

# HOW STUDY THE BIBLE

## DEUTERONOMY 32:47, <sup>ESV</sup>

*They are not just idle words for you-- **they are your life**. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."*

## PSALM 19:7-11, <sup>ESV</sup>

*The law of the LORD is **perfect**, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is **sure**, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are **right**, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is **pure**, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are **true**, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

### TRUTH

- The Word is **perfect** .....Riviving the soul.
- The Word is **sure**.....Making wise the simple.
- The Word is **right/true**.....Rejoicing the heart.
- The Word is **pure** ..... Enlightening the eyes.
- The Word is **eternal**..... Enduring forever.
- The Word of God is **valuable**.....Warning and Rewarding.
- The Word is **available**. .....Sort of.

### ACTION

## MY HOPE FOR OUR MEN...

- Love our Bibles.
- Know our Bibles.
- Teach our Bibles.

## THE NEED FOR TRANSLATIONS...

- Total world languages: 6,912.
- Languages with no Bible: 2,286.

## THE QUESTION OF TRANSLATIONS...

- Which translation should I use?
- Look at the process behind the translation.

## THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION...

- A Divine Author.
- Human Authors.
- Original Text.
- Copies of the Original Text.
- Critical Text.
- Translator or Translation Team.
- Translation.
- Contemporary Reader.

## TRANSLATIONS...

- Are not inerrant.
- Should be used together.

## THE CONTINUUM OF TRANSLATIONS...

- The Formal Approach: "word-for-word."
- The Functional Approach: "thought-for-thought."

**Word for Word:** *For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (NAS)*

**Dynamic Equivalence:** *While we were living by our natural inclinations, the sinful passions aroused by the Law were working in all parts of our bodies to make us live lives which were fruitful only for death. (NJB)*

**Free:** *For as long as we lived that old way of life, doing whatever we felt we could get away with, sin was calling most of the shots as the old law code hemmed us in. And this made us all the more rebellious. In the end, all we had to show for it was miscarriages and stillbirths. (The Message)*

## A RECOMMENDATION FOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS...

- English Standard Version
- New American Standard Bible
- New International Version

## THERE ARE 66 BOOKS THAT MAKE UP THE BIBLE.

Each book is individual.

Each book contributes to the big storyline.

The Bible is about Jesus.

The verses and chapter in the Bible are not inspired.

## THE MIRACLE OF THE BIBLE.

The latest portions were written 2000 years ago.

More than 40 authors wrote sections of the Bible.

Those authors were from a variety of backgrounds.

However, there is great theological unity (no contradictions).

<b>TORAH</b>	<b>HISTORY</b>	<b>POETRY &amp; WISDOM</b>	<b>PROPHETS</b>	
<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Joshua</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>	<i>Jonah</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>Judges</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>Jeremiah</i>	<i>Micah</i>
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>Ruth</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>Lamentations</i>	<i>Nahum</i>
<i>Numbers</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Samuel</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>	<i>Habakkuk</i>
<i>Deuteronomy</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Kings</i>	<i>Song of Songs</i>	<i>Daniel</i>	<i>Zephaniah</i>
	<i>1 &amp; 2 Chronicles</i>		<i>Hosea</i>	<i>Haggai</i>
	<i>Ezra</i>		<i>Joel</i>	<i>Zechariah</i>
	<i>Nehemiah</i>		<i>Amos</i>	<i>Malachi</i>
	<i>Esther</i>		<i>Obadiah</i>	
<b>GOSPELS AND ACTS</b>	<b>LETTERS</b>		<b>REVELATION</b>	
<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Romans</i>	<i>Titus</i>	<i>Revelation</i>	
<i>Mark</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Corinthians</i>	<i>Philemon</i>		
<i>Luke</i>	<i>Galatians</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>		
<i>John</i>	<i>Ephesians</i>	<i>James</i>		
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Philippians</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Peter</i>		
	<i>Colossians</i>	<i>1, 2, &amp; 3 John</i>		
	<i>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians</i>	<i>Jude</i>		
	<i>1 &amp; 2 Timothy</i>			

## WHY WE DON'T STUDY THE BIBLE...

- "I don't see how the Bible really **applies** to my life."
- "I've tried, but I just **don't know how** to study the Bible."
- "I'm **not a professional**; isn't that the pastor's job?"
- "I just don't have **time**."
- "I'm not sure if the Bible is even **true**."
- "To be honest, it just seems **boring** to me."

