

How to Study the Bible

Basic Principles & C.O.M.A.

Basic Principles of Hermeneutics

Prayer - IOUS

- *Incline my Heart* - Psalm 119:36 - Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to getting gain.
- *Open my Eyes* - Psalm 119:18 - "Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your word."
- *Unite My Heart* - Psalm 6:11 - "Unite my heart to fear your name."
- *Satisfy Me* - Psalm 90:14 - "Satisfy me in the morning with Your steadfast love."

Context Interprets Scripture

- Context is everything that is said around the passage.
- Consider the sentences around the verse you are looking at, then consider the paragraph around those sentences, then chapter, then the book, and then the entire Bible
- Read each book of the Bible how it was written: from start to finish

Scripture Interprets Scripture

- Scripture is our first authority and reference to understand Scripture
- What is less clear should be clarified by passages that are more transparent
- Let all of Scripture weigh in on a subject
- A Reference Bible helps you know where to find correlating verses

Intent Interprets Scripture

- Our goal is to work at discerning what the author means in the passage
- Instead of asking: What does this mean for me? Ask this: What was the human author originally trying to communicate to the readers?

C.O.M.A method

Context - the surrounding verses, chapters, and books in order to better understand the passage you are currently studying.

- Literary Context
 - The passages before and after your passage
 - How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?
 - What has happened so far?
- Historical Context
 - The situation or circumstances of the author and/or audience
- Biblical Context
 - What citations, allusions or historical connections is the author making to other books?

Observation - answering the question "What am I actually seeking in the text?"

- Marks you can make to help you observe the text:
 - Circle key nouns
 - Square key verbs
 - Underline key phrases
 - Highlight transitions

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- Questions to help you think about the text:
 - What is the main point or points?
 - Are there any major subsections or breaks in the text?
 - What questions do you have?
 - What is the structure of the passage? Explain this one more

Meaning - the original author's intention for writing the passage

- What is the author's main point?
- What does he want the original audience to know and why?
- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- How does this passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- What do we learn about people?

Application - taking the author's meaning and applying it your life

1. Does it point out sin in my life?
2. What assumptions does it have that I don't share?
3. Is there a command to obey in the passage?
4. Is there an encouragement in this text?
5. Is there a promise for me?
6. Does it teach me something about God?
7. Does it teach me something about myself?
8. What evidence for my faith does it give me?
9. What will I do differently today because of this text?
10. How can I model/share/teach this truth to encourage others?
11. How could my family or church apply this text?

Helpful Resources:

- *Imparting a Passion* by John Piper. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/imparting-a-passion>
- "40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible" by Robert L. Plummer

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C.O.M.A - Acts 8:26-40

Nick	Ben
<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? ● Literary Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (before and after passage) ○ How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? What has happened so far? ● Historical Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (author/audience circumstances) ● Biblical Context (citations/allusion or historical connections to other books that the author is making) 	<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Literary Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The gospel has been pushed out of Jerusalem by persecution, Philip has carried the gospel into Samaria, and now the Lord leads Philip to share the gospel with a man from the end of the earth as Jesus instructed it to be (Acts 1:8). ● Historical Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Luke is a careful historian who wanted to provide a clear record of Jesus and the early church. He tells the history of the early church as a story of the expansion of the gospel according to the plan of Jesus in Acts 1:8. ○ “Gaza” = The last watering hole south of Jerusalem on the way to Egypt - a remote and strange place for a mission. ● Biblical Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Eunuch is reading Isaiah 53:7-8. This was written 700 years before Christ and describes Jesus’ sufferings perfectly.
<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Circle key words ● Square key verbs ● Underline key phrases ● Highlight transitions ● What is the main point or points? ● Are there any major subsections or breaks in the text? ● Note questions that are raised ● Determine the structure 	<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key words to circle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Philip = evangelist (one of the 7 “deacons”) who begins an official outreach to Samaria. ○ Gaza ○ Eunuch = a powerful and wealthy black man who is an important leader in a far-away foreign nation... ○ Candace = Queen of Ethiopia, which the OT calls Kush, and is today Sudan, West of the Persian Gulf - this intriguing civilization was considered to be the very edge of civilization... the end of the earth. ○ Spirit = He is clearly leading Philip ○ Good news

