

LETTING THE  
**BIBLE**  
*TRANSFORM*  
YOUR MIND

*BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.  
---ROM. 12:2*

A systematic method of Bible study  
drawn from the writings of Robert Traina, Lyle Story,  
Charles Holman, Gordon Fee, and Douglas Stuart.

--- Keith Andrews, teacher

# LESSON 1

## 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 – what we think the Bible is. If we consider the Bible to be a collection of human ideas and ideals or merely an anthology of myths and fables we will approach from a purely intellectual perspective. If, on the other hand, we consider the Bible to actually be God's Word to man in human language, then we will approach it from a more reverent and spiritual perspective. We will also be much more inclined to acknowledge its authority and "let the Bible transform our minds."

The Church has believed throughout the centuries that the Bible is 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 Jesus' high view of the Scriptures. As time went on, the words of Christ and the writings of the apostles were understood and accepted 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).

It is essential that 21<sup>st</sup> Century believers understand the nature of the Bible in the same way that the early church did; it IS God's Word for you. It has the power, not only to instruct you, but to transform your life. God is speaking through His Word; let Him speak to you.

### THREE STEPS TO CAREFUL BIBLE READING:

#### 1. OBSERVATION

The first thing the beginning Bible reader must learn is to carefully observe; take the time to see what the Bible actually says. Second, the reader must let the Bible speak for itself. Too often Christians bring their own ideas, interpretations and applications with them to the study of God's Word. That is not helpful, because their preconceptions can obscure their understanding of what God is saying; their preconceptions clutter their thinking and keep them from hearing what God wants them to hear. Christians must also learn to recognize certain terms, relationships, and literary styles in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the revelation of God.

Careful observation is a conscious activity, it isn't automatic; you have to do it on purpose.

## **2. INTERPRETATION**

If you are going to be transformed by the Bible you must let the Bible communicate ITS truth. We all seek for answers, but we must let the Bible 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 biblical text. It is only when we understand the questions – the issues the Bible itself presents – that we will be able to comprehend its answers. The whole idea of asking significant interpretative questions will be covered in a more complete and practical manner in Lesson 4.

Here is a logical procedure for letting the Bible speak to you about any particular issue:

- 1) Consider what the Bible says about it in the paragraphs before and after the one you are reading.
  
- 2) Compare discussions of the same or similar topics elsewhere in 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 in 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 like commentaries, Bible dictionaries, or Bible encyclopedias.

### **EXAMPLE:**

Let's say you are studying 2 Thessalonians and you come to Chapter 2:1-2, which says:

*"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come."*

In verse 2 Paul uses the word "prophecy." You may wonder, "Just what does that word mean"?

According to the instructions above, we begin our study by looking at the preceding and following paragraphs to see if the word is used there. It isn't. Then we would look to see if any discussion of prophecy can be found anywhere else in the book of 2 Thess. (A good concordance or computer-based bible study program will be very helpful in making this kind of survey). Again, we don't find any other occurrences of the word "prophecy." We know that 2 Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul, so the next step is to look through his other epistles to see how (or if) he uses the word "prophecy" in them. Now we are getting somewhere . . . the word "prophecy" occurs in five times in Chapters 12-14 of 1 Cor. (12:10, 13:2, 14:6, 14:22). Once we have thoroughly studied what Paul has written in 1 Corinthians, we are ready to move on to other New Testament books. We discover that the word "prophecy" is used in Matt. 13:14, Revelation 1:3, and a significant passage in 2 Peter 1:20-21. To make our study complete we would have to also look at the occurrences of the word "prophecy" in the Old Testament.

After looking carefully at what the Scripture itself says, if you still are unsure or if you would just like more information on the subject, you may consult a Bible dictionary, Bible encyclopedia, or an commentary or two.

### **3. APPLICATION**

Once the Bible student has observed what God's Word actually says and has drawn interpretive questions from those observations; once the student has attempted to answer those questions by drawing upon all available sources; then, and only then, is he ready to move into the area of application – i.e., moving from "what does the Bible say," to "what is the Bible teaching me to do?"

