

How to Study the Bible

Lesson 28

Putting It Together

Particular Challenges:

How Do I Study Difficult or Familiar Passages?

STUDYING DIFFICULT PASSAGES

1. Why are passages often difficult?

- a. Culture Gap
- b. Apparent Contradiction
- c. Mystery

2. Four Principles:

- a. Pray— “Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned from much reading and speculation” (Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*).
- b. Examine the Context
- c. Let Scripture Interpret Scripture
 - i. Diagnose the difficulty
 - ii. Find relevant passages
 - iii. Synthesize
- d. Ask for Help

Matthew 12:22–32—“Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to him. He healed him, so that the man could both speak and see. 23 All the crowds were astounded and said, “Could this be the Son of David?” 24 When the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” 25 Knowing their thoughts, he told them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges. 28 If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 How can someone enter a strong man’s house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. 30 Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters. 31 **Therefore, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.”**

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STUDYING FAMILIAR PASSAGES

1. Five Principles

- a. Pray
- b. Don't Assume; Ask
- c. Search for Surprises
- d. Meditate
 - i. "The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is, because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation" (Thomas Watson).
 - ii. Meditation is "deep thinking on truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purpose of understanding, application, and prayer" (Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 49).
- e. Express

2. Example

Psalm 23—"A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd;

I have what I need.

2 He lets me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside quiet waters.

3 He renews my life;

he leads me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

4 Even when I go through the darkest valley,

I fear no danger,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD

as long as I live."

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CONCLUSION: YOU ARE APPROVED!

2 Timothy 2:15—“Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.”

1. Four Mistakes to Avoid:

- a. Present yourself to God to get approved.
- b. Fail to present yourself, fearing God’s disapproval.
- c. Present yourself to men as one approved.
- d. Present others to God as one approved.

2. The Challenge: Present yourself to God as one approved. You don’t need to get approved. You are already approved.

Colossians 1:21–23—“Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. 22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him— 23 if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard.”

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RECOMMENDED BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

Interpretive Method—General Tools and Categories for How to Study the Bible

Beginner:

- R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*

Intermediate:

- J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*
- John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*
- Robert Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*

Advanced:

- Jason DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*
- Andy Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*

Biblical Reference—General Tools for Understanding History, Literature, and Theology

- Thomas C. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*
- B&H, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
- IVP, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*
- IVP, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

Biblical Theology—Grasping the Overall Storyline of Scripture

- Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Biblical Theology)
- James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Biblical Theology)
- Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End* (Biblical Theology)
- Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture* (Biblical Theology)
- Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Biblical Theology)

Commentary—Guidance on the Interpretation of Particular Books and Texts

- ESV Study Bible
- NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible
- IVP, *New Bible Commentary*
- Baker, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*
- Get author recommendations from those you trust for specific commentaries
- Tremper Longman, *Old Testament Commentary Survey*
- D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*

Study Guides—Guided Study through Questions for Observation and Application

- Crossway, *Knowing the Bible Series* (knowingthebibleseries.org)
- The Good Book Company, *Good Book Guides* (thegoodbook.com)
- Matthias Media, *Pathway Bible Guides* (matthiasmedia.com)
- Navigators, *LifeChange Bible Study Series* (navigators.org)