

## HOW TO READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE INTRODUCTION TO "O.I.C.A.N." METHOD

- (1) OBSERVATION - Noting what the Bible actually says.
- (2) INTERPRETATION - Stating what Bible means to the original reader(s).
- (3) CORRELATION - Comparing scripture with scripture in context.
- (4) APPLICATION NOW - How the Bible is applied today for a changed life.

### O.I.C.A.N. GENERAL BIBLE STUDY METHOD

#### I. Observation and the Synthetic Method of Bible Study

*Systematic observation is the first and most basic phase in the actual practice of personal Bible study. Many times a person has a lot of trouble figuring out what a Bible passage means because he has not first done the work of carefully and objectively observing exactly what the passage says.*

*An observation is a statement regarding what the biblical text actually says, how it says it, and what it omits. An observation is not an interpretation. An observation has to do with the factual. An interpretation has to do with the meaning and significance of the factual. Notice the distinction between observation and interpretation in the chart on page 15.*

*It is very easy (and very common) for a person to claim that he observed something, when in reality he both observed and interpreted it. Very frequently we confuse the observation phase with the interpretation phase, as in the following instances.*

*You see a family pack a lot of camping equipment into a car and then drive away. You may think that you "observed" them leaving on a camping trip, but that is not what you observed at all. The interpretation about leaving on a camping trip comes from inside your own head, based on an assumption. All you actually observed was a family packing a lot of camping equipment into a car and then driving away. You have confused observation with interpretation. Actually they were taking the equipment to the home of a relative who was borrowing it for the next week.*

*You see a man carrying a guitar case. You may think that you "observed" a musician with his instrument, but again that is your interpretation, not your observation. What you actually observed was a man carrying a guitar case. You have assumed that there is a guitar in the case, and you have assumed that people carrying instruments can play them. Actually, he is a very non-musical father who has picked up a case for his daughter's guitar at the music store.*

*Most misjudgments or misinterpretations in everyday experience are due to our failure to observe carefully, and to our failure to keep our judgments or interpretations from being built on our assumptions rather than our observations.*

*1. Observation: (What the Bible says)*

*Who are the people involved? What happened? What ideas are expressed? What are the results? Where does this take place? What is the setting? When did it take place? What was the historical period? Why did it happen? What is the purpose? What is the stated reason? How are things accomplished? How effective? By what method?*

*2. Definition of Synthetic: The word synthetic is from the Greek word meaning composition or construction, which, in turn, is derived from the word 'to put together or place with.'*

*3. Synthetic Procedures:*

- a. Read the chapter and book containing the passage or verse several times.*
- b. During each reading, record observations.*
- c. Break chapter or book into sections.*
- d. Write an outline of Synthetic study.*

*4. Comments*

*The Synthetic method is generally one of the main tools utilized in the observation part of the O.I.C.A.N. Method.*

*5. The Synthetic Method focused on Observation and you are striving to answer some of the following questions.*

- a. Who is speaking?*
- b. Who is being spoken of?*
- c. Who is being spoken to?*
- d. What are the ideas or subjects being conveyed?*
- e. What is the setting and place?*
- f. Where is this taking place?*

g. *What is the literary, historical, cultural, and geographical context?*

h. *What is the stated purpose or reason?*

i. *How are things accomplished?*

j. *How effective are things accomplished and by what method?*

**NOTE:** *Your observations should state isolated facts, a relationship between facts or a pattern of relationships between facts, which are indicated directly by the biblical text. It is concrete, explicit, evident, visible, easily seen and states with complete certainty what the biblical text does say or does not say. (See page 8 for example)*

*II. Interpretation Method for Study and Interpretation of the Bible. The term hermeneutics refers to the set of principles or rules which governs one's interpretation of a piece of literature. The term exegesis refers to the actual practice of getting the meaning out of the text. Thus, hermeneutics is the theory; exegesis is the practice. Hermeneutics applied becomes exegesis.*