## WHY WE MUST STUDY THE BIBLE...

### - Because it's essential for spiritual growth.

*"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."*

1 Peter 2:2, NIV

- We need it.                      We want it                      We can't grow up without it.

### - Because it's essential for spiritual maturity.

*"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."*

Hebrews 5:11-14, NIV

### - Because it's essential for spiritual effectiveness.

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV

## WHO CAN STUDY THE BIBLE?

- Anyone can study the Bible.
- Only those who have the Spirit of Christ can understand the Bible.

*"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

1 Corinthians 2:12-14, NIV

- The Spirit inspired the Word.
- The Spirit illuminates the Word.
- The Spirit instructs us in the Word.

## DANGEROUS APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY ...

- The emotional approach.                      What feels right to me?
- The spiritual approach.                      What deep, hidden meaning is there for me?
- The pragmatic approach.                      What works best for me?
- The superficial approach.                      What does this mean to me?

## A DEPENDABLE APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY ...

*Imagine going on a mission trip...*

- Observe their home: What do I see?
- Understand their home: What does it mean?
- Bring it back home: How does it relate? What do I do?

## STEP ONE || OBSERVATION

### OBSERVATION DEFINED:

*THE ART OF SEEING THINGS AS THEY ARE, IMPARTIALLY, INTENSELY, FEARLESSLY.*

### Two Revolutionary Disciplines for Reading the Bible...

*Learn to listen.*

*Learn to look.*

### LEARN TO LISTEN...

*Listen thoughtfully.*

*Listen thoroughly.*

*Bible study is not a mindless activity.*

*If we want to understand the Bible, we've got to bombard it with questions.*

### Questions to Consider...

*Who?*

- *Wrote it?*
- *Originally read it?*
- *Are the main characters?*

*What?*

- *Is happening in the text?*
- *Is wrong with the picture?*
- *Is the author saying?*

*Where?*

- *Is the writer?*
- *Are the original readers?*
- *Is the text taking place?*

*When?*

- *Was it written?*
- *Did the events take place?*

*Why?*

- *Is the author writing this?*
- *Is this included in Scripture?*
- *Did the events happen the way they did?*
- *Did the author say what he said?*

### Listen repeatedly.

*Read the text over and over and over and over... you get the point!*

### Listen patiently.

*Be patient with the text.*

*Be patient with yourself.*

### Listen imaginatively.

*See the sights, smell the smells, and experience the emotions.*

### Listen meditatively.

*Take time to reflect.*

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer:** *"Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are*

*said to you, accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation."*

*"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

Joshua 1:8, NIV

*"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."*

Psalms 1:1-2, NIV

*"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."*

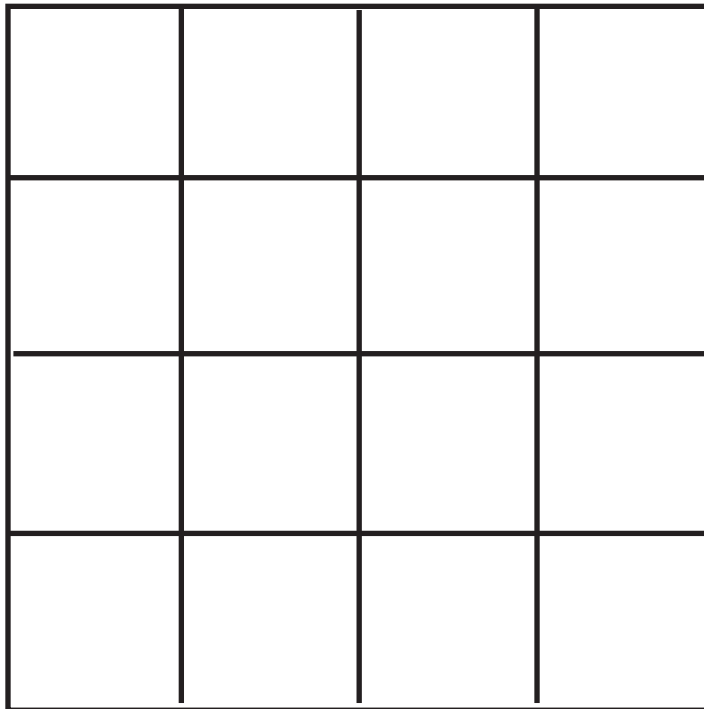
Psalms 119:97, NIV

### **Listen purposefully.**

We want our lives transformed by the heart of God through His Word!