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gospel ● Key verbs to square: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Go ○ Went ○ Join ○ Ran ○ Sit ○ Opened ○ Told ○ Baptized ○ Carried ○ Went ○ Preached ● Key phrases to underline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you understand what you are reading? ○ How can I, unless someone guides me? ○ About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else? ○ See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized? ● Transitions to highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Now = transition from one section to a new section ● Subsections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The quote from Isaiah in verses 32-33 ● Main Point: The determination of God's Spirit to move the mission out towards the ends of the earth.
<p>Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State the author's aim (main point) in a short sentence. ● What does he want the original audience to know and why? ● How does this text relate to other parts of the book? ● How does this passage relate to Jesus? 	<p>Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main Point: NOT that everyone should be baptized immediately or should expect to be carried away supernaturally, but the determination of God's Spirit to move the mission out towards the ends of the earth.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does this teach us about God? ● What do we learn about people? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does the author want the original audience to know? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ That God’s Spirit is moving the gospel mission outward. ● How does this text relate to other parts of the book? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The thrust of the whole book is the story of the gospel moving outward through the Church and by the Spirit’s power and leadership. ○ In chapter 6, Philip is one of the 7 servants. ○ In chapter 8, the gospel is pushed out by persecution all over Judea and Samaria... and Philip heads a mission to Samaria. ● Learn about people? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pursued by God.
<p>Application - 11 Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does it point out sin in my life? 2. What assumptions does it have that I don’t share? 3. Is there a command to obey in the passage? 4. Is there an encouragement in this text? 5. Is there a promise for me? 6. Does it teach me something about God? 7. Does it teach me something about myself? 8. What evidence for my faith does it give me? 9. What will I do differently today because of this text? 10. How can I model/share/teach this truth to encourage others? 11. How could my family or church apply this text? 	<p>Application - 11 Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, when I am not as eager to “run” to the mission as Philip was. 2. God goes before you to prepare someone to hear the gospel. 3. No command, but a powerful example. 4. Sometimes when it seems that God has you in an unproductive mission, He is at work. 5. No 6. He pursues the lost and is committed to the mission to the ends of the earth. 7.

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C.O.M.A - Matthew 6:33

Nick	Ben
<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? ● Literary Context: How does the passage before and after inform the meaning of this passage? What has happened so far? ● Historical Context: Circumstances of author or audience ● Biblical Context: citations/allusion or historical connections to other books that the author is making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Literary Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jesus is speaking earlier in the chapter (beginning at vs. 19) about not making wealth your treasure and not becoming consumed with worry about even the needs of life (food and clothing)... see verses 25 & 31. So, “these things” refers to our needs, not all our wants. ● Historical Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jesus is sharing the Sermon on the Mount where He describes the ideal ethic - a new way of living within His Kingdom. ● Biblical Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This teaching fits with the OT teaching (Dt. 6:5) that we love God with all of our hearts... we show love for God when we trust Him to be our loving Father who provides for us. ○ Matthew 6:33 mentions seeking first His “Kingdom”... the language of kingdom is important in the Bible... God is King and Jesus’ disciples are part of this Kingdom where we live beneath God’s authority/rule.
<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Circle key words ● Square key verbs ● Underline key phrases ● Highlight transitions ● What is the main point or points? ● Are there any major subsections or breaks in the text? ● Note questions that are raised ● Determine the structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show slide for Matthew 6:33 ● Key Words to Circle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Kingdom” = the realm of a king’s sovereign rule ○ “Righteousness” = moral perfection ● Key Verbs to Square: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Seek” = pursue ● Key Phrase to Underline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “these things” = looking back to verses 31-32, this refers to the necessities of life ● Transition to Highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “but” - this word at the beginning of verse 33 links the verse back to the verses that precede it where we are instructed to not to be anxious about our needs. ● Main Point: Our first priority is to seek to submit our lives to the Lord as King and to do what He says is righteous. As we do this, we can trust Him to meet our needs.

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Meaning

- State the author's aim (main point) in a short sentence.
- What does he want the original audience to know and why?
- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- How does this passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- What do we learn about people?

- Author's Main Point:
 - As those who belong to God's Kingdom, our first priority is to submit to His will and to do what He says is righteous and good. As we do this (instead of anxiously chasing after our needs/wants), we can trust that God will meet our needs.
- What does Matthew want his original audience to know?
 - He wants them to understand Jesus' teaching about how it looks radically different to live as citizens of God's Kingdom than it does to live as a citizen of the kingdom of this world. Specifically, it makes a big difference in regard to priorities for life in the area of wealth.
- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
 - This passage relates to Mtt. 9:9-13 where Matthew himself is called out of the background of being a wealthy tax collector. Matthews' priorities certainly shifted when he began following Jesus.
 - Also in Mtt 19:16-30 we see how difficult it is for the wealthy to be saved but Jesus makes clear that all things are possible with God.
- Relate to Jesus?
 - He is the one speaking.
- Relate to God?
 - He is the King whose kingdom and will we are to seek as the first priority of our lives.

Application - 11 Questions

1. Does it point out sin in my life?
2. What assumptions does it have that I don't share?
3. Is there a command to obey in the passage?
4. Is there an encouragement in this text?
5. Is there a promise for me?
6. Does it teach me something about God?
7. Does it teach me something about myself?
8. What evidence for my faith does it give me?
9. What will I do differently today because of this text?
10. How can I model/share/teach this truth to encourage others?
11. How could my family or church apply this text?

1. We can seek many wrong things as a first priority in our lives... not just wealth/needs.
2. The kingdom of God is far greater and more important than any other reality.
3. Seek first...
4. All these things will be added...
5. All these things will be added...
6. He is a King...
7. My mindset needs to be reoriented...
8. I want to live for God and His kingdom and not just focus on making it.
9. Pay my taxes and not worry...