

We believe discipleship is a direction
not a destination.



Living by The Book
Learn to Read & Study the Bible

Course Outline (12 Weeks)

- **OBSERVATION**

- ~~Week 5 Six Things To Look For (CH 18-23)~~

- ~~Week 6 What Do I Do With This (CH 24-26)~~

- **INTERPRETATION**

- **Week 7** Interpretation Intro (CH 27-29)

- **Week 8** Five Keys to Interpretation (CH 30-34)

- **Week 9** Don't Stop (CH 35-38)



Course Outline (12 Weeks)

- **APPLICATION**

- **Week 10** Critical, Truth, Transformation (CH 39-41)
- **Week 11** Steps, Customize, Questions (CH 42-44)
- **Week 12** Principles, Changed Life, Get Started (CH 45-48)



The Value Of Interpretation

Chapter 27



We Can Read, But Can We Understand

- We all need help understanding sometimes
 - That's why you are here right?
- Have you ever read a book or watched a movie and really enjoyed it?
 - You then told someone about the book and how you liked it
 - Then they told you what the book was “really” about
 - And things changed...



Why Do You Go To Bible Study?

- It is a good place to fellowship with other believers
 - Yes this is a really good thing
- But why do you go to a BIBLE STUDY
 - Why not just read the Bible yourself?
 - You, we all, need help understanding what we are reading
- We all can read the Bible but understanding it can be hard



²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go and join that chariot.” ³⁰ When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” ³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone guides me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:29–31



Reading and Understanding

- What's the difference between reading and understanding?
 - For the Ethiopian man, his eternal life
 - He could read the book
 - He was curious about the book
 - But he didn't understand it
- Someone had to interpret it for him



What Do We Mean Interpretation

- Every book of Scripture has a message, and that message can be understood
 - God has a message for us in every part of the Bible
 - He didn't hide it or obscure it to confuse you
 - God wants you to understand His message
- There is only one meaning or understanding or interpretation of that message
 - And that is where the rub is



Multiple Interpretations

- Many people read the Bible and then give an interpretation
 - And those interpretations are different
 - Not only different but sometimes contradictory
- Does this matter?
 - YES!
 - “Meaning” is not our subjective thoughts read into the text but God’s objective truth read out of the text.



Interpretation is the Re-Creation Process

- We are attempting to stand in the author's shoes and re-create his experience
 - Think as he thought
 - To feel as he felt
 - To decide as he decided
- We are asking, What did this mean to him?
 - Before we ever ask, What does it mean to us?



Interpretation Relate to Observation

- So how does Interpretation relate to Observation?
 - In Observation we excavate
 - We ask Questions
 - Answer Questions
 - We clear the area
 - Gather the information, the materials



Interpretation Relate to Observation

- In Interpretation we erect
 - We take the materials we gathered
 - And we start building
 - We construct the meaning of our observations
- The quality of what you erect is directly dependent on
 - The observations you gathered



Why must we interpret Scripture?

- Why can't we just open the Word
 - Read what we're supposed to do
 - Then do it
- Why do we have to go to so much trouble to understand the text?
 - Time and distance have thrown up barriers between us and the biblical writers
 - This can block our understanding



What are the Barriers

- Language
- Cultural
- Literary
- Communication



Language

- The Bible as been translated into hundreds of languages
 - But it was written in
 - Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic
- If you speak more then one language you know
 - Not everything translates well
 - It's about to go down
 - Plead the Fifth
 - Cold Turkey



Cultural

- Cultural barriers are closely related to language barriers
 - We must reconstruct the cultural context
 - communication, transportation, trade, agriculture, occupations, religion, perceptions of time, ...
- Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes
 - This book discusses how we, the USA, view the Bible through our culture
 - We need to see the Bible through the culture of the author



Literary

- The Bible is written in different genres
- We can not read Song of Solomon like we read Romans
 - We must learn to recognize these genres
 - We then need to read with the rules of that genre
 - We will discuss this Chapter 29
 - The last section for today



Communication

- Who has ever heard
 - “I can’t explain this any more clearly”
- Even the best of husbands have trouble understanding their wives sometimes
 - How much more when trying to understand God
- We are finite creatures trying to understand an infinite God