### **LEARN TO LOOK...**

- The art of Bible reading is seeing. I see \_\_\_\_\_ squares.



***Biblical observation is the craft of seeing all \_\_\_\_\_ squares.***

### **WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

When beginning to study the Bible, pick a text that you would like to read. Spend some time praying asking God for wisdom, insight and understanding. Then begin with a reading of the text. After you read the text, write down some general observations. Then give the text a second and a third reading. Then we are ready to start making some observations. As you find your observations write them down either on a sheet of paper or in your bible. I recommend writing them down on a sheet of paper in an organized way so that you can refer back to your list as you continue to read and move through the process of bible study. Remember, the art of observing will take time to develop. You will get better with time. Here is a good list of the types of observations for which you should be looking. This will get you started.

## **KEY WORDS**

As you read through the text underline and highlight keywords that seem to be critical words to the text. Actions verbs, names of people, places, concept words, ideas, etc. These words will contain the main ideas and points that are crucial to the verse.

## **LOOK FOR WORDS EMPHASIZED**

Always be on the lookout for verbs. Be aware of the amount of space given to an idea or thought (In the book of Matthew 342 of the 1,062 verses give us teachings from Jesus. In Ephesians, chapters 1-3 explain salvation and chapters 4-6 apply salvation.). Be aware of an purpose statements (I am writing that...) What is repeated (Matthew 7)?

## **EXAGGERATION**

Does the author exaggerate something for intentional effect or emphasis?

"I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you." 2 Corinthians 11:8, NIV

"You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel." Matthew 23:24, NIV

## **ADVICE/ADMONITIONS/WARNINGS/PROMISES**

Is the text providing advice on a certain subject? Is the text giving an admonishment or a reprimand? Is the text warning the reader about something? Does the text promise something to the reader? Pay attention to the verbs when looking for these observations. Imperative (command) verbs are usually a dead giveaway.

## **CLIMAX**

Does the passage have a point of climax where the text builds an argument, story or a point of high importance? When looking for climax pay attention to how the material is arranged where there is a progression from lesser to greater and ultimately to the greatest.

## **INTERCHANGE**

Interchange is the exchanging or alternating of certain elements. This occurs between paragraphs. In Habakkuk, several paragraphs of interchange occur between the prophet Habakkuk and God in the form of prayers from Habakkuk to God and God responding to him. Interchange is used often to highlight contrasts or comparisons.

## **CAUSE AND EFFECT**

Is there a relationship of cause and effect? Is one event contingent on another? Does a person or event cause something to happen? Are there positive or negative consequences in the text as a result of a person's actions or as a result of circumstances?

## **REASONS/RESULTS**

Does the writer give specific reasons for the exhortations or advice he gives? Sometimes in the text, the author will warn or admonish us and he will tell us the reasons why they are saying the things they are.

## **CONTRASTS/COMPARISONS**

Does the text make a comparison or contrast? Contrasts highlight the differences, while comparisons highlight similarities.

"He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." Proverbs 14:31, NIV

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23, NIV

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." Psalm 42:1, NIV

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up," John 3:14, NIV

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation," 1 Peter 2:2

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Is the author painting a verbal picture to make a point? Does the author make use of figurative language?

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Does the text contain questions? Who asks the questions? Who answers them? Does the response fit the question that is asked?

## GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

Pay attention to how the grammar works in the sentence. Identify nouns, verbs, prepositions, adverbs, adjectives, etc. What tense is the verb (past, present, future)? How is the grammar working in the sentence?

## CONNECTIVES

Pay attention to connectives (conjunctions and prepositions). The term *but* introduces a contrast, *if* introduces a conditional statement, *for*, *because*, *therefore* introduce reason and results, *in*, *into*, *with* are relational words, *in order that* introduces statements of purpose.

## LITERARY FORM

Every scripture has a literary form. Is the text narrative, poetry, a parable, apocalyptic, proverbial, etc. Does the text use literal or figurative language?

## GENERAL STRUCTURE

What is the overall feel of the text? The theme? The atmosphere? The tone? How are the ideas arranged? Does the author list? How does the author piece together his argument? Where does the text take a major shift.