*Many things that we read are relatively easy for us to interpret simply because we know the writer and the circumstances surrounding the writing, as when we receive a letter from a friend, or because we know the culture, as when we read an American newspaper. However, the Bible was written by men whom we have not known personally, in cultural setting and circumstances which we have not experienced, and in languages which are not our mother tongue. Thus, our most fundamental task in interpreting the Bible is to comprehend the mind of the writer and the original readers. This involves the writer's and original reader's language, their historical and cultural setting, their personal backgrounds, and the immediate circumstances, which along with the particular message (passage) being written all go together to comprise the mind of the writer and original readers. The interpreter's task is not to find an interpretation which fits the passage according to our times and ways of thinking. Rather, his task is to reach back and grasp the mind of the writer and original readers - the interpretation which fits the passage according to their times and ways of thinking.*

**A. Definition:**

*Interpretation is finding out what God meant to the people He was writing to in their time. Interpretation is 'drawing out'(exegesis) the true meaning of a Bible passage. Interpretation is what is meant to the bible readers of his day. Interpretation is stating the writer's judgements, explanations, summaries or conclusions in context.*

**B. There is only one interpretation of any Bible passage.**

**C. Interpretation is not discussing what the passage is saying personally to you or completing such statements as, "To me this passage is saying..." or "I think this passage means" or "What this passage means to me is..." Interpretation is not trying to find a**

*personal application in a Bible passage, but letting the Bible speak for itself to discover what the Bible meant to the original readers based on your observations in all context. In general, if the plain, literal sense of a passage makes sense, then seek no other sense or what you get may be nonsense !! (See page 9 for example)*

#### *D. The Analytical Bible Study Method*

*1. Definition: the word 'analysis' is derived from the Greek word meaning 'to unloose, to break up.'*

*2. This method involves a more detailed look at Bible text as follows:*

##### *a. Lexical Analysis*

*i. This involves discovering the key words in a verse or passage and then finding the meaning of these words in the original languages.*

*ii. Some outstanding sources for finding the meaning of these words are:*

*(a) The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*

*(b) Young's Analytical Concordance*

*(c) A Greek-English and Hebrew-English*

*Lexicon numbered to Strong's Concordance*

*(i.e., Gesenius' Lexicon for Hebrew and Thayer's Lexicon for Greek*

*(d) The expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by Bethany House Publishers (number keyed to Strong's Concordance)*

*(e) The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (KJV) by  
Spirus Zodhiates, AMG Publishers*

##### *b. Grammatical Analysis*

*i. This involves thoroughly examining sentences and their structure.*

*ii. This type of analysis helps us to see how ideas and key words are related or connected.*

##### *c. Contextual Analysis*

*i. This involves looking at the context in which a word verse or passage is contained. This should include the literary, cultural, historical and geographical context.*

*ii. It basically means thoroughly examining that which comes before and after the verse passage of interest. A Bible text without a context may be a pretext. (i.e. it may only "pretend" to be properly interpreted and could be misleading)*

Example 1:

PSALMS 1:1-2

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS

*Blessed is the man that walketh  
not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

*Blessed is the man*  
*a. That walketh not in the counsel of*  
*the ungodly.*  
*b. Nor standeth in the way of sinners.*  
*c. Nor sitteth in the seat of the*  
*scornful.*

*What is blessed?*

~~~~~  
*His delight is in the law of the Lord;  
and in his law doth he meditate day  
and night.*

