

LETTING
THE
Bible
SPEAK TO
YOU!

A systematic method of Bible study

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--- Keith Andrews, teacher

LETTING THE BIBLE SPEAK TO YOU

Wk 1 What is the Bible and how should I approach it?

Study Mk. 1:1-13

Wk 2 Looking for important literary relationships

Study Mk. 1:14-45

Wk 3 Sharing What We Have Learned

Discuss Mk. 1:14-45

Wk 4 Asking Significant Interpretive Questions

Study Mk. 2:1-3:6

Wk 5 Sharing What We Have Learned

Discuss Mk. 2:1-3:6

Wk 6 Figures of Speech

Find Examples

Wk 7 Bringing our Observations into Focus

Study Mk. 3:7-35

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Discuss Mk. 3:7-35; Study Mk. 4:1-34

Wk 9 Sharing What We Have Learned

Discuss Mk. 4:1-34; Study Mk. 4:35-6:6a

Wk 10 Moving from Observation to Application

Discuss Mk. 4:35-6:6a; Study Mk. 6:6b-56 - Develop an application from one of your observations.

Wk 11 Sharing What We Have Learned

Discuss Mk. 6:6b-56 and Applications; Study Rom. 1:18-2:11

Wk 12 Sharing What We Have Learned

Discuss Rom. 1:18-2:11

LESSON I

WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND HOW SHOULD I APPROACH IT?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The way we use the Bible is determined primarily by our view of its nature. If we consider the Bible to be a collection of human ideas and ideals or merely an anthology of morality tales we will approach from a purely intellectual perspective. If, on the other hand, we consider the Bible to be God's word to man in human language, then we will tend to approach it from a more spiritual perspective. We will also be much more inclined to "let the Bible speak to us."

The Church has confessed throughout the ages that the Bible constitutes sacred Scripture. The early church was convinced that the Old Testament was inspired by the Holy Spirit and was God's word for them. This attitude is rooted in the church's Jewish roots and in Christ's high view of the Scriptures. The words of Christ and the writings of the apostles were considered to be on the same spiritual level as the OT Scriptures. That is to say that they too were inspired by the Holy Spirit and, as Paul wrote, are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

HOW SHOULD I APPROACH THE BIBLE?

The Bible is unlike any other book. Our approach to reading, understanding and applying it to our lives must, therefore, be different as well.

THE BIBLE MUST BE READ *PRAYERFULLY*. We must trust that the same Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture will illumine our hearts and minds so that we might comprehend it. We must pray as the Psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Ps. 119:18).

THE BIBLE MUST BE READ *PRACTICALLY*. We must always be ready and willing to respond to the message we read. Our response may range from thanksgiving and praise to confession of sin and repentance.

THE BIBLE MUST BE READ *PERSISTENTLY*. The Word of God is food for our souls. We must feed upon it regularly. To do otherwise is to risk spiritual malnutrition! No one is strong enough to maintain a right relationship with God without regular meditation upon His Word. The Psalmist wrote, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:11).

THE BIBLE MUST BE READ Pervasively. There are no unimportant or irrelevant portions of the Scripture. All the Bible is God's Word, His revelation, to us. Because the Bible is a unity, we can often understand a verse or passage better by comparing it to another passage.

THREE STEPS TO CAREFUL BIBLE READING:

1. OBSERVATION

The Bible student must first learn to observe; to "see" (i.e., become conscious of) what the Scripture actually says. Too often Christians bring ideas, interpretations and applications with them when they approach the Scripture which unduly color their perception of God's Word. We must learn to observe terms, literary relations, and literary style in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the revelation of God. Careful observing is a conscious activity.

2. INTERPRETATION

We must let the Bible communicate to us. While we all seek for answers, we must let the Scripture itself determine the questions. Sound Biblical interpretation results from asking and answering questions that arise, not from one's life experience, but from one's observations of the Scripture. It is best to apply the following procedure in formulating possible answers to interpretive questions:

- 1) Consider the paragraphs before and after the one being studied.
- 2) Compare discussions of the same or similar topics within the same book.
- 3) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics by the same author in other books.
- 4) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics by other authors within the same testament.
- 5) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics in the other testament.
- 6) Survey the material available on the subject in extra-biblical sources (i.e., commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, etc.).

