

# **DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE**

A Step by Step Guide of How to do Inductive Bible Study

by

**O. William Cooper**

**This book is intended to be used for the furtherance of  
the Gospel of Christ.  
It is not for sale or resale.  
All rights reserved.**

# DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE

## OF SCRIPTURE

A Step by Step Guide of How to do Inductive Bible Study

by

O. William Cooper

Copyright ©1996 by Logos Ministries, Inc.  
4742 Westbury Drive  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80526

First Edition - January 1995  
Second Edition – May 2002

"The Scripture text of the New American Standard Bible is used by permission of the Lockman Foundation, a corporation not for profit, LaHabra, California 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, all rights reserved."

Some of the maps in this study have been adapted from *"PC Bible Atlas for Windows"* software, Copyright 1993, Parsons Technology, Inc. Used by permission of Parsons Technology, Inc., Hiawatha, Iowa.

**This book is intended to be used for the furtherance of  
the Gospel of Christ.  
It is not for sale or resale.  
All rights reserved.**

## IN MEMORIUM

Several people have made a great impression upon my walk with God. This is one of them.

He was a man of strong faith. When he came to this country, from Germany, he had no money. He agreed to buy a farm for cash and gave a specific date on which the cash would be paid. German friends who interpreted for him were stunned. They knew he had no money. His answer was simple, God will take care of the need. He paid the money on time.

As director of the Liebenzell Mission, U. S. A., he often received word from missionaries requesting funds for specific needs. He would send word that the money would be sent. When he wrote this answer, he did not have the money. That happened often. To my knowledge, the promise was always kept.

Though a newsletter went regularly to the friends of the mission, he never asked for money. "God will see to our needs," was the way he thought.

During his life as a missionary to China and as the director of the mission, he never received a salary or set wages. He trusted God to provide his needs and those of the mission.

He worked hard. As the director of the mission, he worked a farm, in Schooley's Mountain, New Jersey, and preached at least once a day. Most of his sermons were prepared as he rode the tractor or did other work around the Mission Home.

He was a common man. He could travel in the mountains of China without being harmed by bandits because he walked his circuit of churches, while some other missionaries rode in a chair carried by four men. My friend and mentor walked literally thousands of miles across the mountains of China.

He was a forceful preacher. If the Scriptures said it, he believed it and he preached it. He expected to practice it himself and was deeply disappointed when others could not see it that way as well. In good German style, he could preach for five minutes before placing the verb at the end of the sentence.

He was a strong man. Though crippled late in life when hit by a falling tree, he could still outwork many who were younger and had no handicapping condition. He never thought of an eight hour day.

For the quality and example of his life lived in ministry and service, I give God thanks and humbly dedicate this book to my father-in-law,

**Rev. Henry D. Zimmermann.**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the course of preparing this volume, I have been reminded of the many people to whom I am indebted for the book and its content.

Dr. Robert Traina, Professor Emeritus of Asbury Theological Seminary, showed me how much I could learn through the use of Inductive Bible Study.

Through 29 years of pastoral ministry, I taught individuals and groups to use this tool for Bible study. In that process, I discovered much more about this valuable tool for myself.

For many years, I have taught Inductive Bible Study to the students of the North Central Jurisdiction Course of Study School, (a school for second career pastors). This school meets in Evanston, Illinois. As I taught them, my own awareness of the process was sharpened and their inquiries forced me to look more carefully at the ingredients. Many of them offered suggestions that have helped to present some of these teachings in clearer form.

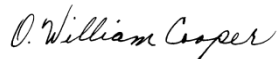
There are several people whose painstaking scrutiny has saved me from many embarrassing situations. Betty Christensen, Eve Lichtenwalter, Rev. Mary Neil and Ruth Cooper have done the proof reading of this work and I am very grateful.

Dr. Peter Stone continues to do his marvelous work on the computer and the formatting of the book. His gracious help has been a real blessing to me.

The cover of the book was prepared by a new friend, DeWain Stoll. DeWain has done an excellent piece of work.

I thank God for bringing these people into my life to be my friends and to help with these tasks.

Gratefully,



O. William Cooper



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

IN MEMORIUM .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
THE INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE KINDS OF LITERATURE.....	5
PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE.....	23
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE .....	25
THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE.....	39
PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE.....	43
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE .....	45
INTRODUCTION TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY .....	55
INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION.....	59
PRACTICE WITH OBSERVATION .....	67
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH OBSERVATION .....	69
THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS .....	73
PRACTICE WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS .....	77
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS.....	79
THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES .....	83
PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES.....	87
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES .....	89
THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS.....	93
PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS .....	97
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS .....	99
THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE.....	105
PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE .....	109
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE .....	111
INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION.....	115
PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION.....	121
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION .....	123
THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS.....	137
PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS .....	145

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS.....	147
THE USE OF CONNECTIVES .....	153
PRACTICE WITH THE USE OF CONNECTIVES .....	163
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE USE OF CONNECTIVES.....	165
INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION.....	169
PRACTICE WITH APPLICATION .....	177
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH APPLICATION.....	179
INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION.....	183
PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION .....	189
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION.....	191
TOPICAL STUDY .....	201
PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY .....	209
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY.....	211
THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY IN BIBLE STUDY .....	219
PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY .....	223
ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY.....	225
THE CONCLUSION.....	233
OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN BY DR. COOPER.....	235



## THE INTRODUCTION

A trend is growing in the church. There are fewer expository sermons preached and more topical sermons. Sunday School classes were once mainly studies of Biblical books. Increasingly Sunday School materials are limited to 13 week studies of "How to Cope with Anxiety," Christian Parenting," Death and Dying," and "Caring for the Environment," and other good topics that are not studies of the Bible. We affirm that these topics are good, but their use as Sunday School material has diminished our exposure to Scripture. Again, most Bible study books tend to deal with parts of a book rather than the entire text.

In the past, many churches had Sunday evening services and mid-week services. In both of these, a portion of Scripture was taught or preached. In many instances, these are gone or greatly reduced. This too diminishes our awareness of Scripture.

Where daily devotions were once a personal study of a portion of Scripture or a book of the Bible, the trend is now to study a book **about** the Bible or a devotional thought for the day. This, too, diminishes our exposure to the Scriptures.