Communication

- This does not mean it is impossible to interpret the Bible
 - It does mean it will take work
 - It also means there will be questions and things we don't get
- This doesn't mean the Bible is wrong or broken
 - It means me or we just can't understand it
 - At the moment



Handle With Care

Chapter 28



Hazards to Avoid

- Be careful when reading the Bible
 - And avoid these classic blunders
 - Misreading the text
 - Distorting the text
 - Contradicting the text
 - Subjectivism
 - Relativism
 - Overconfidence



Misreading the Text

- “I am a way,”
- Or “I am the way”
- “Money is the root of all evil”
- Or “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil”
- Ignorance of what the text says is the unpardonable sin of Interpretation
 - It shows that you haven’t done your homework
 - You’ve skipped the first step in Bible study method
 - Observation

Distorting the Text

- This is when you try and make the text say what **you** want it to say
 - To be sure this has been happening for a long time
- ¹⁶ He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some things hard to understand in them. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.

2 Peter 3:16



Contradicting the Text

- This error is even worse than distorting the text
 - It is calling God a liar
- Satan did this in the Garden
 - Did God really say die?
- What are some lies preached?
 - God wants you to be rich and will make you rich
 - God wants you to be happy, have all the sex, drugs you want

Subjectivism

- Subjectivism is the doctrine that
 - Our own mental activity is the only unquestionable fact of our experience
 - And that there is no external or objective truth
- Facts are subjective
 - Fact Chocolate is tasty
 - Fact for me chocolate is nasty
 - Both are FACTS?!



Subjectivism

- Example: I flip through the Bible until I read something that tickles my fancy
 - I then apply it to my life, this must be true because I feel it
- I like how Dr. Hendricks puts it
 - “They wander around the Scriptures, waiting for a **liver-quiver** to tell them when they’ve struck pay dirt.”
- Basically, take all thinking out of your reading



Relativism

- The thought that the Bible changes meaning over time
 - As the culture changes so does the meaning of the Bible
 - This is **WRONG!**
 - If it was good then, it is good now
 - If it was bad then, it is bad now
 - The truth of the Bible does not change it is eternal



Overconfidence

- This is where you think you understand it all
 - And refuse to change even when shown you are wrong
- My grandfather had a saying
 - “I was wrong once, but then I found out I was right.”
 - He also said “I haven’t ever been wrong at least not since the last time”
- Everyone say it with me
 - “I have been and will be wrong”



Overconfidence

- This does not mean you should not come to conclusions about what you have read
 - Or that you should not feel confident in what you believe
- The process of interpretation never ends
- Just don't let your pride stop you from learning the truth



The Right To Disagree

- Considering all these dangers, is it possible to produce an accurate interpretation of the biblical text?
 - Yes
 - The next few chapters will help with this
- But even though there is only one correct interpretation
 - Christians will disagree on what that interpretation is
 - But remember the conflict is not in the text but our limited understanding of it



What Type Of Literature Is This?

Chapter 29



A Preface to Paradise Lost, C.S.Lewis writes:

The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is—what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. After that has been discovered the temperance reformer may decide that the corkscrew was made for a bad purpose, and the communist may think the same about the cathedral. But such questions come later. The first thing is to understand the object before you: as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them. them. The first thing the reader needs to know about Paradise Lost is what Milton meant it to be.



Literary Form

- The first thing you need to know before studying a book of the Bible is
 - What that book's author meant it to be
 - In other words, what kind of literature was he writing
 - What literary form did he employ



Biblical Genres

- Six kinds of writing in the Bible
 - Exposition
 - Narrative and Biography
 - Parables
 - Poetry
 - The Proverbs and Wisdom Literature
 - Prophecy and Apocalyptic



Exposition

- An exposition is a straightforward argument or explanation of a body of objective truth
 - Paul's letters are good examples of this style
 - Paul argues like a lawyer in Romans
 - Paul uses connective and transitional words like
 - For, Therefore, And, and But
- This style is great average person, it appeals to our sense of order and structure



Narrative and Biography

- Narrative means story
 - Genesis is a good example of this
 - It is the story of God's creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the patriarchs
 - The four gospels tell us the story of Jesus
 - From different angles and perspectives
- Stories make good reading but also interesting interpreting
- Then how do we interpret them?