3. APPLICATION

Once the Bible student has observed what the Scripture actually says and has drawn interpretive questions from those observations; once the student has attempted to answer those questions by drawing upon Biblical and extra-biblical sources; then, and only then, is he ready to move into the area of application. The student should be aware that, while most biblical principles can be directly applied to life in the present day, it is sometimes necessary to adapt or adjust them culturally. **BE CAREFUL!**

ASSIGNMENT: Read through Mark 1:1-13 several times. In an informal way, write down several of your observations from the text.

EXAMPLES:

1) I observe that Mark's quote from Isaiah, "as it is written in Isaiah the prophet . . ." followed by a description of John's coming, identifies John as the fulfillment of the prophecy.

2) I observe a contrast drawn between the baptism of John ("with water") and the baptism of Jesus ("with the Holy Spirit") in verse 8.

LESSON 2

LOOKING FOR IMPORTANT LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

WORKING WITH THE TEXT

CONNECTIVES

Connectives join ideas together to create the flow of a narrative or the sense of an argument. Even though connectives are little words, they have great impact on the meaning of the text. Observe them carefully!

LOGICAL CONNECTIVES:

for, since (the Reason or Cause)
so, therefore, thus (the Effect)
in order that, so that, so (the Purpose)
but, nevertheless, yet (Contrast)
also, as, like (Comparison)
first, last, or (Series of statements)

CHRONOLOGICAL CONNECTIVES:

after, as, now, while

GEOGRAPHICAL CONNECTIVES:

where, from there

EMPHATIC CONNECTIVES:

indeed, only

LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

Careful observation of literary relationships within the text will greatly enhance the student's understanding of the Scripture. Study the following definitions and examples.

COMPARISON

A literary comparison draws attention to the similarities between two or more particulars (people, places, things, events, etc.).

Ex: Lk. 13:1-9. In this passage, a comparison is drawn between the Galileans and an unproductive fig tree. In both cases their lack of fruitfulness will eventually lead to their destruction.

CONTRAST

A literary contrast is used to draw attention to the differences between two or more particulars that are, in a general sense, similar.

Ex., Lk. 15:1-2. Here we see the tax collectors and sinner's response to Jesus being contrasted with that of the religious leaders. The tax collectors and sinners have come to hear while the religious leaders have come to complain.

REPETITION

Repetition is the recurrence of a term or phrase within a passage. Such repetition has the effect of emphasizing that particular idea or thing.

Ex., Matt. 5:3-11. Each verse in this passage begins with the words, "blessed are."

CONTINUITY

Continuity is the recurrence of similar but not identical terms or phrases within a passage.

Ex., Ps. 119. Every verse in this Psalm contains some term or phrase which refers to the Word of God.

vs. 1- the law of the LORD

vs. 2 - his statutes

vs. 3 - his ways

vs. 4 - precepts

vs. 5 - your decrees

vs. 6 - all your commands

PROGRESSION

Progression is the development of an idea in a particular direction. Progressions may be geographical, temporal, ideological, etc.

Ex., Acts 1:8. The phrase, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" shows the step-by-step movement of the gospel proclamation, geographically and temporally.

COMPLETION

Completion brings a progression to an end. It can be thought of as the progression's final unit.

Ex., Acts 1:8. When the witness of Christ has reached the "ends of the earth," the progression will be completed.

CLIMAX

The climax is the high point in a narrative. It is the event or idea to which that which precedes it has been leading.

Ex., Acts 9:1-4. The voice of the Lord speaking to Paul provides the dramatic climax of his conversion account.

PIVOT

A pivot provides a change of direction in the flow of a narrative or argument.

Ex., Mk. 1:9-13. The baptism of Jesus provides a pivot to the narrative of Mk. 1. The focus of the narrative moves from John and his ministry to Jesus and His ministry.

INTERCHANGE

Interchange provides an alternation of elements within the flow of the text.

GENERALIZATION

Generalization is literary movement from specific to general. It often involves drawing a general principle from particular circumstances.

Ex., James 2:1-7. In this passage, James uses a specific example of special attention being shown to a rich man to make the general point that believers should not show favoritism.

PARTICULARIZATION

Particularization is literary movement from a general idea to specific examples.

Ex., Matt. 6:1-8. The general principle is that acts of righteousness should not be done to receive the approval of men. Specific examples are giving and praying which should be done in secret.

CAUSE & EFFECT

Cause and effect is moving from the reason to the result.