The net result of these facts is that there is a creeping Biblical illiteracy, even in some of our more evangelical churches. This is, in part, one of the reasons many people are reluctant to teach Sunday School. No one wants to talk about it, but we are becoming a fellowship of people who are nearly Biblically illiterate. There are places where one cannot use an Old Testament illustration in a sermon because the congregation would not know the story. Thus, it would be a meaningless illustration. I have served such a church. We must encourage Christian people to study the Bible for themselves. Christians must be encouraged to study in greater depth on their own. It is for this reason that this presentation has been written.

We come to this study with very definite views concerning the origin of Scripture. We believe that God inspired the authors to write His message to people everywhere. In doing so, God worked within the framework of the rules for good writing; God spoke through the personality of the writers to convey a special message in a special way; God used the understandings of the people of that culture to disclose specific ideas; God used the strengths of two specific languages - Greek and Hebrew - to convey the divine message in a very precise way.

As one listens to sermons, reads Bible studies or considers theological lectures, it appears that there are some who attempt to interpret Revelation, Romans and the Psalms in exactly the same manner. Still, others attempt to interpret Scripture in such a way as to make it fit their particular theological positions. Each of these directions will create severe problems for the church.

There are several different kinds of literature within the covers of our Bible. We will attempt to describe each kind of literature. It will be important to describe the variances between the different kinds of literature.

As we carefully scrutinize the distinctions within the Scriptures, it will be important to interpret the Bible as one would interpret any well written document.

In this study, we will describe the specific ingredients found in every Biblical passage, to enable us to accurately delve into the precise meanings of a given passage. This will be done through the process called Inductive Bible Study.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

It will be necessary to describe the process called **observation**. There are several levels of observation that will require our attention. We will want to describe each level of observation in depth.

Another facet of the Inductive Bible study process is called **interpretation**. It is important to describe this step with great care in order to grasp the exact meaning of a passage. It is at this point in the process that many people cease their search. Actually, much more research is necessary.

We will give similar careful attention to the process of **application**. Unfortunately, this is a step in the process which is often slighted, if not omitted. If it is to be meaningful, it is essential to apply the findings of Scripture study to life as we live it each day. That is one of the goals of the chapter *"INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION"*.

Unfortunately, it is possible to study a passage up to this point as carefully as possible and still misunderstand the message of the author. It is the job of **correlation** to help protect us from that error. We will describe this process as carefully as possible in the chapter *"INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION"*.

In every written document, in every language, a number of literary relationships can be identified. In the chapter *"THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS"*, we need to describe some of the most common literary relationships and explain how they can be identified and how they can increase our understanding of the deeper, more precise messages presented in the Scriptures.

Scripture follows the rules of good writing. Each sentence will have a subject and predicate. We will treat the interpretation of Scripture as one would interpret any other document. There are five kinds of literature which characterize whole books of the Bible. We will describe each type carefully. There are two other types of literature - drama and parable - that may appear within the basic types of literature. No book of the Bible is characteristically drama, though there is quite a bit of drama in the historical books. No book of the Bible is exclusively parabolic, though many parables are included in the Gospels and some other books.

There are several ingredients which make up a Biblical passage. We will describe these and illustrate their importance in the process of interpretation.

There are several major steps in the process of Inductive Bible study. In this book we will explain each of them, show how they are used and explain how they enhance the interpretive process.

We, also, believe that cultural understanding is a useful tool which Biblical authors used to convey a deeper flavor to their message. We also believe that the recipients of the writings or the people involved had a deeper understanding of the message because of their exposure to the cultural understanding. In some instances new and clearer understandings, which had not been previously apparent, come to light when one discovers these cultural qualities. We will try to use several illustrations which demonstrate this concept. We will also suggest ways to discover these uses of customs and cultural data and suggest ways to go about discovering the richness of their meaning.

## THE INTRODUCTION

Earlier, it was indicated that we must discover the precise meaning of terms if we are to grasp the author's intent. Language is a key element which will help to more clearly and dramatically unlock these precise understandings. Unfortunately, however, not everyone who reads the Bible understands the Biblical Greek and Hebrew languages. Until now, preachers and teachers, conversant with the languages, sometimes gave us the clarifying information. People had no other access to this precise information. We will describe, in some detail, some information in this direction. We cannot do justice to that process in this volume. Another volume, being published by Logos Ministries, will describe how persons who do not know Greek or Hebrew can use the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament in spite of their lack of knowledge of these languages. It should be published within the year.

There are several literary relationships which appear in any language. These relationships, though usually quite obvious, are extremely important in identifying the direction of the author's thought. Each type will be identified. The purpose and importance of each one will be explained and illustrated.

In several books of the Bible, it is easy to see that geography plays an important role in our clearer understanding of that portion of Scripture. In the chapter "*THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY IN BIBLE STUDY*" we want to look carefully at this facet of our search of the Scriptures.

According to Hebrews 1:1-4, and other passages, God has chosen to reveal both His will and Himself through the Scriptures. **If** God is as important as we say, and He is; **if** His will is as close to our hearts as we say: **then** it is absolutely essential that we discern, as precisely as possible, what He has revealed both of His will and of Himself. That is the task to which we are committed in Inductive Bible Study. It is also the purpose of this writing.

All too often, people spend all their time trying to discover the meaning of a passage and at the end have no time to compare these findings with the teachings of the rest of Scripture. This is a serious flaw in one's study habits. Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to determine what the overall teaching of God's Word really is. Our correlation, however, will be no more precise than the study we have made of any given passage of Scripture.

Again, because our time is so limited, we often reach the end of our study having never applied our discoveries to our everyday lives. This is a little bit like preparing a wonderful meal, but being too busy to sit down and eat the wonderful delicacy. Our study is never complete until we look carefully to see how we can allow these discoveries to have a vital, changing impact upon the way we live each day. In this part of the study, we want to point out how such an application can be made. Here too, however, the application can be no better than the precision of one's study of the passage.

The reading of this book and the practice of the principles and processes it advances are not intended to support any particular theological position. Each person who studies must decide for him/herself what are the theological implications of his/her discoveries. Indeed, one of the features of Induction is that persons of several different theological persuasions can pursue a study jointly without unfortunate confrontation because this process offers the tools of understanding which enable each of us to gain sufficient awareness of the author's message to allow us to make a very personal decision.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

It must be stressed, at this point, that this study in no way suggests that Induction is the only possible way one can grasp Biblical truth. It is only one way. We further want to affirm that it has been the most effective way we have found to delve into the riches the Scriptures have to offer.

Induction does not purport to be a means to make the Biblical author's message stronger than the author intended it to be. By the same token, it is not a process to make the author's message softer and more palatable than it was intended to be.

