

*“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*  
(Isaiah 1:18, NIV)

- Metaphor

*“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”*  
(Psalm 23:1, NIV)

*“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.”*  
(Psalm 68:5, NIV)

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”*  
(Proverbs 17:22, NIV)

- Indirect **analogy**.
  - Assumes that the reader can make the comparison without explicit instruction as to what it means.

*“Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.”*  
(Psalm 22:13, NIV)

*“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.”*  
(Psalm 18:16, NIV)

*“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”*  
(Psalm 91:4, NIV)

- Exaggeration.

*“My tears have been my food day and night,  
while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”*  
(Psalm 42:3, NIV)

*“I beat them as fine as dust borne on the wind; I poured them out like mud in the streets.”*  
(Psalm 18:42, NIV)

*“For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.  
They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.”*  
(Psalm 40:12, NIV)

- Personification and Anthropomorphism.
  - Attribute to one entity the characteristics of another type of entity.

*“Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.”*  
(Psalm 24:7, NIV)

*“Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath.  
Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord  
has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.”*  
(Isaiah 44:23, NIV)

*“Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,”*  
(Psalm 19:4, NIV)

- Cause and Effect.

*“Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.”*  
(Psalm 51:8, NIV)

*“A foolish son is his father’s ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.”*  
(Proverbs 19:13, NIV)

- Representation (part for the whole).

*“He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”*  
(Psalm 40:2, NIV)

- Apostrophe
  - Writers address a person like he or she is present when they are not.

*“Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.”*  
(Psalm 2:10, NIV)

*“Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping.”*  
(Psalm 6:8, NIV)

*“Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back,”*  
(Psalm 114:5, NIV)

- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Don't interpret Old Testament poetry like you would interpret a New Testament letter.
    - ✦ Letters appeal to logic; poetry appeals to emotion.
    - ✦ Rational arguments are central in letters; **images** are central in poetry.
    - ✦ Syntax and grammar are critical in letters; figures of speech are critical in poetry.
  - ▶ For each segment of poetry, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What does this segment mean?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - ✦ Identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context.
    - ✦ Filter that theological principle through the New Testament.
    - ✦ Ask two primary questions:
      - Does the New Testament add to that principle?
      - Does the New Testament modify that principle?
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading Old Testament poetry...**

- Psalm 116:1-4

## JOURNEYING INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Prophecy

Difficulties in reading Old Testament prophecy...

- What do we do with gruesome texts?

*“This is what the Lord says: ‘As a shepherd saves from the lion’s mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved, those who sit in Samaria on the edge of their beds and in Damascus on their couches.’”*

*(Amos 3:12, NIV)*

- What do we do with insulting texts?

*“How can you say, ‘I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals’? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving—in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her.”*

*(Jeremiah 2:23-24, NIV)*

- What do we do with texts of judgment?

*“Then the Lord said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the Lord says: “Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.””*

*(Jeremiah 15:1-2, NIV)*

- We don’t have a comparative genre in much contemporary literature.
- We don’t **hear** much about the prophets themselves.

### General guidelines for reading Old Testament prophecy...

- Old Testament prophets were enforcing and mediating the old covenant.
  - ▶ The prophets’ message is **unoriginal**.
  - ▶ The prophets’ message is confrontational.
  - ▶ The prophets’ message is **completed** (about 99%).
- The Old Testament prophets were God’s direct representatives.

### A practical process for reading Old Testament prophecy...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Look at oracles individually.
  - ▶ Look at oracles **historically**.
    - + 760-400 B.C.

- ✦ Those years were characterized by three characteristics:
  - Political, military, economic, and social upheaval.
  - Religious unfaithfulness and **reckless** disobedience to the covenant.
  - Shifts in populations and national boundaries.
- ▶ Look for certain figures of speech.
- ▶ Look for certain forms.
  - ✦ The **Lawsuit**.
    - The full lawsuit contains a summons, a charge, evidence, and a verdict.
    - Isaiah 3...
      - Full lawsuit (13-14a).
      - Indictment (14b-16).
      - Judgment sentence (17-26).
- ▶ The Woe.
  - ✦ Contains three elements:
    - An announcement of distress (the “woe”).
    - The reason for the distress.
    - A prediction of **doom**.

*“Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, ‘Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?’*

*Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man’s blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.”*

*(Habakkuk 2:6-8, NIV)*

- ▶ The Promise.
  - ✦ A salvation oracle.
    - Reference to the future.
    - Mention of radical change.
    - Promise of  **blessing**.

