

Group Bible Study

The priority of any Bible study is to seek to understand what the Bible is saying to the people for whom it was first written as well as to understand its application for our particular day and generation.

Here are some pointers to help you as you study the Bible:

- **PRAY** - Our preparation for any Bible study should begin and end with prayer. We need to ask God, through the help of the Holy Spirit, to guide us as we read the Bible and prepare for study.
- **ASK** - In order to understand the Bible properly, we need to keep six important questions in mind:
 - 1. Who is speaking?** Everything in the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God. Though every word was inspired by God, sometimes the writers record words which come from the hearts of evil men. So, dealing with the question “Who is speaking?” will help us to know whether the words we are reading are words that we should obey.
 - 2. Who is spoken to?** We need to realise that not every command that comes in the Bible is a command for us today. For example, the command by God to Noah to build an ark is relevant for Noah, but not for us.
 - 3. When is the writer speaking?** In answering this question, we will need to make a distinction between those who are living under the Law and those who live under the guidelines and principles as outlined to us in the New Testament, the Way of Christ. Therefore, the principles we see regarding worship in the Old Testament may have a relevance to us but we need to read them in the light of the New Testament. It is always important to bear in mind that one part of the Bible can often help us to understand another part.
 - 4. What type of language is the writer using?** The languages used are usually one of two types: literal or figurative. Sometimes both are mixed together in one passage. For example, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb of God - a figurative form of speech. However, He is also described as the One who

takes away the sin of the world, which is literally true for those who believe. So, Jesus was not an actual lamb, but the One who became the offering for our sins.

5. **What are the writer's circumstances?** If we can grasp the writer's particular circumstances, it helps us understand what he is saying.
6. **What is the context of the Bible passage?** Think about what has just been said and what is about to be said in the particular book of the Bible, as well as the context of the passage within the Bible as a whole.

The Bible is indeed God's inspired Word - His revelation to all mankind. So, in order for us to understand it, we must seek to study it properly. Only then can we "*correctly handle the word of truth*". If we keep these six simple questions in mind, we will find that we can indeed get to grips with God's Word.

- **PLAN**

For those who are preparing and leading a study, the following steps should prove helpful:

1. Try to break the passage into clear sections.
2. Think about what you don't understand and therefore what others also might not understand. What parts do you need to gain more information about? Be ready to deal with questions from others. So, for example, when studying John 3, people might ask 'What is the kingdom of God?', 'What is a Pharisee?'.
 - a) **Understanding** - Questions about what the passage is saying.
 - b) **Significance** - Questions that aim to highlight the significance of the passage in the light of the particular book and against the backdrop of the whole Bible.
3. Having broken the passage up, plan your questions. You can use the questions that are in this book or devise your own. Focus on the following question types in this order:

c) Application - Questions which apply to the situations we are facing today.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Do make use of the St. John's Church team, commentaries and other Christians who have a maturity which you can rely upon when seeking to tackle Bible passages.

It will sometimes prove helpful to have more than one translation as this will give you fresh insights.

As we come to study the Bible, we need to keep in mind that all the books of the Bible have one great theme: God's plan to save mankind from his sins through Jesus Christ.

Fundamentally, make sure that whatever you do, you seek to do it to glorify God.