Narrative and Biography

- Look at the Plot
 - What is different at the end of the book and Why
- Look at the Characters
 - What roles do they play
 - What decisions do they make
 - How do they relate to each other
 - Do they fail? Why?
 - Do we like them? Dislike them?

Narrative and Biography


- How is the story true to life
 - What question(s) does the story raise
 - What problems do the characters deal with
 - What lessons do the characters learn
 - How do they deal with unavoidable things in life
 - What do they discover about God
- These are just a few things to consider



Parables

- A parable is a brief tale that illustrates a moral principle
- Parables are close to narratives but shorter
- Most parables are in the New Testament
 - And they come from Jesus
- Right and wrong (The sower and the three kinds of seed)
- Love and compassion (The prodigal son, the good Samaritan)
- Justice and mercy (the Pharisee and the tax collector).

Poetry

- The Bible contains some of the finest lines of verse ever composed
 - “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1 KJV) 
 - “God is our refuge and strength,/A very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1)
 - “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9 KJV)

Poetry

- The distinctive feature of poetry is its appeal to the emotions, as well as the imagination
 - That's why the psalms are so beloved
 - They express deep feelings
 - Longing, Rapture, Pain
- Understand the poetry you are reading
 - Most of the psalms were meant to be sung



Poetry Features

- Hebrew poetry has several features to be aware of
 - Parallelism: There are two lines that
 - Reinforce each other through repetition
 - By extending the thought with new information
 - By opposition, the second line opposes the first
 - Hyperbole: exaggerated language that makes a point



Poetry Features

- Questions to ask when reading
 - Who composed this material?
 - Can you determine why?
 - What is the central theme of the poem?
 - What emotions does the verse convey
 - What questions does it ask?
 - Which ones does it answer, and which does it leave unanswered?
 - What does the poem say about God? About people?

The Proverbs and Wisdom Literature

- A proverb is a short, poignant nugget of truth
 - Typically practical, and often concerned with the consequences of a course of behavior
- Proverbs come right to the point
 - Of all the biblical material, they are perhaps the easiest to understand, though sometimes the hardest to apply



The Proverbs and Wisdom Literature

- Warnings about proverbs
 - Proverbs contains a principle, not a promise
 - He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich
Proverbs 21:17
 - In general squandering your time, energy and resources lead to poverty
 - But we all know exceptions, principle not promise



Prophecy and Apocalyptic

- We tend to think of prophecy as predictions of the future
 - They are
 - But there is an overriding tone of dire warning
 - The prophet was sent to warn the people of the consequences of their sin



Prophecy and Apocalyptic

- When reading recreate the situation and ask
 - What is the main problem that the prophet is addressing?
 - What images does he use to describe it?
 - What is the response of the people?
 - What does this prophet's message tell you about God?
 - What happens after this prophet delivers his message?
 - Why do you think God included this book in His Word?

Prophecy and Apocalyptic

- Apocalyptic literature deals with cataclysmic events of global proportions
 - Having to do with the end of the world
- The language of apocalyptic is highly symbolic
 - This makes the genre fertile ground for speculation and subjective interpretation
 - To avoid that, when you study Revelation, pay close attention to the structure of the book

Prophecy and Apocalyptic

- What movement is there from the opening to the close?
- What changes come about?
 - Who is the material written to?
- What was the historical and cultural context in which the writer was working?
- How might that have influenced his method of communication?



Prophecy and Apocalyptic

- In terms of understanding the book's symbols
 - Look carefully at the Old Testament for insight into what the author is describing
- Rather than worry about a time line for future events
 - Ask what implications this book would have had for Christians in the early church



Homework

- Read Jonah
 - List all the characters
 - Do you like/dislike them? Why?
 - What roles do they play
 - What decisions do they make
 - How do they relate to each other
 - Do they fail? Why?



| Character | Do you like/dislike them? Why? | What roles do they play | What decisions do they make | How do they relate to each other | Do they fail? Why? |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Jonah | | | | | |
| Sailors | | | | | |
| King | | | | | |
| People of Nineveh | | | | | |
| ??? | | | | | |
| ??? | | | | | |



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Observation: What do I see?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Application: How does it work?

