

SUNDAY MORNING

Announcements
Clay Morris

Song Leader
Jack Calvert

Lord's Supper
Mark Davis Jon Barry
Jerry Schnelle

Prayers
Bill Rinehart Bill Brittenham

SUNDAY EVENING

Announcements

Scripture Reading

Song Leader

Lord's Supper

Prayers

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Via Zoom

- Vocationally, how should this change our work and how we engage culture?
 - Missionally, what are implications for making disciples of our neighbors and the nations?
- In all of this, prayerfully consider how to respond. Pray for the Spirit to transform your mind, heart, and actions. Let the text lead you to praise God, confess sin, and rest in his grace, and rejoice in his promises. Ask him to stir your heart to love God and others more deeply. And then step out into the rest of your day to reflect God's goodness to others.

ABOUT US

Elders
Jack Calvert Rodney Ellis

Jon Barry Bill Brittenham
Mike Davis Clay Morris

Evangelist
Bryan Garlock

SERVICE TIMES

Sunday
Bible Study9:30 A.M.
Worship10:15 A.M.
Worship6:00 P.M.

Wednesday
Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

Hear the word of truth Romans 10:13-17

Believe the truth..... Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24

Repent from all sins Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38

Confess the name of Christ ... Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized in His name Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12

Walk in newness of life and **be faithful** unto death Romans 6:1-4; Revelation 2:10



Volume XXVI

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Issue 14

A 7-Step Approach to In-Depth Bible Study
Drew Hunter

With All Our Effort
Studying God's word is worth all the effort we can give, because it is God's voice to us, making us wise for salvation and equipped for a life of love (2 Tim 3:16-17). But how do we study it more deeply? Where do we start and what should we look for in the text? Here are seven steps I take when studying the Bible.

One of the best ways to get to know someone is to ask them questions and stay curious. I've found that it's the same with studying the Bible. That's why with each step I ask a key question or two. I've found that asking these questions, in this order, provides a fruitful path of studying God's word.

Approach with Prayer
But before we take a step, we need to take a posture of prayer. Without prayer, we study with a prideful sense of self-sufficiency. But God says, "this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isa. 66:2). In light of this, we don't approach the Bible to master it, but to be mastered by it. We don't come to be puffed

up by knowledge, but to be humbled before God. So we pray throughout our study, "open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of your law" (Psalm 119:18).

1. See the structure.
Start with looking for the structure of the passage. The first key question is *How did this author structure or arrange this text?*

Most texts have an organizational structure. Different kinds of literature use different kinds of structural norms. For example, stories often follow a narrative plotline with a setting, rising tension, climax, resolution, and a new setting. Persuasive letters often introduce a thesis, develop an argument with key points, and end with a conclusion. As we pay attention to the structure of a text, we find the main ideas the author is developing.

But authors don't often explicitly state their structure. We have to develop eyes to see it. Good readers develop a kind of x-ray vision to see the structure of texts they study. If you're reading a story, discern the

FAMILY TALK

Continue to remember and check on our shut-ins: **Bonnie Allgor, Maxine Burnham, Ann Thomas** and **Francine Davis**.

Cathy Monaghan is continuing treatment for her cancer.

Also, please pray for **Sonny Monaghan**. He continues to have medical problems.

And continue to pray for **Joey Avance**.

Bible Study: 9:30 AM (and Zoom)

Services: 10:15 AM (and Zoom)

Kids Only: 5:00 PM (Zoom)

Monday: 7:00 PM (Zoom)

Wednesday: 7:00 PM (Zoom)

Thursday: 7:00 PM (Zoom)

scene divisions or sections of a plot line. If you're looking at part of a letter, follow the flow of thought. As you go, make an outline with summary phrases and verse references. For example, when I studied Psalm 19, I wrote down this outline:

- The sky declares God's glory everywhere (19:1-6)
- The word of God is powerful and precious (19:7-11)
- A responsive prayer for forgiveness and transforming power (19:12-14)

2. Read in context.

After seeing the structure, consider the narrow and broader literary context. Every passage is situated within the immediate context of its book, and also the broader context of the whole Bible. Ask, *How do the immediate and whole-Bible contexts inform the meaning of this text?*

First, with the immediate literary context, we seek to understand the role our passage serves in the flow of its larger book. In order to do this, we look at the texts on both sides of our passage—the preceding passage and the following passage. We have to gain a sense of how our text fits in the developing structure and purpose of the book in which it's found. This means it is important to read through sections on scripture, thinking paragraph-to-paragraph.

