

How to study your Bible

A method of personal study with minimal use of external resources

PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES

1. **Have a consistent time** – People make time for the things which are important to them
2. **Remove distractions** – Don't allow other things to interfere with your set time
3. **Have a plan** – be systematic in your Bible study; study through books of the Bible
4. **Keep it simple** – Don't study in a way that you cannot consistently perform

THE METHOD

- **Begin with prayer: Psalm 119:18** – *open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* **1 John 2:27** – *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*
- **Carefully read the passage (3-7 verses)** – Suggestion: write it down to help you read every word
- **Answer the simple questions:**
 - Who is writing?
 - Who is being addressed?
 - What is the context of the passage?
 - Why was the passage written?
 - What does the passage say about man?
 - What does the passage say about God?
- **Write down an explanation of the passage**
 - Don't try to apply everything to you personally, allow God's word to speak for itself.
 - Try not to use helps right away, if you don't understand something, meditate upon it and pray about it.
 - After you have come to your own conclusions, see what other's (commentaries, etc.) have to say.

OTHER HELPFUL CONCEPTS

- **Use good interpretation principles**
 - Take God's word literally
 - Take God's word historically
 - Take God's word grammatically
 - Take God's word contextually
- **Context is king** – NEVER divorce a passage from the context in which it is found. Do not try to apply the concept beyond the context in which it is given. Use all of Scripture to help you understand and interpret.

AXIOM 1: THE BIBLE IS A BOOK WRITTEN BY PEOPLE TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE.

Corollaries

1. Each Biblical writing was written by someone to specific hearers or readers in a specific historical-geographical situation for a specific purpose.
2. Each Biblical writing was couched in the cultural setting of the times in which it was written.
3. Each Biblical writing was recorded in a written language and followed normal grammatical meanings including figurative language.
4. Each Biblical writing was accepted or understood in the light of its context.
5. Each Biblical writing took on the nature of a specific literary form (genre = category of literature characterized by a particular style, form, or content - History, Poetry, Narrative, Wisdom, Gospels, Prophecy, Letters/Epistles).
6. Each Biblical writing was understood in account with the basic principles of logic and communication.