**Tone:** *"I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead."* Lamentations 3:1-6, NIV

**Tone:** *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"* Philippians 4:4, NIV

**Tone:** *"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."* Matthew 23:33-35, NIV

**Major Shift:** *"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'"* Acts 8:26, NIV

## OBSERVATION OVERALL...

- Observe individual verses.
- Observe paragraphs.
- Observe entire discourses.
- And remember... be patient!

## OBSERVATION IN ACTION.

## EXAMPLE: ACTS 1:8

## STEP TWO || INTERPRETATION

### INTERPRETATION DEFINED:

The art of explaining the meaning of something with diligence to truth, purpose, and message.

### MOVING FROM EXPLORATION TO INTERPRETATION...

- From what the text says to what the text means.
- From questions of content to questions of context.

### RULE 1 OF INTERPRETATION: CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT...

The definition of context...

Context = that which **goes with** the text.

The dilemma created by context...

The Bible communicates eternal content.

The Bible communicates through **specific** contexts.

How do we go from then and there to here and now?

The dedication to context...

We work to step into the author's shoes and determine his original intent.

A biblical text can never mean what it never meant.

Context shapes meaning.

The rule of context: **CONTEXT RULES!**

The diversity of contexts...

**Our** context.

**Their** context.

### CONSIDER OUR CONTEXT...

#### Our preunderstandings:

All of our preconceived notions that we unconsciously or consciously bring to the text.

Our pride.

Pride knows before listening.

Our agenda.

Two options:

- Stand over the meaning of the text.

- Kneel under the meaning of the text.

Our familiarity.

Don't skip over a text just because it's familiar.

Our culture.

- Language. Customs. Stories. Family. Values. Economics. Politics. Ethnicity. Gender.

#### Our presuppositions:

- The Bible is inspired.

- The Bible is reliable.

- The Bible is unified.

- The Bible is supernatural.

- The Bible is purposeful.

## HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THEIR CONTEXT:

- Never forget that Scripture was God's Word to **other** people before it became God's Word to **us**.
  - God cared deeply about them.
  - God cares deeply about us.

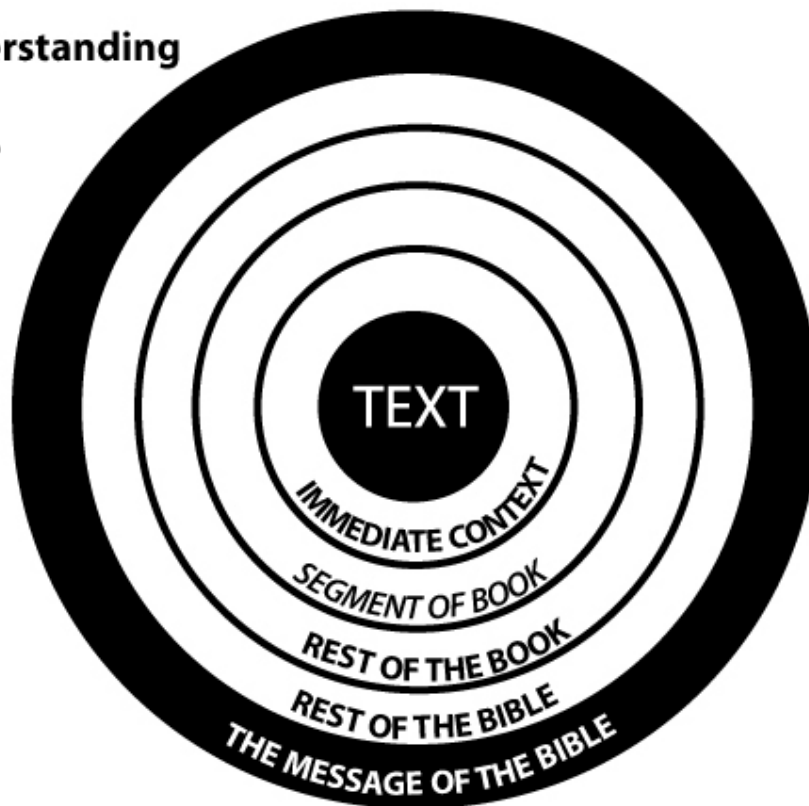
### - Literary Context.