Second, we consider the whole-Bible context. Consider how your text fits within the flow of the Bible's unfolding storyline. Read through the text and identify any quotes or echoes of previous biblical texts the author draws on. Identify any whole-Bible themes that move through the text as they make their way through the Bible's story. Identify how the culmination of redemptive history in Christ informs the meaning of this text. For example, in the New Testament, "redemption" often has the background of Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt, which is used by the prophets to anticipate a greater redemption from deeper slavery.

3. Consider the background.

Every author wrote within a particular historical setting and circumstance. Although the Bible is ultimately one book, it is also a collection of 66 smaller books. Various books were written within different cultures and circumstances. Ask, *What was the original setting and circumstance of the author and readers?*

Note anything that reflects the author or original readers' culture or circumstance. For example, we learn from Philippians that Paul wrote from house arrest in Rome—he could be executed soon. This makes the letter's theme of joy even more striking.

4. Grasp the main point.

When studying a text, press in to identify the author's main idea. So we ask the

question, *What is the main point the author is making?* Our goal is to restate the author's point in a way that he would agree with. Our goal is to say, *Author, if I'm reading this correctly, here's what you're saying: _____; and the author would respond, Yes, that's exactly my point!*

This process requires humility. We set aside what we may *want* the text to say in order to embrace what the author actually *did* say.

We also have to focus on identifying the *main* point. Communication is incredibly complex. We rarely ever have just one point or idea. But we do typically have one *main* point. In the same way, biblical texts are saturated with interesting themes and important sub-points. But one of our most important tasks is to grasp the *main* point that the other ideas complement.

5. Identify the purpose.

Once we've identified *what* the author said, we need to identify *why* he says it. So, we ask the question, *What is the author's purpose in writing this?* With this question, we're moving from the author's point to his purpose. If the main point is an arrow, the purpose is the target—it's what he's seeking to *do* with his words. We could refer to this as the author's pastoral agenda or burden. We consider how the author wants to change the reader's thinking, believing, or living.

One of the best ways to get a start at this is to look for the larger purpose of the book in which your passages are situated. For example, John gives us the purpose of including Jesus' signs in his gospel is "so 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). That helps us understand the purpose of passages in the rest of the book.

6. Relate to the gospel.

We may already see how our text relates to the gospel, but we need to give this direct attention. Ask the question, *What are a few ways that this relates to the good news of God's grace for sinners and sufferers?* Reread the text and look for direct statements about Jesus and his death and resurrection. Look for direct gospel-statements, such as "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Look for our gospel-response of repentance and faith. Look for gospel-centered motivations like, "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Eph. 5:2). As you become familiar with the central themes that thread through the Bible's story, consider if any of those run through your text and how they culminate in Jesus (ie., kingship and kingdom, covenant, temple, priesthood, and sacrifice, exodus redemption, exile, and return, etc.). And finally, consider how this text shows the gracious heart of God, which we also see expressed in Christ through the gospel.

7. Respond to implications.

Our final step is to draw out and respond to implications. We now ask, *What are implications and applications for us today?* We didn't start here because unless we rightly understand the text, we may miss how it uniquely calls us to respond. But after the process of prayerful and faithful study, we need to respond. We've discerned the meaning and heard God's voice; we can now seek the Spirit's renewing and transforming power.

Slow down and think through several categories:

- Personally, how should this text change the way you think, feel, or act?
- Communally, what implications does this have for your relationships?