### **EXERCISES**

- 1) Read Mark 1:2-4 - Notice that Mark's quote from Isaiah, "*It is written in Isaiah the prophet . . .*" is followed by a description of John's coming. What are we supposed to believe about John?
- 2) Read Mark 1:8. When you take this verse with the preceding ones it would seem that both John and Jesus baptize. What is the difference in their modes of baptism?

# LESSON 2

## WORKING WITH THE TEXT

### PART 1

#### CONNECTIVES

Connectives are words that join ideas together to create the flow of a story or the sense of an argument. Even though connectives are usually little words, they have great impact on the meaning of the text. The more carefully you observe them the more clearly the Bible will speak to you and the more transformative it will become!

#### LOGICAL CONNECTIVES:

for, since (the Reason or Cause)

**Ex: Mark 2:4** – "*Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus. . .*"

so, therefore, thus (the Effect)

**Ex: Mark 1:30-31** – "*Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up.*"

in order that, so that, so (the Purpose)

**Ex: Mark 5:23** – "*My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.*"

but, nevertheless, yet (Contrast)

**Ex: Mark 1:8** – "*I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*"

also, as, like (Comparison)

**Ex: Mark 4:15** – "*Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown.*"

first, last, or (Series of statements)

**Ex: Mark 4:28** – "*All by itself the soil produces grain— first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.*"

#### CHRONOLOGICAL CONNECTIVES:

after, as, now, while

**Ex: Mark 1:14** – "*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.*"

### **GEOGRAPHICAL CONNECTIVES:**

where, from, from there

**Ex: Mark 1:9** – *"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."*

### **EMPHATIC CONNECTIVES:**

indeed, only

**Ex: Mark 9:13 (NASB)** – *"But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come. . . "*

## **PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE**

READ the following passage and try to identify the types of connectives that are used:

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

18 ¶ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" —which means, "God with us." 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

# LESSON 3

## WORKING WITH THE TEXT

### PART 2

#### LEARNING TO MAKE OBSERVATIONS

The essential tasks in Bible study are to determine what the text actually *says* and, once that is determined, what it *means*. This is called "exegesis" or "reading out" the meaning of the passage. It is crucial that the reader allow the Bible to speak for itself. Try not to make assumptions. Try not to allow preconceptions to color your understanding.

It is a good practice to jot down what you see. For example, the connective "And so" in vs. 4 below indicates a cause and effect relationship between the prophecy of Isaiah in vv. 2-3 and coming of John. God said: "I will send my messenger" . . . "and so John came . . ."

Here is the first chapter of Mark (NIV). Make and record as many observations as you can based on the literary connectives you have learned.

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" — 3 "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" 4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 ¶ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." 12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

14 ¶ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" 16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little

farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. 21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

23 ¶ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God!" 25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching— and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

29 ¶ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. 35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else— to the nearby villages— so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 ¶ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

# LESSON 4

## WORKING WITH THE TEXT

### PART 3

#### **LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS**

Careful observation of literary relationships within the text will greatly enhance your understanding of the Scripture. Study the following definitions and examples of literary relationships that are commonly found in the Bible.

#### **COMPARISON**

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

**Ex:** In Mark 1:16-17 Jesus compares his ministry to “sinners and tax collectors” to the work of a doctor who meets the needs of the sick rather than the healthy.

#### **CONTRAST**

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

**Ex:** In Mark 1:22 the teaching of Jesus is contrasted to that of the teachers of the law: “. . . *he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.*”

#### **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:** In the first part of Mark chapter 2, Jesus’ interaction with tax collectors and sinners is emphasized through repetition of the phrase:

2:15 - “. . . *many tax collectors and sinners.*”

2:16 - “. . . *with sinners and tax collectors.*”

2:16b - “. . . *with tax collectors and sinners.*”

#### **CONTINUITY**

*Continuity* is the recurrence of *similar* but *not identical* terms, phrases, or events within a certain portion of Scripture.

**Ex:** There is continuity in Jesus’ call of Simon and Andrew in Mark 1:16-18, James and John in Mark 1:19-20, and Levi in Mark 2:14. In every case they were near the sea, Jesus saw them, Jesus called them, and they left their work (nets, boats, tax office) and followed him. Even though similar things happened, the passages do not describe the same event.