- Genres.
  - Different forms or kinds of biblical texts.
  - We need to know the rules involved with different genres.
    - Old Testament... Narrative, Law, Poetry, Prophets, Wisdom
    - New Testament... Letters, Gospels, Parables, Acts, Revelation

### - The Biblical Context.

The Bible contains an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

**understanding  
the  
bible**



"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20, NIV  
I can do all things through Him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

### Historical-Cultural Context.

The time and culture of the author and his readers, including the social, geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author's setting. Get to know the author, audience, geographical conditions, social conditions, religious conditions, and political conditions.

### Theological Context.

Where does this passage fit into the unfolding revelation of God in Scripture?

**J. I. Packer:** *“The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini, each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively, to play his notes just as the great conductor desired, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole... The point of each part only becomes fully clear when seen in relation to all the rest.”*

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEXT...**

- Remember that context rules.  
Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say something that is contrary to the text.
- Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.  
The more you study, the more you will be able to discern what Scripture means.
- Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture.  
Compare Scripture with Scripture... use cross-references!
- The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.  
Avoid basing your doctrine on an obscure passage of Scripture.

### **RULE 2 OF INTERPRETATION: GO AFTER THE ORIGINAL INTENT**

A BIBLICAL TEXT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING.

A BIBLICAL TEXT CAN NEVER MEAN WHAT IT NEVER MEANT.

### **RULE 3 OF INTERPRETATION: USE ALL OF GOD’S WORD.**

*No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:9*

### **RULE 4 OF INTERPRETATION: never base core beliefs off obscure passages of Scripture.**

*He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:16*

**Mormons | 1 Corinthians 15:29...***Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?*

### **FINISHING THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION...**

- 1) ANSWER THE MAJOR QUESTIONS:  
What is the point to his original readers?  
What does this teach me about God?
- 2) WRITE THE POINT IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES  
(what the author is saying to his original audience and why he is saying it)
- 3) BE RESPONSIBLE  
a. A text can only mean what it has always meant.
- 4) BE CONCISE and SPECIFIC  
a. Keep it simple.
- 5) CHECK YOUR CONCLUSIONS BY LEANING ON THE CHURCH.

### **EXAMPLE: ACTS 1:8**

## STEP 3 || APPLICATION

### APPLICATION DEFINED:

the art of evaluating the text with courage so that it transforms your life

#### The goal...

Identify the timeless truth(s).

This is the theological principle that applies to all people of all times.

#### The guidelines...

- The timeless truth is biblical.
- The timeless truth is compatible (with the rest of Scripture).
- The timeless truth is eternal.
- The timeless truth is cross-cultural.
- The timeless truth is applicable (both here and there)

#### The differences between interpretation and application...

Interpretation focuses on meaning.

Interpretation involves a singular meaning.

Interpretation is the same for all Christians.

Interpretation involves getting into the Word.

Interpretation asks, "What does this text mean?"

Application focuses on action.

Application involves multiple actions.

Application is different for specific life situations.

Application involves the Word getting into us.

Application, "How does this meaning apply to my life?"

#### Five questions...

##### • WHO SHOULD I BE?

Any application of the text is dependent on Christ in you.

##### • HOW SHOULD I THINK?

We need to learn from the Word how to think Christianly.

##### • WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a verse to memorize?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there a prayer to repeat?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a condition to meet?

Is there a challenge to face?

##### • WHERE SHOULD I GO?

All of Scripture is intended to be understood in the context of mission.

##### • WHO WILL I TEACH?

The best way to learn is to give it away... this is what discipling is all about!

## EXAMPLE || ACTS 1:8

## IMPLICATIONS FOR YOU:

1) Ask God to grow your love for Scripture.

2) Develop a plan to know your Bible.



- Memorize (January || Scripture memory plan)
- Study (Choose a book of the Bible you would like to dig a little deeper into: Ephesians)
- Read (Bible Reading Plan, book of the Bible)
- Hear (Listen to good Bible teaching often)
- Meditate (think about everything.)

3) Develop a plan to help your wife know her Bible.

- Set aside time to read the Bible together.
- Set aside time to teach your wife Biblical truth.  
q: What if I don't know the Bible very well? Learn something and start with that.

4) Develop a plan to help your kids know their Bibles.

- Set aside time to read the Bible with your family.
- Set aside time to teach your kids Biblical truth.