Inductive Bible Study is not a short-cut to discover the truth of the Bible. Indeed, it will probably take more effort, but it is our considered opinion that it is worth all the effort we invest.

Our purpose is to help people find a way to discover for themselves the message the author had in mind when he wrote. We want to establish a foundation upon which people can interpret Scripture and focus Biblical teachings upon their own lives in such a way that they will more carefully reflect the will of God and show His righteousness to others by the way they live.

We should keep in mind, that our findings will be tentative through most of the study. The more we study a passage, the more new insights will be revealed each time we study it. There have been times when I have read a chapter at least 50 times. Then on a subsequent reading, I discover something that had been there all along, but I never saw it before. This is one of the exciting things about Bible study. One can continually discover new understandings almost every time one reads a passage.

It is our fervent desire that this work will encourage you to study the scripture with an intensity you have never experienced before. To this end we prayerfully invite you to study with us. We want to stress the fact, however, that every time you study a Biblical book, you will gain some new insight. Because of this, our understanding of Scripture is always tentative and is constantly growing.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

One of the first tasks, in the process of studying Scripture, is to determine the kind of literature you are about to study. There are five basic forms of literature found in the Scripture. They are as follows:

- Historical
- Poetry
- Epistles
- Prophetic
- Apocalyptic

These forms of literature will be described more carefully in due course. In each instance, there are whole books of the Bible that are written in each particular form.

There are two other forms of literature that are also found in Scripture, but no Biblical book is made up exclusively of these particular forms. They are as follows:

- Parable - This form of literature is often found in historical and prophetic kinds of literature.
- Drama

We will describe and illustrate these forms as well.

### HISTORICAL LITERATURE

This name can be misleading. This form of literature contains historical information, but it is not an historical book. This distinction is important. The purpose of a history book is to present an historical record. A Biblical historical form of literature purposes to use the historical record in order to convey a specific message about God. Because this is true, we are never finished with a study of a Biblical book, which uses the historical form, until we carefully discover the underlying message it contains about God.

In order to accomplish this task, there are a number of important steps we must take. They are presented in a useful order, but a different order may be more helpful for you.

#### 1. Discover the Story Line of the Book

There are several books of the Bible that exclusively follow the historical form. Among them are the following:

Genesis	I Samuel	I Chronicles	Luke
Exodus	II Samuel	II Chroni- cles	John
Joshua	I Kings	Matthew	Acts
Judges	II Kings	Mark	

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

In all good writing, a book contains an underlying idea or thought. Every portion of that book adds important information about the basic idea. Careful study disclosed that each book of the Bible has just one underlying message. Our first task is to discover that message.

Some of the books of the Bible are so long that it is hard to study the story line of the book without writing it down. One way to do this is to read each chapter and give it a title of seven words or less. I chose the number seven because it is short enough to give a concise summary, but long enough to give a good idea of the content. When you have given each chapter a title, you can study the list to see what the author was saying.

### **2. The Timeline of the Book**

In almost, if not every historical Biblical book, there are one or more hints concerning the timing of the story. If you track these indications, there is a good chance it will give you some important insights into the story of the book.

The Gospel of Mark is a good illustration of this idea. Scan chapters one through ten. With the exception of Jesus baptism and His temptation, in chapter one, the entire passage takes place in the area around the Sea of Galilee. It begins with Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his ministry. We cannot be very specific, but Jesus was born +/- 4 BC and started his ministry +/- 26 AD. It appears that His ministry lasted approximately three years. The Gospel of Mark almost ignores the first 30 years of Jesus' life. Mark chapters 1 - 10 deal with the three years of Jesus' ministry. Now scan Mark chapters 10-16. You will see that these seven chapters deal almost exclusively with the events of one week in the ministry of Jesus and most of it took place in and around Jerusalem.

I am sure that it is clear that the geographical structure of Mark's Gospel and the time designations match each other precisely. This does not always happen. When it does, however, you can be sure you have found the major divisions of the book. That is certainly the case with the Gospel of Mark.

### **The Study of Events**

All Biblical historical literature deals with specific events. We begin to understand the meaning and importance of these events as we focus our attention on them at great depth and precision.

Each event brings about certain specific results. As we begin to delve into the events as well as their consequences, we inch ever closer to a mature understanding of the historical situation. I believe an example would be helpful.

The author of Genesis tells the story of Joseph. One event in that story attracts our attention. Joseph had a dream about his sheaf of wheat and those of his brothers. Joseph's sheaf stood upright and those of his brothers bowed down before Joseph's. In a general sense, every event in the remainder of the book of Genesis is a consequence of this single event. Of course, some of the consequences would be direct while many more would be indirect. The direct consequence of Joseph's sharing the information about his dream was that he reaped the anger of his father and all his brothers. Indirectly, this led to his brothers' plot to sell him, his position in Potiphar's house, his stay in prison, etc. The indirect consequences are, in themselves, a chain of events which lead to the throne room of Egypt.

We can clarify some information as we observe, more carefully, this event and its consequences.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

1. The event itself took place in an atmosphere of **competition**. Joseph was the son of Jacob's favorite wife while the other ten brothers were the children of the ill-favored wife and the two servant girls. In one sense, no matter what Joseph did, it would be a source of tension and distress.
2. This event also took place in an atmosphere of **rejection and painful disappointment**. Joseph was the youngest son in the family. Generally the oldest son was designated the heir and received the special garment identifying the heir. In some translations it is called "the coat of many colors." Jacob, however, placed Joseph in that position of being the head of the family when Jacob died. This meant that all ten brothers felt rejected and blamed Joseph for that fact.
3. There is another element to this event. Joseph made Jacob aware of the irresponsible conduct of his brothers. They had been getting away with unacceptable care of the flocks and even leaving the flock to pursue their lustful desires. Their father was completely unaware of this. Joseph told Jacob about these things and the brothers were confronted with their conduct. This created an atmosphere of hatred, guilt and a desire for **revenge**.
4. This entire process led to the brothers decision to kill Joseph, but they settled for his sale as a slave. This helps us get at their motive. They were certainly angry, but it is more than that. Joseph was a problem to all of them. His sale was an attempted solution. The sale, brutal as it was, was their attempt at justice, which might better be described as revenge.

There is a long list of unfortunate motives played out in the story of Joseph. God took the jealousy, hate, and revenge of ten brothers; the lust, dishonesty and deceitful bitterness of Potiphar's wife; the neglect and casual disregard of the butler and shaped them in such a way that Joseph was moved step by step into the place God wanted him. God also shaped the working out of these tragedies in such a way that each person guilty of wrongdoing became a beneficiary of the providence God activated through the mind and work of Joseph.