## **PROGRESSION**

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

**Ex:** There is a progression (smaller to larger) in the size of the crowds that were attracted to Jesus as you read through Mark.

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

Mk. 2:2 – *"So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door. . ."*

Mk. 3:7-8 – *"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon."*

## **COMPLETION**

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

**Ex:** There is a progression of events leading to completion involving Jesus and a man with leprosy in Mark 1:40-42

Vs. 40 – *"If you are willing, you can make me clean."*

Vs. 41 – *"I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"*

Vs. 42 – *"Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured."*

## **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:** In Mark 1:9-11 there is an account of the events of Jesus' baptism. It begins with Jesus coming from Nazareth and reaches its climax with the voice from heaven declaring: *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

## **PIVOT**

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

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

# LESSON 5

## WORKING WITH THE TEXT

### PART 4

#### MORE LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

##### **INTERCHANGE**

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

**Ex:** In Mk. Chapter 1 there is an INTERCHANGE in the narrative between Jesus' ministry to individuals and his ministry to the crowd.

vs. 14 (crowd - Galileans)

vs. 16 (individuals – Simon and Andrew)

vs. 21 (crowd – those in the synagogue)

vs. 23 (individual – possessed man)

vs. 27 (crowd – the people were amazed)

vs. 29 (individuals – James, John, Simon, and Andrew)

vs. 32 (crowd – the people)

vs. 40 (individual – a man with leprosy)

vs. 45 (crowd – the people came from everywhere)

##### **GENERALIZATION**

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

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

##### **PARTICULARIZATION**

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

**Ex:** In Matt. 6:1-8 Jesus teaches the general principle that acts of righteousness should not be done to receive the approval of men. He then gives specific applications applying to giving and praying, which should be done in secret.

##### **CAUSE & EFFECT**

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

**Ex:** We read in Mk. 4:37-39 that the wind died down and it became calm because Jesus rebuked the storm. Jesus spoke and the storm ended. The

authoritative command of Jesus was the cause of the wind becoming calm.

### **GROUNDS & CONCLUSION**

*Grounds 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:** In Mark 10:6-8 Jesus begins a logical argument by reminding the Pharisees that it was God who made man and woman, that it was by His plan that they should leave father and mother and be united, and it is He who makes them "one flesh." Jesus concludes his argument by saying: "*Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*"

### **INSTRUMENTALITY**

*Instrumentality* is the means by which something is accomplished.

**Ex:** Jesus touched the sick and they were healed. He commanded demons and they obeyed. He put mud in a man's eyes and he regained his sight. Although the power to do these things was in Jesus himself, the touching, commanding, and mudpack were the *means* He used to bring the works about.

### **EXPLANATION**

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

**Ex:** Often Jesus would tell a parable to the crowds and then later explain it to his disciples. Another example can be found in Matthew 8:14-17 where Jesus' healing and delivering the people are explained as fulfilling "*what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.'*" Explanation often answers the question "why" or "how."

### **IDENTIFICATION**

The meaning or significance of something is established by its being equated with something else. This can be explicit, as in the example below, or it can be implied as in Acts 26:14-15 where Jesus says to Paul, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Here Jesus is identifying Himself with the church that Paul was persecuting.

**Ex:** In Mark 14:22-24 Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it with his disciples. He also took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them. It should be noted that the bread and cup are made significant by being identified with the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus.

### **PREPARATION**

*Preparation* introduces an idea or event by giving the reader the information necessary to understand that idea or event.

**Ex:** Read Mark 2:1-4. The description of the large number of people gathered around Jesus is given to prepare the reader to understand why the paralyzed man's friends found it necessary to cut a hole in the roof.

### **SUMMARIZATION**

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

**Ex:** A good example is found in Josh. 21:43-45. This single paragraph summarizes the conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan by the Israelites which was recorded in the preceding chapters.

