

THE ADVENTURE OF JOINING GOD IN HIS WORK

Lesson 3

The Adventure of Interpreting God's Word

Learn and Practice...

- (1) Heart preparation for studying the text

- (2) The four contexts of every text

*“[T]he goal of our instruction is
love from a pure heart and a good conscience
and a sincere faith.”*

I Timothy 1:5

Heart Preparation

Sound biblical interpretation should always begin with preparing our hearts and aligning ourselves with God's goals in instructing us from his word.

"...[T]he goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." 1 Timothy 1:5

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you." John 16:12-14

Guided Exercises: Every text has four contexts.

1. _____ – Examine the passages immediately before and after your text.

"Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

1 Corinthians 15:18 / See 1 Corinthians 15:12-17 and 20.

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." Matthew 18:20 / See Matthew 18:15-19.

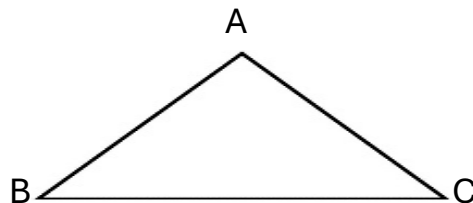
"...A little child shall lead them..." Isaiah 11:6b / See Isaiah 11:1-6a.

2. _____ – Interpret the passage considering the themes and purpose of the book your text is in.

Case Study: The Epistle of 1 John

John's purpose in writing 1 John: *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."* 1 John 5:13

John uses the word "know" thirty-nine times in his book, underscoring the theme of assurance. Therefore, he repeatedly identifies three indicators that help us "know" that we are born again.



(A) _____ Christ as the God/Man & confess your sins.
(1 John 1:5-10; 2:23-24; 4:15; 5:1)

(B) _____ (1 John 2:9-11; 3:14-18; 4:7-14, 19-21)

(C) _____ (1 John 2:3-6,29;3:7-10)

4. The Context of the Larger World

(A) The larger context of _____ and _____

Case Study: How can understanding the history and culture of a Roman triumph in Paul's day help you interpret the following passage in a way that keeps you from giving into despair?

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." II Corinthians 2: 14-16

Case Study: How can knowing the history and context of Caesarea Philippi in Jesus' day aid you in interpretation of Matthew 16:13-19?

"Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you yourselves say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

(B) **The larger context of _____**

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic (Daniel), and the New Testament in Greek. There are easy to use tools to help you understand the Bible's Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words. ^{ii iii}

Case Study: How can an understanding of the original language help you explain the contradiction in Galatians 6:2,5?

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. ⁵ For each one will bear his own load.

Case Study: How can the Greek language help you interpret Mt. 16:18? *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."*

Case Study: How can a knowledge of John's use of Greek verb tenses help you to not panic when you read I John 3:7-10?

(C) **The larger context of _____ / _____**

Excellent resource: *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, Leland Ryken.

(D) **The larger context of _____**

Case Study: How can visualizing geography aid you in understanding the familiar Rev. 3:14-16 passage?

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵ 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth.'

Case Study:

How can a knowledge of geography help you refute the criticism that there is a contradiction when Jesus was travelling from Galilee, in the North, to Jerusalem, in the South--and yet the text says he was going "up" to Jerusalem? (John 2: 12-13)

Adventure Workouts for Lesson 3

1. **Memorize** 1 Timothy 1:5- “[T]he goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”
2. Prepare your heart and use the four contexts of every text to **interpret** 1 Corinthians 13 (or another passage of your choice).
3. **Share** with someone this week what you learned about how to accurately interpret the Bible.
4. **Reflect---Discuss with someone or journal individually:**

Think about a time when you or someone you know misinterpreted a verse or passage. What effect did this faulty interpretation have on your/their thinking about God, others, self, the church, the world?

How does the church change when the people who are not officially ordained (or in ecclesiastical authority) are empowered with tools to accurately interpret the Bible for themselves?

Before this lesson, what were your guidelines/practices in interpreting the scriptures?

ⁱ *Beware the Slow Leaks – eight ways ministry leaders can thrive and finish strong* by Steve King. Chapter 3, *Align Your Life* (47-72), clarifies the significance of Caesarea Philippi in Jesus' day.

ⁱⁱ *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine is a comprehensive dictionary of the original Greek words with the precise meanings for English readers.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Blue Letter Bible* and *Logos Bible Software* are both useful resources to help you understand the meanings of Hebrew and Greek words of Scripture.