~~~~~  
*His delight*  
*a. Is in the law of the Lord.*  
*b. In his law he meditate day and*  
*night*

~~~~~  
*What is meant by day and night?*

## INTERPRETATION CONT'D (Psalm 1:1)

### Example 2:

- a. Blessed (esher, eh, sher) - happiness, how blessed.

Walketh (halai) figuratively, signifying the whole round of activities of the individual life the saved and unsaved lifestyle.

Counsel (etsev) to consult: for advice, a plan of action or behavior pattern.

Ungodly (rasha) morally wrong, or (actively) bad person; condemned, guilty, wicked.

#### Summary:

Happy is the person, who does not seek advice nor allow the wicked to direct their behavior.

- b. Nor standeth (meno) to abide, remain

Way (derek) - figuratively, a course of life, or made of action.

Sinner (chatta) unbelievers, offenders, a person who sins habitually.

#### Summary:

Nor abide in the path of unbelievers.

- c. Sitteth (kataklino) - to set at meat, to be comfortable.

Seat (moshav) to dwell in, dwelling place.

Scornful (luwts, loots) - to make a mock, mocker, scornful, despised, contemptuous.

#### Summary:

Nor become comfortable in the dwelling place of the contemptuous or despised.

### Conclusion of verse 1:

Happy is the person who does not seek advice nor allow the wicked to direct their behavior, nor abide in the path of unbelievers, nor become comfortable in the dwelling place of the contemptuous or despised.

## *E. Correlation and the Comparative Bible Study Method*

### *1. Definition of Correlation:*

- a. Correlation: involves comparing scripture with scripture in context to back up your interpretation and possible applications or observations. The Bible repeats many ideas and principles in many different ways. This means the Bible is its own best commentary on itself with other scriptural references.*
- b. The Comparative Method also involves comparing scripture with scripture. The method of securing and examining scriptural references will vary according to the purpose of the student and the printed references available.*
- c. In order to understand a difficult text, it is best to first seek an explanatory reference in the immediate Biblical context.*

### *2. Types of Scriptural references and comparisons*

- a. Quotations of one passage found in another passage*
- b. Parallels in words or phrases*
- c. Similarity in thought or topic*
- d. Illustration of meaning (Matt. 16:18, 1 Pet 2:5-6)*
- e. Prophecy and fulfillment*
- f. Contrast of ideas*

### *3. Sources*

- a. Reference Bible*
- b. "The treasury of Scripture Knowledge"*
- c. "Concise Critical Comments" by Robert Young*
- d. "Introduction to the Critical Knowledge and Study of Holy Scriptures" by Thomas Hartwell Horne*

*F. Application Now / S.P.E.C.K.S.*

*S = Is there a SIN for me to forsake?*

*P = Is there a PROMISE for me to keep?*

*E = Is there an EXAMPLE for me to follow?*

*C = Is there a COMMAND for me to obey?*

*K = How does this increase my KNOWLEDGE about God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?*

*S = Is there a STUMBLING BLOCK for me to avoid*



SUMMARY OF RESOURCES FOR  
HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE WORKSHOP

1. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (KJV Text)
2. Young's Analytical Concordance
3. Gesenius' Lexicon for Hebrew (numbered to Strong's Concordance)
4. Thayer's Lexicon for Greek (numbered to Strong's Concordance)
5. The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by Bethany House Publishers. (numbered to Strong's Concordance)
6. The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (KJV), by Spiros Zodhiates, AMG Publishers (numbered to Strong's Concordance)
7. A Reference Bible (Ryle Study Bible KJV)
8. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
9. Concise Critical Comments, by Robert Young
10. Introduction to the Critical Knowledge and Study of Holy Scriptures
11. Nave's Topical Bible, by Orville J. Nave, published by Moody Press
12. The Bible Study Resource Guide, by Joseph D. Allison, Thomas Nelson Publishers.
13. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr, editor; Wm. B Eendmans Publishing Co. (4 volumes)
14. Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, by Moody Press (2 volumes)
15. Halley's Bible Handbook, by Henry H. Halley. Zondervan Publishing House
16. The new Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition, by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
17. Unger's Bible Dictionary, by Merrill F. Unger, Published by Moody Press
18. The Bible Knowledge Commentary of the Entire Bible (2 volumes) edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, by S. P. Publications, Inc.
19. The Macmillan Bible Atlas, by Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah; Macmillan Publishing Co.
20. Creative Bible Teaching, by Lawrence O. Richards, Moody Press.
21. Understanding and Applying the Bible (an Introduction to hermeneutics) by J. Robert McQuilkin, Moody Press

22. Direct Bible Discovery, by Ronald W. Leigh, Broadman Press.
23. How we Got our Bible, by Ralph Earle, Baker Book House.
24. 12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods, by Richard Warren with William A. Shell. Victor Books (Division of S. P. Publications)
25. Effective Bible Study (a guide to sixteen methods) by Howard F. VOS, Zondervan Publishing House.
26. Dispensationalism Today, by Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press.
27. How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit, by R. A. Torrey, Baker Book House
28. How to Study the Bible, by John MacArthur, Moody Press.
29. Handbook for Bible Study, by Grant R. Osborne and Stephen B. Woodward, Baker Book House.