# LESSON 6

## WORKING WITH THE TEXT

### PART 5

In the previous lessons you have been exposed to a fairly large number of literary relationships. I know that it can seem a bit overwhelming, but don't worry; they will become familiar to you as you continue to work with them.

Again I am going to ask you to take a portion of the book of Mark, read it, and record your observations. Try to find as many uses of the literary relationships described in lessons 4 and 5 as you can and be prepared to discuss them with the class.

Here are a couple of examples from the first verse of Chapter 1:

1) When I look at the first verse I notice that Mark presents Jesus Christ as "the Son of God." This is IDENTIFICATION. I might want to make note of that in my Bible's margin or in a notebook because it is a clear statement of who Jesus is: the Christ (i.e., Messiah) and the Son of God.

2) I also notice in that same verse that Mark is starting a TEMPORAL PROGRESSION by saying that this is the "*beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is clear from this opening statement that there is more to follow.

Here is the second chapter of Mark (NIV) for you to use in making your observations.

1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I

tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

13 ¶ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. 15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

18 ¶ Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" 19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins." 23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

# LESSON 7

## ASKING SIGNIFICANT INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

The psalmist wrote: "*I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.*" (Ps. 119:99). The word "meditate" in this verse means to ponder, to think about, to consider, and then to reconsider. Often, if we are open to it, the Bible will raise questions. This is good, because it makes us think; and when we think we learn. Remember, God's purpose is to transform us and He does it by renewing our *minds*.

We ask ourselves questions about what the Bible says because we believe the Bible also has the answers. Again, we have to let the Bible speak; otherwise we just end up reviewing what we already know and replaying what we already think.

The first step in finding significant answers is to pose significant questions. Here are some helps in learning to ask good interpretative questions.

### THREE PHASES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:

#### 1) START WITH 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. What is this? What does this mean? When you ask these questions you are attempting to discern exactly what the author has presented.

#### 2) MOVE TO THE RATIONAL PHASE

##### WHY?

The rational phrase seeks to answer the question "why".

- A) Why is it significant that this particular event or action occurred?
- B) Why is this statement or literary relationship included at this point in the story?
- C) Why is this statement true or why is this statement important?

#### 3) END WITH THE PRINCIPLES PHASE

##### SO WHAT?

The principles phase seeks to find the fundamental universal truth behind a particular statement or event. What are the implications of this occurrence or this saying? This phase serves as a bridge between interpretation and application. Once the

meaning of a passage has been determined, the door is open to proper application.

## **ASKING THE *RIGHT* QUESTIONS**

It is very important that interpretive questions be based directly on your observations of the text. It is of little value to ask questions that have nothing to do with the passage you are studying or that miss the point of the observation. Consider the following example:

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 were the people so amazed with Jesus teaching? (While this may be a valid question, it has nothing to do with Mark's use of repetition).

It is also important that your interpretive questions 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 thought provoking if it is simplified to: Does Mark emphasize Jesus' authority? (A yes/no question).

Here is another example of how an accurate observation can lead to a good interpretive question:

I observe the 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."

**GOOD INTERPRETIVE QUESTION:** Why were tax collectors and sinners attracted to Jesus in such large numbers?

**POOR INTERPRETIVE QUESTION:** What did Jesus, the tax collectors, and the sinners have for dinner?

# LESSON 8

## CONSIDERING POSSIBLE ANSWERS

We are ready to share and discuss our most significant observations from the first two chapters of Mark and the interpretive questions based on those observations. The idea is for the group to pose possible answers to the questions. As much as possible, all the answers should be drawn from the text. That is the only way for the Bible to speak to us. We must avoid drawing conclusions from our own experience or from what we heard somebody say somewhere. Remember, our objective is to hear what God says.

To find a biblical answer to an interpretive question, it may be necessary to look beyond the particular passage being studied. Remember to expand your sources in the following order:

- 1) The paragraphs before and after.
- 2) Elsewhere within the same book.
- 3) In other books by the same writer.
- 4) In other books in the same testament.
- 5) In other books in the other testament.
- 6) In extra-biblical sources. NOTE: It is best to use such resources only to the extent that they point you back to the Bible.