It is appropriate to say that this brief examination of the material gives us a keener sense of the heartbeat of the story. It made some obvious observations more vivid. That is helpful.

This process can be followed with every event in the story of Joseph. It can also be followed in any historical book.

### A Study of Conversations

In the study of Biblical historical books, many people tend to pass over conversations in search of the next event in the story, the really important material. This is unfortunate because the conversations often hold the key to an understanding of the events.

We need to remember that events do not exist in a vacuum. An action can cause a subsequent action or reaction. By the same token, a conversation can cause a reaction which is equally strong. Let us look at an example. I would like for you to meditate on the story of the Samaritan woman Jesus met at Jacob's well. The story is found in John 4:1-26.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

This story has elements of both action and conversations. The fact that Jesus came into Samaria had a decisive impact on the story. Jews were not welcomed in Samaria and it would be hard for Jesus to miss the slurs and rejections. This definitely impacted the woman's response to Him.

The conversations were equally important. Observe that Jesus initiated the conversation. This would be a surprise to any Samaritan. It was equally surprising that Jesus made a request of a person who was both a woman and a Samaritan. Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink. Normally, a Jew would not touch anything which had been defiled by the touch of a Samaritan. Jesus surprised her by requesting she touch a cup from which he was going to drink. The verbal response identified her reaction to Jesus' request. She was shocked!

The woman's verbal response provided Jesus with an excellent opportunity to share the mercy of God with her. The verbal response opened up an opportunity for discussion at a much deeper level. Jesus spoke of things she would not understand in order to get her to ask another question concerning his statement.

*Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 4:10*

The fact that Jesus said anything to her beyond "give me a drink," had to be a great surprise to the woman. Decent people just did not speak to a person like her. There is also the fact that a man did not speak to a woman who was not his wife.

The woman's response was just what Jesus would anticipate.

*"Sir," the woman said, "You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" John 4:11*

Her response came in the form of two kinds of questions:

- The first kind of question sought clarification concerning the meaning of Jesus' statement.
- The second, a question growing out of the meaning of Jesus' explanation.

The important thing about the woman's response is that it required a further response from Jesus. This response also gives us a clue as to the difference in the thinking between the woman and Jesus - she was thinking in physical terms, Jesus was thinking in spiritual terms.

In Jesus' reply, He further sets the stage for a meaningful spiritual discussion by speaking in such a way that an opportunity opens to confront her with her need to repent. This continues through the entire dialogue. It is clear that the dialogue provides the very essence of the story.

### **A Study of Relationships**

In most any Biblical, historical book, the relationships between the persons in the story are of critical importance. The story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel is a case in point. The story is told in Genesis 29-31. You will observe that there are potentially four sets of relationships in this triangle:

- Jacob with Leah



## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

- Jacob with Rachel
- Rachel with Leah
- Jacob with Leah and Rachel together.

As you read these chapters, you will notice that the story only occasionally focuses on the relationship between Rachel and Leah together with Jacob. From a relational point of view, nearly the entire focus is on the fragile relationship between the sisters, Leah and Rachel. Let's identify some of the feelings which characterize this fragile relationship:

EVENT	LEAH	RACHEL
Jacob was surprised to get Leah as a wife - asked for Rachel	Rejection, unloved	Elation
Jacob worked 7 more years to get Rachel as wife	Disappointment, more rejection, lack of worth	greater elation, sense of greater love
Leah bore Reuben	Joy, hope for love, victory over Rachel	Sadness
Leah bore Simeon	Greater joy, certainty it would bring love from husband	Greater sadness, hopelessness
Leah bore Levi	Certainty of exclusive love of her husband	Greater disappointment, hopelessness, jealousy
Rachel confronted Jacob - "Give me children or I die."	Probably smug, contentedness	Tormented, grasping at straws
Rachel gives Bilhah to Jacob	Self-contented silence	Ready to try anything, exasperation

From this chart, several pieces of information emerge which might not otherwise be suspected or even overlooked:

- The relationships identify the focus of the story. In this instance, the focus of the story centers on the competition between Leah and Rachel.
- The relationships produced through events also produce the consequences, the succeeding stage of the story. An awareness of these relationships carefully points out the effects produced by a given cause. This contributes significantly to a careful understanding of the story.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- The intertwining relationships in a story help to highlight these relationships at a much clearer, more obvious level.
- Though it is not evident in this story, a careful awareness of the relationships in a story can protect the student from serious misunderstandings.

### **The Cultural Information**

Human events and relationships take place within a particular cultural setting. It is important to be alert to any cultural impact which may affect one's understanding of the story. The following look at the parable of the Prodigal Son may prove helpful in illustrating this assertion.

THE EVENT	COMMON UNDERSTANDING	CULTURAL IMPACT
The second son asked for his part of the inheritance	He was impertinent, thoughtless	This was totally unacceptable in that culture. The neighbors would do the boy physical harm for this.
The son got together all he had	He was prepared to leave home	Inheritance involved land and animals. No Jew would buy the land. Unacceptable to sell to Gentile - the land was a gift from God.
Boy hired himself out to a citizen of that country	He needed a job to live	He probably incurred debt he couldn't pay. If you couldn't pay debt, you became a slave (He returned home without shoes).
He fed pigs	That was his job	Jews couldn't eat or even touch pigs. Pigs were sacrifices for idol worship. This was the worst thing that could happen to him, a Jew.
Father threw arms around his son	He was glad to see him	This is a symbol of trust - highly unlikely in such a case
The father kissed the son	Pleased to see the son come home	This was a Jewish sign of forgiveness
Bring the best robe	Father will give son a present - expensive clothes	This was a symbol of honor in the family. Such a robe was usually worn by the heir.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

THE EVENT	COMMON UNDERSTANDING	CULTURAL IMPACT
Put a ring on his finger	a gift of jewelry	This was the family checkbook
Put shoes on his feet	finish his clothing gift	A symbol - the boy was to be a son again. only slaves went barefooted.
Let's have a feast	celebration	This is a sign of forgiveness.
My son was dead	Perhaps they did not know what happened to him	Son was disowned and pronounced dead because he disgraced the family.
The oldest son refused to go into the feast	Stubborn, sulking	He was honest. To go into the house and greet brother would tell everyone that he forgave his brother and he did not.

An awareness of the cultural elements of a story can add significantly to one's grasp of its meaning.

- It can add detail to situations where we properly grasp the meaning of the story, but lack information.
- As occurred more than once in the above illustration, it can prevent us from drawing misinformed conclusions.

