

How to Study the Bible

Basic Principles & C.O.M.A.

Basic Principles of Hermeneutics

- **Prayer**
 - We start with prayer because...
 - The heart is desperately wicked (Jer 17:9).
 - The basic human response is to reject God's revelation (Romans 1:18-23)
 - Use Psalm 119 to help you pray
 - 119:5 - *Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!*
 - 119:10 - *With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!*
 - 119:12 - *Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!*
 - 119:17-20 - *Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. ¹⁸Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. ¹⁹I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! ²⁰My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.*
 - 119:34-37 - *Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. ³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. ³⁶Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! ³⁷Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*
- **Context Interprets Scripture**
 - Context is everything that is said around the passage.
 - Think Sentence, Paragraph, Chapter, Book, Whole Bible
 - Read each book of the Bible how it was written: from start to finish
- **Scripture Interprets Scripture**
 - Def: Scripture is our first authority to understand Scripture
 - FIRST: What is less clear should be clarified by passages that are more transparent
 - SECOND: Let all of Scripture weigh in on a subject
 - Genesis 17:10-12 - *¹⁰This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.*
 - From Genesis 17, we might conclude that we all male believers need to be circumcised, but several New Testament passages help us see that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law.
 - 1 Corinthians 7:19, Hebrews 10:1, Acts 16:3, and Galatians 2:3.
- **Intent Interprets Scripture**
 - Our goal is to work at discerning what the author means in the passage
 - We need to always try to discern what is the authorial intent of Scripture... asking ourselves what was the human author really trying to say rather than asking what it means for me.

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the C.O.M.A method

Context

- How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?
- 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

- Circle key verbs
- Square key nouns
- 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

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?

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?

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the C.O.M.A method APPLIED to Matthew 6:33

Principle	Example
<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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Example from Matthew 6:33 ● 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. It is because of grace and by the Spirit that true disciples will strive for this ethic, even though we fall far short. ● 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. (Solomon in verse 29, was a wealthy and wise human king of Israel.)
<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Circle key verbs ● Square key nouns ● 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 Nouns 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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<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? ● What does this teach us about God? ● What do we learn about people? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Author's Main Point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He is the one speaking. ● Relate to God? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He is the King whose kingdom and will we are to seek as the first priority of our lives.
<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? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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...

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