*“In that day I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the Lord, who will do these things. “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God.”*

*(Amos 9:11-15, NIV)*

- ▶ The Enactment Prophecy.
- ✦ God accompanies His Word with symbolic actions.

*“Then the Lord said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt’s shame.”*

*(Isaiah 20:3-4, NIV)*

- ▶ The Messenger Speech
  - ✦ “Thus says the Lord...”
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Think **oracles!**
  - ▶ Three basic points in prophetic oracles:
    - ✦ You have broken the covenant; **repent!**
      - Idolatry.

*“Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.”*

*(Jeremiah 10:5, NIV)*

- Social **Justice**.

*“Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

*(Micah 6:7-8, NIV)*

- Religious Ritualism.

*“The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings!*

*Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—*

*I cannot bear your evil assemblies.”*

*(Isaiah 1:11-13, NIV)*

- ✦ If you don’t repent, you will experience **judgment**.
- ✦ Yet you have hope beyond judgment for future **restoration**.
- ▶ For each oracle, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What’s the meaning of this oracle?

- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - + Identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context.
    - + Filter that theological principle through the New Testament.
    - + Ask two primary questions:
      - Does the New Testament add to that principle?
      - Does the New Testament modify that principle?
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - + Who should I be?
    - + How should I think?
    - + What should I do?
    - + Where should I go?
    - + Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading Old Testament prophecy...**

- Jeremiah 7

## JOURNEYING INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Wisdom Literature

#### Difficulties in reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

- Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.
- Difficult to follow the line of thinking.
- Difficult to **understand** literary styles.
- Difficult to determine meaning.

*“How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing.  
Each has its twin; not one of them is alone.”  
(Song of Solomon 4:1-2, NIV)*

#### General guidelines for reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

- The goal of wisdom literature is to **apply** the Word to practical living.
- The wisdom books are **not** a collection of universal promises.
- They are insights and guidelines for development of godly character.

*“He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.”  
(Proverbs 22:11, NIV)*

*“Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.”  
(Proverbs 22:26-27, NIV)*

*“If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.”  
(Proverbs 29:12, NIV)*

#### A practical process for reading Old Testament wisdom literature...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Look for figures of speech.
  - ▶ Look closely for the historical-cultural **background**.

*“Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.”  
(Proverbs 25:24, NIV)*

- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Interpret wisdom literature in light of its specific **book** context.
  - ▶ Interpret wisdom literature in light of its overall **biblical** context.
    - ✦ The Basic Approach to Life – Rational and Ordered (Proverbs).
    - ✦ Exception 1: The **Suffering** of the Righteous (Job).

- ✦ Exception 2: The Failure of the Rational, Ordered Approach to Provide Ultimate Meaning (Ecclesiastes).
- ✦ Exception 3: The Irrationality of **Romantic** Love Between a Husband and Wife (Song of Solomon).
- ▶ For each segment of wisdom literature, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What does this segment mean?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
    - ✦ Identify a theological principle in its Old Testament context.
    - ✦ Filter that theological principle through the new covenant.
    - ✦ Ask two primary questions:
      - Does the New Testament add to that principle?
      - Does the New Testament modify that principle?
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

### **An example of reading Old Testament wisdom literature...**

- Job 19

## JOURNEYING INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT

### Revelation

#### Difficulties in reading Revelation...

- So many details.
- So many images.
- So many numbers.
- So many different views!

#### General guidelines for reading Revelation...

- Look at Revelation with humility.
- Look for Revelation's message to the original readers.
- Avoid trying to construct a strict chronological map of future events.
- Take Revelation seriously, but not always literally.

#### A practical process for reading Revelation...

- Observe their home: What do I see?
  - ▶ Look closely at the images that John specifically identifies.
  - ▶ Look at various segments as a whole, not always pressing every detail.
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
  - ▶ Stay focused on the main idea.
  - ▶ For each segment, write down in one or two sentences the answer to the overall question: What's the point?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate?
  - ▶ Look for the biblical and compatible...
  - ▶ Look for the eternal and cross-cultural...
  - ▶ Look for the applicable...
  - ▶ Write out the timeless truth (or truths) using present-tense verbs.
- Apply it in your home: What do I do?
  - ▶ Meditate on the timeless truth.
  - ▶ Relate the timeless truth to today.
  - ▶ Practice the timeless truth.
    - ✦ Who should I be?
    - ✦ How should I think?
    - ✦ What should I do?
    - ✦ Where should I go?
    - ✦ Who will I teach?