Ex., Mk. 4:37-39. The wind died down and it became calm because Jesus rebuked the storm. Jesus spoke and the storm was calmed. This passage demonstrates the superiority of Christ over nature.

FOUNDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Foundations and conclusion are, in some ways, similar to cause and effect. This literary device, however, deals with the logical progression and the conclusion of an argument.

Ex., Rom. 6:1-12. In the first 11 verses of this passage, Paul presents the foundations (or basis) for his argument concerning the believer's participation in Christ's death and resurrection. The believer is dead with respect to sin and alive with respect to God. The conclusion of the argument is in vs. 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

INSTRUMENTALITY

Instrumentality is the means by which something is accomplished.

Ex., Lk. 5:12-14. While we know that the power to heal is in Jesus Himself, Jesus' touch and His spoken word are the instruments of this healing.

EXPLANATION

Explanation consists of a statement followed by its interpretation or an illustration.

Ex., Acts 2. The first 13 verses of Acts 2 consist of a description of the events on the day of Pentecost. The rest of the chapter is Peter's explanation of those events.

IDENTIFICATION

The meaning or significance of something is established by being equated with something else.

Ex., Lk. 22:19-20. The bread and cup are made significant by being identified with the body and blood of the Lord. The new covenant is also identified with the shedding of Jesus' blood.

PREPARATION

Preparation is an introduction to an idea or event which gives the reader information necessary to understand that idea or event.

Ex., Lk. 19:11-27. The first verse of this passage gives us the setting and purpose for the telling of the parable, ". . . because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once."

SUMMARIZATION

A summarization is a wrap-up or survey of material that has been presented. Often the point of the passage is made in a single statement or in brief form.

Ex., Josh. 21:43-45. This paragraph summarizes the conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites which was recorded in the preceding chapters.

COMPLEMENTATION

Complementation occurs when there is a pair of items, one fulfilling or completing the other. These pairs may consist of a question and an answer, a problem and its solution, a promise and its fulfillment, etc.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Mark 1:14-45 thoroughly. Find and record places in the text where you observe use of the literary devices described above.

EXAMPLES:

- 1) I observe a CHRONOLOGICAL PROGRESSION indicated by the connective "after" in vs. 14. First John was arrested and then Jesus came into Galilee.
- 2) I observe a CAUSE AND EFFECT relationship between vs. 17, "Jesus said to them, 'follow me...'" and vs. 18, "and immediately they left their nets and followed him." They followed because he called.

LESSON 3

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Students should be prepared to present and discuss their most significant observations from the first chapter of Mark. Those observations made informally during the first week can now be put into more formal language. Observations based on the literary relationships presented in lesson 2 can be now drawn from vv. 1-13.

The preliminary work in Bible study is to determine what the text meant to those to whom it was originally given. This is the very important task of "exegesis" or "reading out" the text's meaning. If our study of the text does not go beyond this, however, our study is little more than academic. Has God spoken through the Scripture to your heart? The message of the Bible is for believers of all ages. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

ASSIGNMENT: Write out one "spiritual truth" that you recognized as you studied this Chapter along with the observations that led you to discover that truth.

LESSON 4

ASKING SIGNIFICANT INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

THREE PHASES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1) THE *DEFINITION* PHASE

WHAT? - The definition phase seeks to answer the question what. The focus may be on a particular term or a particular structural relationship. The student is attempting to discern exactly what the author has presented.

2) THE *RATIONAL* PHASE

WHY? - The rational phrase seeks to answer the question why.

- A) Why did this particular event or action occur?
- B) Why is this statement or literary relationship here?
- C) Why is this statement true or necessary?

3) THE *PRINCIPLES* PHASE

SO WHAT? - The principles phase seeks to find the fundamental truth behind a particular statement or event. What are the implications of this event or statement? This phase serves to bridge interpretation to application. Once the meaning of a passage has been determined, the door is open to proper application.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

A. Interpretive questions must be based directly on our observations of the text. It is of little value to ask questions that have nothing to do with the passage being studied or that miss the point of the observation. Consider the following example:

OBSERVATION: I observe REPETITION in Jesus authoritative ministry in Mk. 1. In vs. 22, Jesus is seen teaching with authority. In vs. 27 He demonstrates his authority over evil spirits.

GOOD INTERPRETIVE QUESTION:

Q. Why does Mark emphasize Jesus' authority?

POOR INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS:

Q. Why did the Scribes not minister with authority? (The observation makes no mention of the Scribes).

Q. Why did Jesus teach with authority? (While this may be a valid question, it has nothing to do with Mark's use of repetition).