Here is an example borrowed from last week's lesson. Now, however, we move from observation to interpretive question to possible answers:

I observe the 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 9

## FIGURES OF SPEECH

How can heavenly ideas be communicated through a language that is rooted and grounded in earthly ideas? How can eternity be expressed using only words that fit things that are temporary? How is it possible to describe something that can't be seen? In the Bible, as in the rest of literature, it is done through the use of figures of speech, symbols, and poetic language. Such language adds richness, vividness, and excitement to the flow of the biblical narrative.

Actually, figures of speech are common in ordinary conversation. For example, when my mother said, "If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, don't play in the street," she was using a figure of speech. She really didn't have to tell me that a *thousand* times. She was using exaggeration to emphasize that it wasn't the first time she had mentioned it . . . she had told me before. If a great ball player or a popular singer is referred to as a "star," it doesn't mean that they are a ball of hot gas. It is a metaphor which means that they stand out in their sphere of activity like a star stands out in the night sky. Metaphor and exaggeration (hyperbole) are familiar figures of speech.

As you study the Bible you will see that figurative language is a common and essential part of its theological language. The failure to recognize such speech as figurative presents a major problem that can lead to serious misinterpretations of the biblical text. What was meant to make the meaning clearer to you will, instead, have the effect of making its meaning more clouded. Therefore, the reader must always carefully consider the context of the passage in order to distinguish figurative language from literal narrative.

## RECOGNIZING THE FIGURES

### **SIMILE**

A *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 draws attention to a single 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.

# LESSON 10

## BRINGING OUR OBSERVATIONS INTO FOCUS

When we read a paperback book we expect it to be divided into chapters. When we turn on a TV program we know for certain that it is going to be broken up any number of times by commercial breaks. Actually, even if there were no commercials, the flow of the drama would probably be divided into parts; in plays these are called "scenes" and "acts." The Bible is much like that. A quick look will show you that the biblical text consists of the same kinds of parts that we are used to seeing in other kinds of literature; namely, sentences and paragraphs. In the Bible we also find "verses" and "chapters." Although the chapter and verse numbers are not part of the original text they have become standardized and are conveniently marked in nearly all English Bibles. In this lesson we will also use the term "segment." A segment is a portion of the biblical book that deals with a particular event or subject. Often segments and chapters are the same, but not always; a segment may span several chapters, or there may be more than one segment in a chapter. The account of Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew would be an example of the first possibility. It is one continuous narrative, but it spans three chapters. There are also many examples of chapters that contain multiple segments.

### TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS

Sometimes we study the Scripture as if we were looking at it through a microscope. We do this when we want to focus in on the details of the text. "All Scripture is God-breathed . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16), so we don't want to let even the smallest word or relationship go 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 try to see how the details fit into the context of the whole.

The text of Scripture, then, is divided into sentences, verses, paragraphs, segments, chapters, books, and Testaments. Here are the four different types of observations that will be dealt with in this lesson:

- a) Those pertaining to the relationship of segment to segment
- b) Those pertaining to relationships within a paragraph
- c) Those pertaining to relationships of parts of paragraphs within a segment
- d) Those pertaining to relationships of paragraphs as wholes

First, read Mark Chapter 3. Then we'll look at each of these types of observations one at a time. . .

### **Mark Chapter 3**

1 ¶ Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. 7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. 8 When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. 9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. 10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. 11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

13 ¶ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

22 ¶ And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." 23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. 28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." 30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

31 ¶ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around

him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

## **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 a particular book.

### **EXAMPLE:**

I observe a PROGRESSION in the size of the crowd that follows Jesus from segment to segment (assuming that chapters = segments).

Chapter 1:

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

Chapter 2:

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

Chapter 3:

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. Therefore, "b" observations must be made one paragraph at a time.

### **EXAMPLE drawn from Mark 3:22-30:**

I observe a COMPARISON, drawn through the use of METAPHOR, between Satan, a kingdom, and a house in the passage. Each of these particulars are used to establish the fact that Jesus would not do what He was doing if "Beelzebub" was the source of His power. He then uses the strongman metaphor to point out that He is not utilizing Satanic power but is, in fact, opposing it (i.e., binding the strongman).

