

Proper Hermeneutics | The Nitty Gritty of Studying Scripture

- **Context:** There are 3 levels of context – 1. Within the passage; 2. within the book; 3; within scripture as a whole. We have got to understand that the bible is to be read as a whole. Though we can zero in on certain passages, do not forget the meta-narrative in scripture. Like, there's individual passages (i.e. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Phil 1:21) but realize that the surrounding context Paul is speaking about the power of the Gospel *while* he is in prison. But the bigger context is that this is within Paul's missionary journey. But the bigger context is that this isn't even about Paul, but about the substitutionary work of Jesus. But the bigger context is that this verse falls within a redemptive Gospel plan of God creating all things good, sin fracturing creation thus rendering it futile, creation then groans and longs for a savior to redeem it, Jesus coming to earth as God to absorb the wrath of sin, and now we eagerly wait for the day that Jesus comes back again. You should always have "context" on your mind.
- **Main Idea:** In a passage, there are many things you can get out of it. And the most common mistake when reading scripture is mistaking a sub point for the main idea. Because of the many genres in the bible, the way to find the main idea is different for each one. For narratives, the main idea usually is found at the climax of the story; for the Gospels, the main idea is typically determined by context (it's what the whole story is focusing on). For example, the main idea of Jesus feeding the 5000 isn't that He can do miracles nor is it the fact that you pray and good things happen, if you read within context Jesus is showing and teaching his disciples what "compassion" really looks like. Remember that the author already has a main idea in the passage, it is up to you and I to humbly dig for it.
- **Allow the Text to Read You:** Many times we like to read Scripture as if it were the newspaper. We'll see what's interesting and we'll avoid the boring stuff. But Paul writes in 2 Timothy that it should not be treated as such but this sacred text you are reading is supposed to prompt you towards holiness. They are, according to Solomon in Ecclesiastes, "goads" that spur you to live life differently. So the challenge is to do some hard self-examination when you encounter spiritual truths in the text. How does the text speak to you and how should *you* (not people around you) respond?
- **Drawing Application:** The application from the text is ultimately a prompting of the Holy Spirit. When we are attentive to the Holy Spirit and we are truly *wanting to study*, the Holy Spirit tends to use Scripture to sharpen, rebuke, exhort, and teach us. As we are transformed by the reading and study of the word, we translate that into our daily lives as individuals, family, and church. Always take the main idea of the passage and pull application from it. Usually (not always) the application is found within the same passage. When Jesus teaches a certain thing, watch how he applies it – that becomes our example. Let me throw this out real quick – "wanting" and "doing" are two different things. I can "want" to study scripture but unless I go about blocking off time in my day, grabbing my pens and notes, and studying it...then there's only a desire but no commitment. There's no actuality and we deceive ourselves. So make goals, have a vision as to how you're going to apply biblical truths into your life and the life of your family. However, allow truth and the implementing of truth be accompanied by love. Your end goal isn't to beat yourself or your family into submission...rather, it is to lovingly encourage, lovingly rebuke, and lovingly mold...and at the end of the day, all we can do is position ourselves to be transformed...it is the Holy Spirit that ultimately changes the heart of a person.