

HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

There are five steps to Bible study, which you must be aware of at all times. Future articles will help you get the most out of each step.

OBSERVATION (You and your eyes) Begin your study of any passage of the Bible with open eyes, open mind and an open Bible. If possible, read it carefully in several translations. Jot down your observations of things like: Is there a command here? Who is the author? What is the subject of the paragraph? Who is speaking? To whom was this book written? Make notes of everything you don't understand or problems you hope to resolve.

INTERPRETATION (You and your brain) Ask "What does this passage mean? Check out the meanings of words and phrases. Observe the flow of thought and the main ideas by noting the sentence structure. Seek to discover what the author wanted the original readers to know. Continue noting questions you need to answer.

EVALUATION (You and your books) Do research to evaluate your interpretation and answer your questions. Check commentaries, word study books, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias. Ask for help from someone who knows more than you. If you discover different points of view, decide which has the best support and why.

APPLICATION (You and your life) Now that you know what the passage means, ask "How does this affect me? What must I do with what I now know?" or "What does this tell me about God and His nature?"

CORRELATION (You and your beliefs) Ask how this relates to the rest of Scripture. Fit this in with all you know from other passages. Gradually you will build up your knowledge of all the doctrines of the Bible.

"Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation" (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, page 1). This is the first in a series on hermeneutics, designed to help you study your Bible with more confidence and enthusiasm. In weeks to come you will learn principles to apply throughout the five steps of Bible interpretation.