## **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 chapter 3

3:7 - moving from the sea

3:13 - to the hills

3:20 - to their home

## **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 relationships between the main themes (primary points) of the paragraphs.

### **EXAMPLE:**

The authority that Jesus demonstrates over unclean spirits in Mark 3:11 (the first paragraph) is granted to his disciples in Mark 3:15 (the second paragraph). I observe that this action IDENTIFIES the disciples' authority with that of Jesus.

# LESSONS 11

## SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Read the segment that begins with Mark 4:1 and ends with Mark 4:35.  
Try to find and record at least one of each of the types of observations (a, b, c, and d) discussed in the previous lesson.

1 ¶ Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." 9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" 13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop— thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

21 ¶ He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? 22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you— and even more. 25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." 26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does

not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain— first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." 30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." 33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

The next segment in Mark begins with Mark 4:35 and ends with Mark 5:20. Be prepared to present and discuss what you consider to be your most significant observations, interpretive questions and possible answers drawn from this segment. 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!

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. 11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. 14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what

had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man— and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. 18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Was there anything in this segment that particularly spoke to your heart? If so, you may want to share it with the class.

# LESSON 12

## MOVING FROM OBSERVATION TO APPLICATION

It should be clear by now that the Bible is not just 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 you to be able to identify and understand how a Scriptural event or saying fits into the context of the narrative and how the narrative fits into the culture of the time. It helps to know what was going on and why the things you are reading about were said or done. 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, prophecy, or something else?
- 3) Is this particular passage explanatory, descriptive, instructive, illustrative, or figurative?

#### THE POINT

Not everything that Jesus said or did is included in the Bible. As John wrote in Jn. 21:25: *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."* Likewise, not every event in the ministry of Paul or Joshua or Daniel is included in the Scripture. It must be assumed then, that there is a reason why the particular text you are studying *has been* included in Scripture. There is something in the portion of the Bible you are looking at that has transformative significance. God's Word always has a "point."

*"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish . . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. —Isa. 55:10-11*

As you read and study, you need to thoughtfully, prayerfully, and persistently seek to understand the single "main point" of each passage.

# APPLYING WHAT YOU READ TO YOUR OWN LIFE

## POINTS OF CORRESPONDENCE

You and I do not live in an Oriental culture, nor do we live in the first century. While there are many points of CORRESPONDENCE between the culture of Jesus' day and ours, there are, likewise, many points of INCONSISTENCY. The nature of humanity, for example, is unchanged but circumstances of everyday living are quite different. It is important, after studying the literary and 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 (i.e., what is the same)?
- 2) What are the points of INCONSISTENCY between the life situations of the original audience and my life situations (i.e., what is different)?
- 3) How might those differences, if any, impact the point of the passage?

## FINDING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Often it is possible to apply the Scripture directly to your own life. When there is a one-to-one CORRESPONDENCE in the life situation – when the circumstances of the original readers and your circumstances are the same – this is always the case. When there is no such CORRESPONDENCE, you must look for a Biblical principle. A Biblical principle is a *universal truth*. This is a truth that is not tied to any particular people or culture, but has application to all people everywhere.

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?

### **Eph. 5:21-6:9**

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church,

without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"— which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

**EXAMPLE:** In Ephesians 5:21-6:9 Paul gives instructions on how individuals within the body of Christ should relate to one another. He starts with wives and husbands, then moves to children and their parents, and then to slaves and masters. The relationships between husbands, wives, and children are the same today as then. On the other hand, we do not have slaves in our culture. But the principles that are included in 6:5-9 can be applied to any relationship where there is a hierarchy of authority in a work environment. What Paul says here concerning slaves and masters can be applied to a boss and his employees. Even though the cultural correspondence is imperfect the principles are applicable.

## "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 of OBSERVATION . . . INTERPRETIVE QUESTION . . .  
POSSIBLE ANSWERS . . . APPLICATION.**

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

Mark 6:22a "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: Herod feared John. But 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 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 about his unlawful act (vs. 18), that he was putting his life 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.