

The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study

[by Robert F. Ramey, used with permission]

Many read the Bible only on rare occasions--in a crisis or in church. They are content to get their Bible knowledge second hand. Others who read the Bible on a regular basis do not know the method whereby they can discover the riches of Scripture for themselves. The method of study described here will open up God's truth for any purposeful goal. Try it and see!
See 2 Timothy 2:15.

Step 1--OBSERVE

Key verse: John 5:39 "SEARCH"

Key Question:

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Method</u>
To discover all the words and details and ideas that are easily overlooked. Often we fail to see what is right before our eyes. We are poor detectives. We read too hastily. We can easily miss what the verse clearly says.	To look, inspect, hunt, pay close attention to, notice, watch, consider every word and phrase	Read and reread. Take notes. Ask questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Paraphrase (restate in your own words).

Step 2--INTERPRET

Key verse: Matthew 24:15 "LET HIM UNDERSTAND"

Key Question:

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Method</u>
To explain, give the meaning that the Bible writer intended and which his readers understood.	To explain, elucidate, tell the meaning, give the sense.	To bridge the cultural, language and time gap. In order to do this we often need help: translations, dictionaries, atlases, etc.

God means what He says and says what He means. The problem is that we often come to God's Word with our own preconceived ideas and notions about what we think the Bible says. This is why people can prove anything that want by using the Bible. But instead of using the Bible, they are actually abusing and misusing the Bible by forcing their own interpretation upon God's Holy Word.

Instead of letting God say what He says, we try to make the Bible say what we want it to say or what we think it should say. This subjective approach is very detrimental to true Bible study and God will not honor it. We need to come to God with a humble heart, casting aside all of our preconceived notions and opinions, and say, "Lord, teach me Thy way. Help me to learn, unlearn and re-learn. Correct my thinking. Help me to amend my thinking in favor of what You have said."

May God the Holy Spirit open the eyes of our understanding so that we might know God's truth, so that we might walk in God's truth (2 John 4; 3 John 3-4).

Step 3--APPLY

Key verse: James 1:22 "BE DOERS"

Key Question:
**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE
 MEAN TO ME?**

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Method</u>
To learn spiritual lessons and to grow in grace resulting in a changed life. Amending one's life because of what God has said in His Word.	To utilize, employ, do, obey, believe, exercise, etc.	Answer these questions: Is there a promise to believe? An example to follow? A sin to avoid? A duty to perform? A prayer to echo? etc.

“There is scarcely anything so dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its Biblical sense, but something else and something less. The Bible is more than a volume of hitherto unknown facts about God, man and the universe. It is a book of exhortation based upon those facts. By far the greater portion of the book is devoted to an urgent effort to persuade people to alter their ways and bring their lives into harmony with the will of God as set forth in its pages. Theological truth is useless until it is obeyed. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action. Bible exposition without moral application raises no opposition. It is only when the hearer is made to understand that truth is in conflict with his heart that resistance sets in. As long as people can hear orthodox truth divorced from life they will attend and support churches without objection. Much that passed for NT Christianity is little more than objective truth sweetened with song and made palatable by religious entertainment.” –A.W. TOZER

Step 4--COMPARE

Key verse: 1 Corinthians 2:13 "COMPARING"

Key Question:
**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE
 SAY ELSEWHERE?**

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Method</u>
To relate the portion of Scripture that I am studying with the rest of the Bible. Every part of the Bible must be seen in relationship to the whole. When we see a tree clearly, then we must see its relationship to the whole forest. The Bible is a unified whole and we must see how all the pieces fit together.	To correlate, integrate Scripture.	Ask yourself: What other verses and paragraphs and chapters in the Bible can I tie together with what I have just studied? Can I find parallel passages that would shed light on and help confirm what I have just studied? You may find help using the cross references found in your Bible as well as a concordance.

God's Word should be read PRAYERFULLY (Psalm 25:4-5; 119:18); REGULARLY (Matt. 4:4; Job. 23:12); SLOWLY (1 Cor. 14:19); CAREFULLY (John 5:39); SYSTEMATICALLY (1 Cor. 14:40); INQUISITIVELY (asking questions as given above); LOVINGLY (Psalm 119:97); REVERENTLY (Isaiah 66:2); BELIEVINGLY (Hebrews 4:2) and OBEDIENTLY (Rev. 1:3; 22:7,14; James 1:22).

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A Complete Literature List is Available Upon Request