B. Interpretive questions should be framed in such a way that they cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

Good interpretive questions elicit a wide range of possible answers. It is important that they should be "open ended" and not prematurely introduce interpretation into the questioning process. The good interpretive question above, for example, becomes much less though provoking if simplified to: Does Mark emphasize Jesus' authority? (a yes-no question).

ASSIGNMENT: Read Mark 2:1-3:6 carefully. Record your observations based on the literary relationships in the text. Choose several observations and draw interpretive questions from them. It is not necessary to record possible answers, although you may wish to have them in mind.

EXAMPLE:

I observe CAUSE AND EFFECT in 2:15 between Jesus having a meal with tax collectors and sinners and the fact that there were so many such people who followed Him. This relationship is indicated through the use of the logical connective "for."

Q. Why were tax collectors and sinners attracted to Jesus in such large numbers?

LESSON 5

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Students should be prepared to present and discuss their most significant observations and the interpretive questions based on those questions. The group will be allowed to pose possible answers to the questions. Remember that, as much as possible, the answers should be drawn from the text. It may be necessary to look beyond the particular passage being studied to arrive at a definitive answer. Remember to expand your sources in the following order:

- 1) Consider the paragraphs before and after the one being studied.
- 2) Compare discussions of the same or similar topics within the same book.
- 3) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics by the same author in other books.
- 4) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics by other authors within the same testament.
- 5) Consider discussions of the same or similar topics in the other testament.
- 6) Survey the material available on the subject in extra-biblical sources (i.e., commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, etc.).

ASSIGNMENT: Write out possible answers to the interpretive questions you asked in lesson 4. Be sure to document your answers from the Scripture or from other sources.

EXAMPLE:

I observe CAUSE AND EFFECT in 2:15 between Jesus having a meal with tax collectors and sinners and the fact that there were so many such people who followed Him. This relationship is indicated through the use of the logical connective "for."

Q. Why were tax collectors and sinners attracted to Jesus in such large numbers?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

1. The crowds (which included many non-religious people) were attracted to Jesus because they had heard about his amazing works and teaching. Note Mk. 2:12-13.
2. It was to these people, rather than to those who considered themselves "righteous," that Jesus directed His message. Consider Mk. 2:17 and 1 Tim. 1:15.

3. Because they were "sinners," they made no pretense of being righteous. They were, therefore, aware of their need for a Savior.

LESSON 6

FIGURES OF SPEECH

How does one describe something that cannot be seen? How can heavenly ideas be communicated through a language that is rooted and grounded in the earthly and temporal? It is most often done through the use of figures, symbols and poetic language. Additionally, such language adds a vividness and excitement to the flow of Scriptural narrative.

While figurative language is an essential part of theological language, it also presents a problem. The failure to recognize such speech as figurative often leads to misinterpretation of the text. What was meant to make clearer has the effect of making more clouded. The reader must carefully consider the context of the passage in order to determine figurative language from literal.

RECOGNIZING THE FIGURES

SIMILE

The simile is an explicit comparison which uses the words "like" or "as." Some authors refer to the parables of Jesus as "similitudes" because they so often begin with the phrase "the kingdom of God is like . . ." The use of simile usually draws attention to one point of correspondence or similarity between the things being compared. It is important not to over-extend the relationship in interpretation.

EXAMPLES:

Mk. 1:10 "As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove."

Lk. 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . .how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

METAPHOR

A metaphor is an implied comparison which does not use the words "like" or "as." This figure of speech is used to describe one thing in terms of something else. Like the simile, the metaphor normally points to one point of similarity between the objects being compared. Be careful not to "over interpret" the analogy.

EXAMPLES:

Lk. 13:32 - Referring to Herod, Jesus said, "Go and tell that fox. . ."

Ps. 18:2 - "The LORD is my rock and my fortress . . ."

PERSONIFICATION

Personification occurs when an idea, a thing, or a quality is represented as a person or is given the characteristics or attributes of a person.

EXAMPLES:

Jn. 3:8 - "The wind blows wherever it pleases."

Matt. 6:34 - "Tomorrow will be anxious for itself."

Prov. 1:20 - "Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice."

EUPHEMISM

A euphemism is a term that is substituted for another word, phrase or idea that is deemed to harsh or unpleasant.