### The Place of Empathy

Every historical Biblical story involves feelings at many different levels. To protect the flow of the story, the author could not possibly identify all the feelings involved. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us, as readers, to identify these important feelings. To illustrate this fact, look at the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, as recorded in Genesis 39:7-20. As you read these verses, you will observe there is no reaction or response from Joseph when Potiphar accepted his wife's accusation and put Joseph in prison, apparently without asking Joseph if it were true, or giving him an opportunity to defend himself. Joseph was a righteous man, but it is hard to believe that in this entire, tragic experience, he had no feelings at all. It is possible, but doubtful. I believe a Holy imagination can be helpful here. (Notice I said, a **Holy** imagination.) This tool of understanding requires great caution and a Godly respect for the text. One must ask: Just how would a person feel under these circumstances? Let's list some very realistic possibilities:

- Outrage - I did the godly thing and I was punished for my trouble.
- Fury - She did evil and I went to prison.
- Rejection - I protected my master's interests and he put me into prison without even asking me if I had done such a terrible thing.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- Extreme disappointment - After all I have done and the way he has been able to trust me, you would think he would at least talk to me about it.
- Fear - people who went into these prisons seldom came out alive.

All of these would be reasonable responses to such an event. The text, however, gives no hint as to how Joseph felt at that time. There is no possible way to precisely pinpoint feelings which the text does not identify. This is one way to responsibly come much closer to the real situation than the text itself permits.

### **The Identification of the Climax**

Most historical Biblical books consist of stories of people and events. It is important to identify the climax of the story. Many times people think the climax and the end of the story are synonymous. That is not always the case.

The climax is that point in the story when the purpose of its writing has been achieved. This is easier to illustrate than to define. Look at the story of Joseph in Genesis 37 - 50. There are a few places one might identify as the climax of the story.

- The time Joseph took his brothers into his house to eat was the climax of the story.
- The time Joseph revealed himself to his brothers
- The time the divining pitcher was found in Benjamin's sack
- The statement of Joseph, "You meant it to me for evil, but God meant it for good."

Each of these four episodes was very dramatic. I would choose the last one because it contains an element which is missing in the other three - purpose. The point of the story of Joseph was not just to tell the events of his life. That purpose would be served by any of the first three. The author used that story to tell us some very important information about God. This is very clear and dramatic when Joseph said to his frightened brothers, "Don't be afraid, Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Genesis 50:19, 20

When you have determined that you are going to study a Biblical book, which is historical in nature, these are some of the things that will be very helpful in that search.

### **Prophetic Literature**

Prophetic writings include many characteristics found in other kinds of literature. Prophecy, however, has several characteristics which must be taken into account when attempting to interpret one of these books or passages.

There is an intense use of history in the writings we call "the prophets." In most instances, the prophecy grows out of a specific historical situation. Where this is true, it is in our best interest to familiarize ourselves with this historical information. We need to ask probing questions like: Who is the enemy of whom in this prophecy? Who conquered whom? Which nation had what weapons for their defense or aggression? Check to see who was king at the time. What kind of king was he? This tells us whether or not he was a good or a bad king. It identifies the atmosphere in which the prophecy took place.

There will be a number of allusions to this information in the prophetic text. There are instances when familiarity with the secular historical background of a particular Biblical book will keep us from errors in interpretation.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

As in poetry and apocalyptic literature, there is a generous use of symbolic language in prophecy. As we interpret prophetic passages, it is vitally important to be sensitive to the use of symbolism. It can keep us from serious error.

Prophetic writings also use **hyperbole**. A hyperbole is an exaggeration for purposes of effect. A gross understatement can accomplish the same goal. When interpreting prophetic writing, one must always be sensitive to the possible presence of hyperbole. To ignore this, can leave one open to misunderstanding of the text. In Micah 3:1-4, the prophet described selfish men. It is possible that this description will literally take place. It is more likely that it is a hyperbole. He talked about people who would "tear off their skin," and "tear off the flesh from their bones." This is intended to be an overstatement to describe just how terrible it will be.

In prophetic writing, there is repeated use of **visual images**. The naming of the children of Hosea is a case in point. If you look at Hosea 1:3-9, you will see an explanation of the names of Hosea's sons. God commanded Hosea to name his first son Jezreel. The name "Jezreel" literally means "God will sow." Notice the explanation God gave to Hosea:

*"For yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel." Hosea 1:4*

Hosea's second child was a daughter. God told Hosea to name her "Lo-ruhamah" The name "Lo-ruhamah" has strong meaning. The word "lo" means "no or not." The word "ruhamah" literally means "to fondle," "to love," "to have mercy." Again, observe the explanation that God gave Hosea:

*"For I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them." Hosea 1:6*

Hosea's third child was a boy. God commanded Hosea to name the boy "Lo-ammi." This name is also a compound word. The word "lo" means "not." The word "ammi" means "my people." Again, observe the explanation God gave to Hosea:

*"For you are not my people and I am not your God." Hosea; 1:9*

Just the calling of the names of Hosea's children would recall, for the people of Israel, the judgment of God pronounced by the prophet.

There are a host of illustrations of this idea throughout the Scriptures. The prophet Ezekiel is particularly noted for the use of highly visual material. In Chapter 47, he describes the healing water coming from the temple. Again, in Ezekiel 40 and following, the picture of the man measuring the temple is a vivid image for us to consider. Ezekiel chapter 37 contains the famous picture of the valley of dry bones. This is a vivid image upon our minds.

If you study prophetic writing carefully, you will encounter several announcements of punishment. We must keep in mind that there is always purpose in this punishment. The prophets proclaim the punishment of God's people as a way to get the people to repent so that they can be the recipient of Divine mercy. Again in Hosea, there is an identification of sins and announced punishment in chapters 1-13, but the concluding chapter is sunlight; it is a picture of the mercy of God for His penitent people.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Geography is very important in prophetic writing. The book of Amos is a good illustration. Chapters one and part of chapter two form a denunciation of the sins of each nation surrounding Israel. Beginning in chapter two and continuing through the remainder of the book, the prophet denounced Israel for the same sins he had identified in the national life of the pagan nations. Only in the final chapter do you see a careful statement of the hope of Israel's redemption.