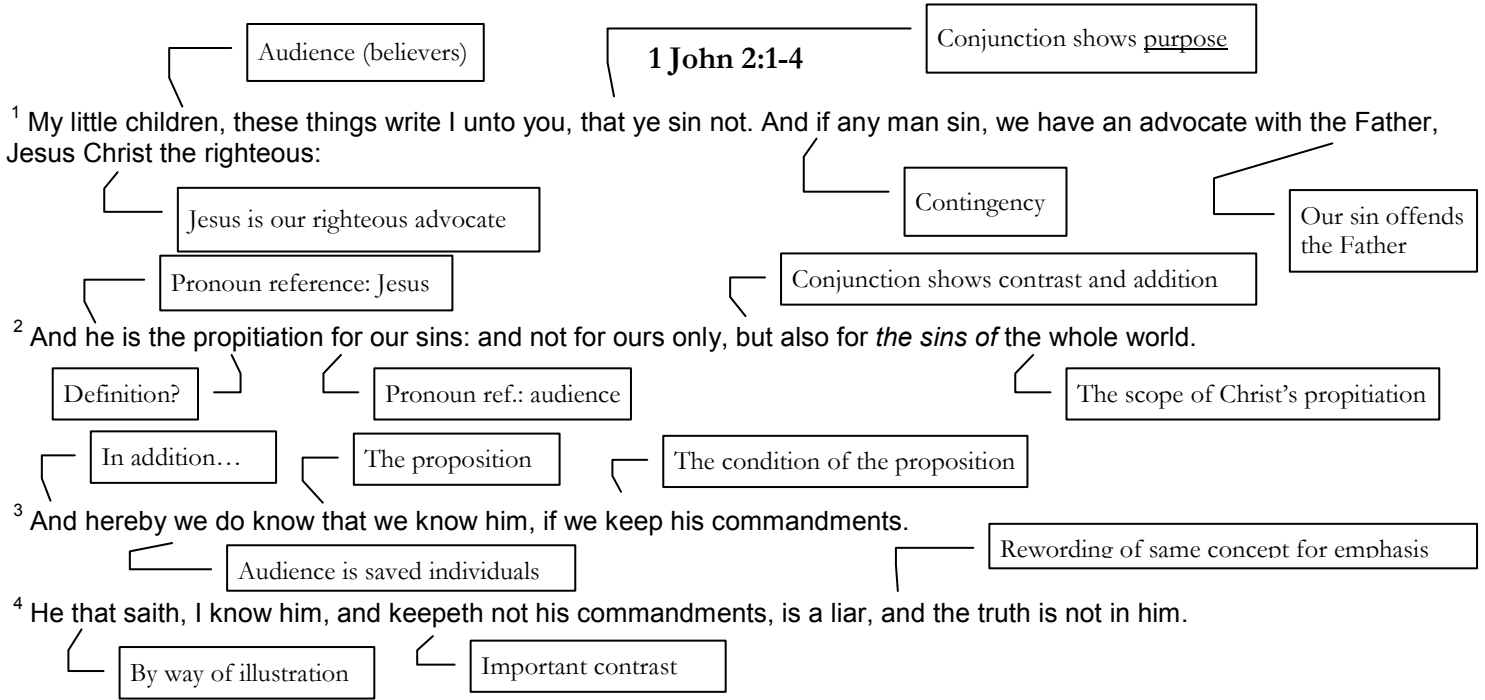
AXIOM 2: THE BIBLE IS A DIVINE BOOK

Corollaries

1. The Bible contains **MYSTERY**
Only supernatural can answer: Prophecy, Parables, Miracles, Doctrine
2. The Bible contains **UNITY**
It will not contradict itself (all fits together).
It often interprets itself (study all of it).
Its obscure and secondary passages are to be interpreted in light of clear and primary passages.
3. The Bible contains **PROGRESSION**
Progressive revelation (from partial to complete).

(Source: Clinton Lockhart, Principles of Interpretation, 2nd ed. Fort Worth: S. H. Taylor, 1915)

BIBLE STUDY EXAMPLE



Comments: It is important to understand the context going into 1 John 2. John is writing to born-again believers here, indicated by his use of the phrase “my little children”. This means that what John is saying in this book is not written so that a person can know *how* to be saved. Rather, 1 John 1:4 says, “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” John in writing to believers to teach them how they can live a joyful Christian life.

John has just finished telling these believers at the end of 1 John 1 that if they walk in darkness (sin), we cannot have fellowship with the Father. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When we confess our sins, we have immediately restored fellowship with God. John explains how this is possible in 2:1, telling us that we have an advocate between us and the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. Here we see the Righteousness of Jesus Christ clearly stated, and it is only by virtue of His righteousness that I am able to have fellowship with the Father. It is also important to note that the purpose of John writing about confession is not to make us feel better about sinning because we have a way to “make up for it”, but in order that we may have fullness of joy and bask in the reality of true, sinless fellowship with God. This does not mean we will never sin, but we have the privilege of walking in the light.

The word propitiation, as defined by Webster’s 1828, means “the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage his wrath and render him propitious to sinners.” Thus, the blood of Jesus Christ is the means of pacifying the wrath of God upon my life. Notice, that Jesus Christ is the propitiation FOR THE WHOLE WORLD. How is this possible? If the propitiation of Jesus Christ has been applied to the whole world, why do people go to hell? Thus we understand what John was saying when he wrote in John 3:18, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Jesus Christ has paid the price for the sins of EVERY man and woman in this world. Thus it is not man’s personal sin that condemns him to hell, but a failure to believe on Jesus Christ. Jesus is the standard.

Verse 3 reminds us that we can know God. We recall that this is written to believers, so it is not speaking of knowing Him for salvation. Rather, the passage speaks of knowing the character and nature of God. We know that we know God if we keep His commandments. The implication is that we do not truly know the character of God if we are offending it through sin. Thus, we judge our knowledge of God based upon our disposition toward His commandments...