EXAMPLES:

Jn. 11:11-13 - "After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep."

Php. 3:8 (NIV) - ". . . I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . ." In this example, the translators have used a less harsh word than the apostle. The KJV "dung" is much closer to the actual meaning of Paul's Gk. word.

HYPERBOLE

An hyperbole is an exaggeration which is made for the purpose of effect. It intentionally overstates the facts and is not intended to be interpreted literally. Though the hyperbole does not accurately present the facts, it does point in the direction of the truth and is used to emphasize the point it exaggerates.

EXAMPLES:

Mk. 1:33 - "The whole town gathered at the door . . ."

Gen. 22:17 - "I will multiply your descendants as . . . the sand which is on the seashore."

IRONY or SARCASM

Irony or sarcasm is used to denote the opposite of what is being said. While this means of communication is not common in Scripture, examples can be found.

EXAMPLES:

1 Cor. 4:8 - "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich!"

Matt. 27:29 - ". . . and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

ASSIGNMENT: Find at least one example of each of the figures of speech listed above. Do not limit yourself to Mark's gospel.

LESSON 7

BRINGING OUR OBSERVATIONS INTO FOCUS

TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS

Sometimes we study the Scripture as if we were looking at it through a microscope. Our purpose is to focus in on the details of the text. We don't want to let even the smallest word or relationship go by unobserved. At other times, though, we need to take the telescope approach. We need to pull way back and "take the long view." In other words, we must see those details in the context of the whole.

For convenience, we divide the text of Scripture into sentences, verses, paragraphs, segments or chapters, books, and Testaments. There are four different types of observations that will be dealt with in this lesson, those pertaining to:

- a) The relationship of segment to segment
- b) Relationships within a paragraph
- c) Relationships of parts of paragraphs within a segment
- d) Relationships of paragraphs as wholes

CATEGORY "A" OBSERVATIONS

A category "a" observation deals with general or specific ideas that span two or more segments. An observation of this type takes a relatively long view and helps us to focus on the general flow of the narrative or argument within the book.

EXAMPLE:

I observe a PROGRESSION in the size of the crowd that follows Jesus from segment to segment.

1:33 - "And the whole city was gathered about the door."

2:2 - "And many were gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door."

3:7-8 - " . . . and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from about Tyre and Sidon . . ."

CATEGORY "B" OBSERVATIONS

Category "b" observations deal with insights drawn from a single paragraph of the segment. "B" observations must be made one paragraph at a time.

EXAMPLE: (drawn from the paragraph 3:19b-27)

I observe a COMPARISON, drawn through the use of METAPHOR, between Satan, a kingdom, a house, and a strong man in the passage from 3:23-27.

CATEGORY "C" OBSERVATIONS

Category "c" observations deal with the relationships of words, phrases, clauses, events or ideas which span two or more paragraphs within a single segment.

EXAMPLE:

I observe a GEOGRAPHIC PROGRESSION through this segment, moving from the sea (3:7), to the hills (3:13), to their home (3:20).

CATEGORY "D" OBSERVATIONS

Category "d" observations deal with the relationships of paragraphs as wholes within a single segment. Observations of this type focus our attention on the main themes of the paragraphs.

EXAMPLE:

The authority that Jesus demonstrates over unclean spirits in the first paragraph is granted to his disciples in the second paragraph. I observe that this action IDENTIFIES the disciples' authority with that of Jesus.

NOTE: All examples in this lesson are drawn from Mark 3:7-35.

ASSIGNMENT: After reading and studying the segment from Mk. 3:7-35, make and record an observation of each type.

LESSONS 8 & 9

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Students should be prepared to present and discuss their most significant observations, interpretive questions and possible answers drawn from the assigned segments. Be sure to indicate, in addition to the relationship upon which the observation is based, the category of your observation. Try to balance the types of observations so that your focus does not become fixed on either the "microscopic" or on the "telescopic" view!

LESSON 8 ASSIGNMENT: Study mark 4:1-34 and make observations in all categories. Choose at least two observations on which to base interpretive question. Pose possible answers to at least one of your interpretive questions.

LESSON 9 ASSIGNMENT: Study mark 4:35-6:6a and make observations in all categories. Choose at least two observations on which to base interpretive question. Pose possible answers to at least one of your interpretive questions.