The prophetic writing in the Scriptures can be found in the following books:

Isaiah	Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah
Jeremiah	Joel	Micah	Haggai
Ezekiel	Amos	Nahum	Zachariah
Daniel	Obadiah	Habakkuk	Malachi

### Poetic Literature

There are six books of the Bible which are written exclusively in poetic form. These books are as follows:

Job	Ecclesiastes
Psalms	Song of Solomon
Proverbs	Lamentations

There are no books in the New Testament that are written exclusively in poetic form. There are, however, brief expressions of poetry in the New Testament. Most of these are quotations from the Old Testament. It is not surprising that all poetic books in the Bible are in the Old Testament. The Hebrew language is quite emotional and descriptive. It lends itself to poetry. Greek, however, is more precise and scientific. It does not lend itself to poetry as well.

Because of the nature of the poetical, Biblical books, we will make some general observations which are true for all of them. We will, then, look more closely at each of these six books.

Unlike poetry in English, the lines of a Hebrew poem do not rhyme even in an English translation. The poetic value is in the author's ability to express precise, graphic word pictures in brief form.

Hebrew poetry makes extensive use of what we call parallelism. Parallelism is a writing tool which states a simple truth and then adds information to it by the inclusion of a second statement which is quite similar, but not identical. There are a host of illustrations of this form. Let me illustrate some of them:

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

Psalms 96:1-9 form a long series of parallel statements. In Psalm 51, David begins this great confession with a parallelism and uses the form repeatedly through the rest of the Psalm. David begins with a simple petition, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love." The parallel statement is like the initial statement, but not identical. The difference is in the additional information it includes. In this instance, the additional information is "according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions." The second part of the verse is more specific. The mercy requested in the first part is identified as "blot out my transgressions" in the second part.

Hebrew poetry also uses repetition. A beautiful expression of this tool is found in Psalm 136. In this Psalm, the author, probably David, included the phrase "His love endures forever" twenty-six times. There is a story in this Psalm, but it is interspersed between the 26 statements about God's enduring love. Clearly the author used extensive repetition to strongly emphasize the fact that the love of God endures forever and has no boundaries.

Hebrew poetry makes extensive use of graphic language. In Psalm 114, the author again probably David, said "The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back, the mountains skipped like rams and hills like lambs." Psalm 114:3. The seas do not have eyes and can not see. Mountains and hills are more or less stationary. They certainly can not skip like rams or lambs. The author has used exaggerated graphic/symbolic language to convey a sense of awe, a sense of activity on a gigantic scale. Though not always this dramatic, Hebrew poetry makes frequent use of this writing tool.

Each of the six poetical books employs a slightly different form. Because of this, I will describe the form of each book separately.

### The Psalms

The book of Psalms is the hymnbook of the Hebrew people. They sang these songs as often as they read them. For centuries our Scottish brethren have done the same thing.

The book of Psalms is a collection of poetic Hebrew writings. Certainly many Psalms were omitted from this collection of 150 hymns. The editor gathered works from the writings of such writers as David, Moses, Asaph, The sons of Korah, Solomon, Ethan and perhaps others.

The book of Psalms is divided into five books as follows:

Psalm 1 - 41	Psalm 90 - 106
Psalm 42 - 72	Psalm 107 - 150
Psalm 73 - 89	

There are several different kinds of Psalms. Some Psalms are written in an alphabetic or acrostic fashion. Psalm 119 is an outstanding example of this form. The first paragraph begins with the letter "aleph" or "א". The second paragraph begins with the letter "beth" or "ב". Each succeeding paragraph begins with the next succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalms 111 and 112 are also written in this form. Psalms 9 and 10 were one Psalm in the Hebrew text. Each stanza started out with the next succeeding letter of the alphabet.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

There are also several Psalms of reflection. These are Psalms which begin and end with the same phrase. Psalm 103 is an example of this form. David begins and ends the Psalm with the phrase, "Praise the Lord O my soul." Psalm 104 is a Psalm of reflection as well as Psalm 106. In a Psalm of reflection, the author has thought through the theme of the Psalm. He begins writing the Psalm by recording the theme. He concludes the Psalm by repeating this theme. Here repetition is a means of emphasis. To interpret such a Psalm, one must view the content of the Psalm in terms of the theme with which the Psalm begins and ends.

### **Job**

The book of Job is a story written in poetry. Whether one thinks this story is real or fictional, it is still very old. This book, though in poetic form, carefully follows the description of historical Biblical literature. The story is about a man named Job. The message is about God. When interpreting a passage from the book of Job, one must always ask, "What does this passage say about God?" Again, a study of the book of Job must keep in mind that it is poetry. We must be alert to the presence of parallelism and extensive use of symbolic, picturesque language and repetition. If one attempts to interpret Job the way you would interpret Genesis or Romans, the results would be catastrophic.

### **Proverbs**

The book of proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, in poetic form, edited to convey a specific message about God. Solomon is usually considered to be the editor. The book deals with a broad range of practical subjects appropriate for a father to discuss with his maturing son. It makes use of parallelism and of picturesque speech as carefully as do the Psalms. This must be a consideration in any attempt to understand this wonderful book.

When attempting to interpret a portion of this book, one must remember that it is a collection of wise sayings put together by an editor. This means that we must be careful not to include the end of one proverb with the beginning of another and hope to make sense of the message.

### **The Song of Solomon**

Solomon is traditionally credited with the authorship of the Song of Solomon. It is allegorical in nature. An allegory is a story in which people, things and events have other meanings than those mentioned. Often, people attempt to make literal sense of this book or portions of it in an attempt to support their theological position. This will usually lead to chaos and shed little if any light on an understanding of God's word.

### **Lamentations**

This poem is a song of bitter lament. Though it is a painful dirge, the author has taken the care to write it in an acrostic style. Good Hebrew poetry will often do that. The acrostic style means that successive segments of the text will each begin with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The text describes Jeremiah's doleful lament over the capture of Jerusalem in 586 BC. As indicated above, the five chapters are written in an acrostic or alphabetic style. It is done, however, in an unusual way.

- Chapters 1 and 2 have 22 verses and are done in acrostic style.



## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

- Chapter 3 has 66 verses - the first three verses begin with the letter "aleph" "א"; the second three verses begin with the letter "beth" "ב". This process continues throughout the 66 verses.
- Chapter four also has 22 verses and is written in acrostic style.
- Chapter five has 22 verses. It, however, is **not** written in the acrostic style.

(It should be noted that there are 22 consonants in the Hebrew alphabet.)

When attempting to interpret this book, several things must be taken into consideration:

- There is an historical element in this writing, as there is in Job.
- It includes all of the basic features of biblical poetry. This makes it incumbent upon the interpreter to be alert to the presence of parallelism and other poetic features in the text.
- About 85% of this lament is written in acrostic style. The need to find words beginning with a specific letter, but having a specific meaning has a serious impact upon the content. The resulting material will tend to have a higher level of symbolic language than the usual form of writing. In spite of this, the lament has a high level of precision in the thoughts conveyed in the text.