#### An example of reading Revelation...

- Revelation 12:1-17

# Now What?

You made it! You officially finished Secret Church. You're exhausted—mentally, spiritually, physically—so the first recommendation is to get some sleep! But after you do, what comes next? We know that these intensive Bible studies are not intended to be confined to one particular night. They are intended to affect our lives and affect others lives through us. But where do you begin?

Listed below are 7 simple steps to start putting the truths we saw at Secret Church into action, particularly as they pertain to how to study the Bible. We have seen the absolute necessity of studying God's Word, and we've seen our God-given, Christ-centered, Spirit-led ability to study it for ourselves. Let's put this thing into action and pray that God will draw us into deeper intimacy with Him and greater impact for Him as we unlock the beauty and power of His Word...

## **STEP 1: DETERMINE YOUR OBJECTIVES**

In light of the fact that spiritual growth doesn't happen overnight, it's time to ignite the sometimes slow but always fulfilling process of spiritual transformation. In order to begin, it would be helpful to identify some objectives for moving forward in that process. Take a notebook or journal and write out some answers to the questions below:

- Where do you want to be spiritually six months from now? A year from now? Five years from now?
- What role do you believe Bible study plays in your spiritual objectives?
- Are you convinced that you need to study the Bible on a regular basis?
- What facets of your schedule or priorities in your life are you willing to rearrange in order to accomplish your objectives in study of the Word?
- Are you willing to pay the price?

## **STEP 2: PRAY FOR GOD'S GRACE**

We can almost look at this step as a given, but we need not fly by it. If we are studying the Bible simply to fulfill a religious duty, then we're doomed from the start. Bible study is only intended to be a means by which and through which we experience the grace of God. His grace is what transforms us through the Word. So pray that God would give you grace...

- Pray for grace to desire and long for His Word.
- Pray for grace to know how to best balance your schedule to study His Word.
- Pray for grace to grow in the knowledge of His Word.
- Pray for grace to love Him more as a result of your time in His Word.

### STEP 3: DEVELOP A PLAN

Now it's time to dive in – in the power of His grace, of course! As we've seen, study of the Word doesn't happen automatically every day. It takes time and work. It takes intentionality. So it's necessary for us to develop an intentional plan for what Bible study is going to look like in our lives. Just as we plan to eat a few meals a day, just as we plan to go to work or take care of our children, we plan to get to know God through His Word. Use the following guidelines to form your plan for intentional study of the Word...

- Set a time and place. Consistency is a plus here. Where is the most effective place and when is the most effective time for you to study the Word?
- Set a starting point. If you're new to intensive study of the Word, don't let your ambition send you into the deep end just yet. It's not necessary to start in Jeremiah or Leviticus. Why not start in a simple New Testament letter like Philippians or James? They are shorter, they can be read altogether in one sitting, and then they are easily divided into paragraphs for study. Or you may try one of the Gospels – maybe Matthew or John – in order to dive into the life of Christ. Whatever you decide, keep it simple at the start.
- Set a pattern. So what are you going to do when you sit down to study the Word? Remember that Bible study always involves having a notebook and a pen/pencil nearby. You might be tempted to think, "But I don't have anything to write!" On the contrary, that's the beauty of how this thing works. The Holy Spirit is about to give you something to write! As you read the Word and He opens your eyes to understand it through study, He is going to reveal Himself to you in ways you have never experienced before. So get your notebook and pen/pencil ready. Once you've decided what you are going to read, use the guidelines from Secret Church for that particular genre and begin to walk through the process. If you would like, take the "Studying the Bible" worksheet and use it each day or each week to help guide your study. Whether or not you use that sheet or something else altogether, simply set a routine for what you do when you sit down to read and study. And make sure that routine involves you reflecting on the text, praying in light of the text, and writing what you learn from the text!

#### **STEP 4: STUDY THE WORD**

Now you're ready. You've got a time and a place. You've got a point to start from and a pattern to go through. It's time for implementation. Listed below are some of the reminders from the beginning of Secret Church about how to study the Bible. And as you face various challenges in your study of the Word, go back to your Secret Church notes and see if you can find help there...