LESSON 10

MOVING FROM OBSERVATION TO APPLICATION

It should be clear that the Bible is not a collection of isolated verses. The flow of events and ideas in Scripture is sensible and logical. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the meaning of a particular passage in its literary and historical context.

CONSIDERING THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT

THE OCCASION

It is important for the reader to be able to identify and articulate the occasion of the event or saying that is being considered. Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) What were the characteristics of the original audience?
- 2) Is this portion of Scripture historical narrative, an epistle, poetry, etc.?
- 3) Is this particular passage explanatory, descriptive, instructive, illustrative, figurative, etc.?

THE POINT

It must be assumed that there is a reason why this particular text has been included in Scripture. As Paul pointed out to Timothy, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness . . .*" (2 Tim. 3:16). The student should attempt to discern the single "main point" of the passage.

MAKING APPLICATION

POINTS OF CORRESPONDENCE

We do not live in an Oriental culture of the first century. While there are many points of CORRESPONDENCE between that culture and ours, there are, likewise, many points of INCONSISTENCY. While the nature of humanity is unchanged, the circumstances of everyday living are quite different. It is important, after studying the historical context of the passage, to consider the similarities and differences in life situations. Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) What are the points of CORRESPONDENCE between the life situations of the original audience and my life situation?

2) What are the points of INCONSISTENCY between the life situations of the original audience and my life situations?

3) Do those differences, if any, impact on the point of the passage?

THE SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE

Often it is possible to apply the Scripture directly to our own lives. When there is a one-to-one CORRESPONDENCE in the life situation this is always the case. When there is no such CORRESPONDENCE, we must look for a Biblical principle. A Biblical principle is a universal truth. As such, it that is not tied to culture, but has application in every culture.

To make application of a Scriptural passage where there is an imperfect CORRESPONDENCE in the life situation, answer the following questions:

1) What principle can be drawn from the original life situation as it appears in Scripture?

2) How does that principle apply to my own life situation?

"RULES" FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1) A text cannot mean anything that it could not have meant to its author or his readers.

2) If life situations are identical, then God's instruction to us is identical.

3) If life situations are not identical, then one must endeavor to discern the principle of God's Word.

4) The reader must separate Biblical absolutes from that which is reflective of culture.

EXAMPLE:

I observe PROGRESSION in the actions of Herod which lead to John's death.

6:22 "When Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests."

6:22b "The king said to the girl, 'Ask for whatever you wish, and I will grant it.'"

6:25b ". . .give me at once the head of John the baptist on a platter."

6:27 ". . . the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head."

QUESTION: What compelled Herod to keep his promise?

POSSIBLE ANSWER: The text states that Herod feared John. He must have feared the ridicule of his guests, Herodias, and her daughter even more. He did not want to be seen breaking a vow that he had made in their presence.

vs. 26 "And the king was exceedingly sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her."

APPLICATION: The whole of the paragraph can be seen as a contrast between the man who lives to serve and please God (John) and the man who lives to serve himself and please men (Herod). A lesson to be learned from this account is that to be righteous in an unrighteous world involves total commitment; being willing to stand for that which is right, but at the same time, being willing to accept the consequences of that stand. John was a holy and a righteous man. This did not, however, keep him from falling victim to Herod, who was a weak and unrighteous man. John certainly knew, when he confronted the king with his unlawful act (vs. 18), that he was putting his all on the line. Few of us will be called upon to confront a king, but we must be every bit as fearless in performing that which God has called us to.

ASSIGNMENT: Read and study Mk. 6:6b-56. Record your most significant observations. Select several observations which inspire interpretive questions. Record your questions and pose possible answers. Develop an application from one of those observations.

LESSONS 11 & 12

SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Students should be prepared to present and discuss their most significant observations, interpretive questions, possible answers and applications drawn from the assigned segments. Be sure to indicate, in addition to the relationship upon which the observation is based, the category of your observation. Try to balance the types of observations so that your focus does not become fixed on either the "microscopic" or on the "telescopic" view!

These final two lessons will deal with a segment of an epistle rather than a gospel. The character of the text itself is quite different, but the means of interpreting it remains the same.

LESSON 11 ASSIGNMENT: Study Rom. 1:18-2:11 and make observations in all categories. Choose at least two observations on which to base interpretive questions. Pose possible answers to at least one of your interpretive questions.

LESSON 12 ASSIGNMENT: Draw applications from the Rom.1:18-2:11 passage and be prepared to share them with the class. Be sure that your applications are based solely upon your observations of the text.