### Ecclesiastes

The book of Ecclesiastes is in a class all by itself. Unlike the other poetical books, Ecclesiastes is a logical report of the author's experiences in search for meaning. The book begins with a description of its purpose. The body of the book is a series of reports of the author's findings as he searched for meaning in life. The book ends with a conclusion based on the results of the author's search.

Though written in poetic form, there is a certain logical presence in this writing. There is a delicate precision in the presentation of feelings in this book. It would be easy to forget that it is poetry. Nevertheless, it is poetry and this must always be a part of our thinking as we attempt to understand the book. The book has a philosophical approach to the search for meaning which seems to characterize some of the other writings of Solomon in Psalms and Proverbs.

All of this has an impact upon the way one views the book of Ecclesiastes as you study the book to discover its meaning.

### Logical Literature

The complete biblical books that are made up of logical literature are all found in the epistles. They are as follows:

Romans	I Thessalonians	James
I Corinthians	II Thessalonians	I Peter
II Corinthians	I Timothy	II Peter
Galatians	II Timothy	I John
Ephesians	Titus	II John
Philippians	Philemon	III John
Colossians	Hebrews	Jude

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

We must remember that an epistle is a letter sent from one person to another person or group. This is a general format which characterizes almost all the epistles. It is as follows:

- The salutation
- The statement of the problem
- The identification of the theological basis of the major theme
- The author's exhortation to solve the problem
- The closing remarks

The study of an epistle is a lot like a detectives search for a fugitive. Usually, He does not know who he is looking for. He only knows that someone committed a crime. He sifts through even the most unlikely evidence in search of clues and hints about the persons identity.

Often we must search for clues about the author himself. This is the case in Hebrews. There is usually a wealth of information about the recipients of the epistles. Again, there are nearly 200 bits of information about the recipients of the Hebrews epistle. These are most valuable in an understanding of any epistle.

Epistles tend to present exhortations for a practical application of the issue or issues concerning which the author was writing. If what you identify as the theological basis of the major theme or problem is not addressed in the closing practical applications (exhortations), then look over the material again. You have probably missed some very important parts of the presentation.

As is true in a number of kinds of biblical literature, the specific names for God that the author used and the things that he said about God can be major keys in an overall understanding of the epistle. This is true in both Romans and Philippians, just as it is in Genesis and Psalms.

As we said earlier, an epistle is characterized by a logical presentation. This is true in the overall design of the epistle as well as individual paragraphs. Logical literature, like the rest of Scripture, follows the rules of good writing. Essentially a good book is a many-faceted focus upon one single idea. Before we can meaningfully investigate a particular portion of a book, we must discover what is the over-arching central idea in the whole book. Again, our Junior High School English teacher tried to drum it into our minds that each chapter of a good book zeros in on a single facet of the one major idea in the book.

Again, they tried to help us see that each paragraph in the chapter contributes only one isolated piece of information to the chapter which focuses intently on one facet of the major idea of the book.

By the same token, each sentence in the paragraph contains a single idea about the one facet of the paragraph which zeros in on one segment of the idea which the chapter describes about the single idea of the book.

This being the case, it is imperative that we clearly understand the single idea in the book, chapter, paragraph and sentence. It is at this point that a number of people are mislead because they are not aware of what the author was trying to affirm. There is no doubt that this process is time consuming, but it pays off in rich dividends of understanding.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

Because epistles are logical literature, it follows that the movement from one idea to the next is accomplished by connectives. These connectives can give us very important clues concerning the intentions of the author. We will look more closely at this element later on in our study.

### **Apocalyptic Literature**

There are only two books in the Bible that are exclusively apocalyptic in nature - Daniel and Revelation. These books, especially Revelation, were presented to people whose faith and lives were stressed to the breaking point. We must remember that "apocalyptic" is a combined Greek word whose meaning is "to uncover." It is to remove the cover so that readers may gaze into truth previously hidden from their view.

In both Daniel and Revelation, there is repeated use of symbolic language. If one attempts to understand Revelation in the same way that he studies Romans, the figurative, symbolic language is bound to create some interesting problems in an understanding of the book.

In Both Daniel and Revelation, there is a careful use of historical information. This is quite deliberate in Daniel, especially. It is equally present in Revelation, but in a less obvious way. If we fail to acquaint ourselves with the appropriate historical information, we may deny ourselves some vital pieces of information necessary in the interpretation of the book.

In both books, the authors are careful and selective in their use of the names of God. If we take the time to make these observations, it can add significantly to our understanding of the text.

By the same token, if you write down every detail the author gives you about God, it will be immensely helpful in an overall understanding of the text. In the opening statement, the book of Revelation claims to be "a revelation of Jesus Christ." A careful record of every piece of information John gives us about Jesus provides a great platform upon which to build an understanding of the book. A careful reading of the first sentence of Revelation is most enlightening. The primary purpose of the text is to reveal Jesus Christ. Only secondarily is it the purpose of this text "to show his servants what must soon take place." As is often the case, God has, through the author, given us a clue concerning the purpose of the book. If we fail to take this information seriously, we run the risk of misunderstanding the divine intent of the book. If we, therefore, focus exclusively on what the book of Revelation says about future events, we miss a vital ingredient which God through the author intended for our understanding. If on the other hand, we deprive ourselves of the primary purpose for which the book was written, then we have totally misunderstood what the author was intending for our understanding. God used the language, the culture, the author's personality, every tool at His disposal to convey to us a revelation of Himself.

Both Daniel and Revelation give us a precise, delicate use of cultural information. An awareness of this cultural information will enhance our grasp of the text. Daniel used a careful understanding of the legal system to give us a sharp impression of just how perverse his enemies were. In Revelation, it speaks of a bottomless pit. All of John's readers would know that a pit was a cistern. During the dry seasons, cisterns were sometimes used as places of incarceration. A bottomless pit, which is an exaggeration for purposes of emphasis, was a detention site from which no one could ever free themselves.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Because these features are characteristic of the apocalyptic form, each one must be carefully observed if we hope to complete our study with a high level of accuracy.

As indicated earlier, there are two other forms of literature. These, however, are not exclusively characteristic of any book of the Bible. Still they are found in the Bible and thus require our attention.