- Study the Bible Prayerfully.
  - ▶ We NEVER study the Bible alone.
- Study the Bible Humbly.
  - ▶ Do you really want to know Him?
- Study the Bible Carefully.
  - ▶ We want to understand the text rightly.
- Joyfully.
  - ▶ Bible study involves the thrill of personal discovery.
- Study the Bible Simply.
  - ▶ You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit...
- Study the Bible Confidently.
  - ▶ The Holy Spirit is in you to enable you to do this!
- Study the Bible Consistently.
  - ▶ We need to be equipped to study every text of every book.
- Study the Bible Diligently.
  - ▶ Learning to study the Bible will not happen overnight.
- Study the Bible Intentionally.
  - ▶ Always study with a notebook and pen/pencil in hand.
- Study the Bible Personally.
  - ▶ You will fall in love with the Author of the Book.
  - ▶ You will find true life under the authority of the Book.

#### **STEP 5: FIND A SMALL GROUP**

As you begin studying the Bible properly, you find yourself constantly asking, "How can I apply this text by teaching it to others? How can I use my time in the Word to make disciples of all nations?" This is the purpose of the Word—it sends us out to be involved in others' lives! So studying the Bible in isolation completely misses the point of God's design for His Word. He wants to enable you to share what He teaches you with others. If we only soak it in and we never pour it out, we are taking a self-centered approach to God's Word, always receiving but never reproducing.

Think about it this way. What if God is revealing things to you in His Word on someone else's behalf? What if there is a person in your community who needs to hear God's Word in a specific area of their life, and God has chosen to put that Word in your heart for them? You ask, "Well, why doesn't God just tell them instead?" And the answer is, "Because He loves you enough to involve you in His work!" God desires to use you to multiply His Word—that's why He's given it to us (Deut. 4:5-6). So if you are not in a small group where you can study the Word as the church, get involved in what God is doing in other peoples' lives, and let Him use that to encourage you in your spiritual transformation along the way!

## STEP 6: DIVE IN DEEP

As we talked about at Secret Church, this is not a necessary step. You can study the Bible with simply you, the Holy Spirit, and the Word. However, there are great resources available to students of the Bible, and just a few simple resources can go a long way in increasing your understanding of the Word. Listed below are a few different categories of resources, many of which were used in preparation for Secret Church. As you study the Word, you will want to go deeper and deeper, and having resources like these will be extremely helpful...

### ■ How To Study The Bible

- ▶ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Zondervan)
- ▶ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Zondervan)
- ▶ Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Moody)
- ▶ Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible* (Harvest House)

### ■ Bible Handbook

- ▶ David Dockery, *The Holman Bible Handbook* (Holman)

### ■ Bible Dictionary

- ▶ I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer, and D.J. Wiseman, *New Bible Dictionary* (InterVarsity Press).
- ▶ Brian S. Rosner, T. Desmond Alexander, Carson Goldsworthy, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (InterVarsity Press).

### ■ Old Testament Introduction

- ▶ Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Zondervan).

### ■ New Testament Introduction

- ▶ D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan).

### ■ Word Studies

- ▶ Edward Goodrick and John Kohlenberger III, eds., *Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Zondervan).
- ▶ W.E. Vine, M.F. Unger, and W. White, Jr., eds., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Thomas A. Nelson).

### ■ Bible Atlas

- ▶ Thomas Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* (Holman).

## ■ Bible Commentary Series

- ▶ *Logos Bible Software* (see [www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com))
- ▶ *Expositors Bible Commentary* (Zondervan), Available on CD-ROM.
- ▶ G.J. Wenham, J.A. Motyer, D.A. Carson, and R.T. France, *New Bible Commentary* (InterVarsity Press), Available on CD-ROM
- ▶ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Chariot Victor Publishing), Available on CD-ROM.

## ■ Internet Helps

- ▶ [www.biblicaltraining.org](http://www.biblicaltraining.org)
- ▶ [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)
- ▶ [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)

## STEP 7: KEEP IT UP

Well, you've made it this far, but the beauty of it is—the journey is just beginning. Can you imagine a lifetime of walking with the God of the universe through His Word? This journey is well worth it. One of my favorite characters in the Old Testament is Enoch. There's not a lot said about him in Genesis 5, but what is said about him sure does stick out. Very simply, the Bible says, "Enoch walked with God." That's it. That was the life of Enoch. He walked with God. But when you think about it—what life can even begin to compare with that? Oh, that God would give us a grace to know the simple, thrilling, all-consuming, eternal joy of walking with Him.

As you study the Word, dive deep into the treasures He has stored for you. Resist the temptation to waver as life gets busy and demands get heavy. Bible study is intended to bring great freedom, great peace, and great joy as we experience the incredible privilege of walking with God on a day-by-day basis, listening to His voice, feeling His heart for the world, and experiencing His will in our lives. May God continue to give us grace for the journey ahead, and may He get great glory through His Word at work in us!