### **Dramatic Literature**

Dramatic episodes may be found in most forms of literature. They are most common, however, in Biblical historical literature. There are two expressions of dramatic episodes in Paul's epistles. A dramatic episode, in Paul's epistles, is often identified by one of the doxologies for which Paul's epistles are well known. Another episode in Paul's epistles is found at that point in the epistle where he turns from a discussion of the problem to the exhortations he offers for the solution of that problem. This dramatic point is usually identified by the use of the Greek word "toigaroun" (τοίγαροῦν) This is translated "Therefore." The most obvious expression of this is found in Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Good drama begins with the not-so-obvious kernel of a problem with which everyone can identify. The jealousy of Saul over David's popularity is a case in point. Good drama builds and expands upon this small tension until it explodes upon the scene with all its fury and involves all of the expanded tensions and personalities. This climax which every drama must have, takes place when every seemingly unrelated element of the story converges in such a way that the total story is unalterably changed and redirected. Such a dramatic buildup is often made up of a series of lesser climactic moments. The story of Joseph is a good illustration of this truth. The episode started with the natural rivalries between siblings when one is given a position which involves control or authority over the others. This happens when the oldest child is in charge of the others while mother goes to the store. There was a dramatic moment when Joseph was sold into slavery. The story builds toward another climactic moment when Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph. Again, the story turns and builds toward another climactic moment when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream. The story builds to still another climactic moment when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. Finally all of these lesser dramatic moments converge at the time of Jacob's death when the brothers fear for their lives. At that time, Joseph spoke some very memorable words, "Don't be afraid: Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives..." This is the dramatic close to the book of Genesis.

Drama, in Biblical literature, is not fully utilized until we have accomplished two things:

- We must study each expansion of the tension and the final dramatic moment to discover what was involved that made each expansion so dramatic.
- We must study the final climax of the entire dramatic episode to determine what it means; what the author was trying to convey along with the detailed events of the story.

## THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

Look again at Genesis. The climax of the story of Joseph and of the entire book take place in 50:19 - 21 when Joseph spoke to his brothers. The story of Joseph tells a compelling story about God as well as the story about Joseph. The sovereignty of God is so great that He can take the evil purposes of people like Joseph's brothers, Potiphar's wife, the butler and others and turn them around in such a way as to bless and provide for the guilty and abusive as well as the righteous.

Genesis is a collage of the stories of the lives of several men. Each story expands the story, started when Adam and Eve were confronted with the serpents dishonest presentation, until it climaxes in the beautiful words of Joseph - "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

### **Parabolic Literature**

In the first century and before, the rabbis taught through stories, parables. They did it well. Modern rabbis often do the same thing. Jesus was particularly adept at this skill. A parable is a word picture. Its intent was to present truth in an unforgettable form.

Like the story of the Prodigal Son, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The story of the Prodigal Son is a story all by itself. Underneath that story, however, is a story about the mercy and forgiveness of God. Because of this, some contend that the parable is poorly named. They hold that it is a parable about a merciful father.

We must remember that a parable has only one message to tell. People sometimes try to study a parable to find extensive hidden meanings. This will probably lead to error and is not the intent of the parable.

There are at least 38 parables in the New Testament. All of these parables are located in the Gospels. There are at least ten parables in the Old Testament. An example of these is the parable of the man with one lamb, which Nathan told David, in II Samuel 12:1 - 10.

In most instances, the parable was not true. Jesus was probably **not** telling about a particular family when he talked about the Prodigal Son. These parables, though not true, tell a specific message about God that was absolutely true.

As we attempt to interpret the different parables in the Bible, we must keep these facts in mind and allow them to impact our understanding of the parable.

A grasp of the purpose of a parable is essential to an understanding of it. If you look at Luke chapter 15, three parables make up the entire chapter. Verse one of chapter 15 tells us that the religious leaders murmured because Jesus spent time with tax-collectors and sinners. Religious leaders thought these people were unredeemable. Jesus told three parables. In each parable, something was lost; something or someone was found; and they rejoiced. The use of three parables established the truth of Jesus' teaching. You will remember that the Old Testament teaches that truth is established at the mouth of two or three witnesses. The single message of each of these three parables answered the Pharisee's murmuring. Jesus spent time with the outcasts because they were important to God; they could be forgiven.

Having identified the kind of literature with which we will be working, we must now turn our attention to a study of the book itself.



## PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

1. Scan the Gospel of Mark to identify the timeline of the book.
2. Scan the Gospel of Mark to identify the geographical movement of the story.
3. Study the story of the meeting of Jacob and Esau upon Jacob's return from Paddan Aram. The event is recorded in Genesis 32:1 - 33:20. Delve as deeply as possible into this event. What additional information did you discover as you studied this event more deeply? What kind of literature is this? How can we make this useful for our understanding?
4. Turn to Genesis 22:1 - 24 and carefully study the conversation between God and Abraham. What understanding did you gain from a careful study of the conversation that you did not have before? In what ways does this conversation stimulate other conversations and events? How has this increased your understanding of the event?
5. Turn to Luke 15:11 - 32. Study the different relationship you find in this parable. Identify the relationships you discover. Describe each relationship in careful terms. How does each relationship contribute to the story Jesus was telling?
6. In John 2:1 - 11, the author includes several cultural elements which may not be applicable in our culture. Identify each cultural element. What does an awareness of these cultural explanations add to our store of knowledge concerning this story? How do these pieces of information affect the flow of the story?
7. As you read the story of Peter at the trial of Jesus, Mark 14:53 - 72, put yourself in Peter's place. How would you feel in each instance? What did this exercise contribute to your understanding of the story?
8. In Isaiah 53, the author gives a graphic picture of the coming Messiah. Describe this picture. What does the graphic picture add to our understanding? What kind of literature is this? What does this tell us about its interpretation?
9. Jesus used a startling hyperbole in Matthew 5:27-32. What is a hyperbole? In view of the nature of a hyperbole, what did Jesus mean by this hyperbole?
10. Study Psalm 23. Identify the graphic, symbolic statements. Explain what the author said in each one.
11. In Psalm 57:1, there is a vivid parallelism. Describe what the author said in this parallelism. What kind of literature is this? What rules would you follow in interpreting the verse?





## **ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE**

### **1. Scan the Gospel of Mark to identify the timeline of the book.**

The Gospel of Mark has no genealogy as you find in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. That is not surprising since Mark emphasized the servanthood of Jesus. No one seeks out the lineage of a slave.

The Gospel of Mark rather begins with the baptism of Jesus, the beginning of His ministry. We commonly understand this to have taken place when He was about 30 years of age.

In 10:1, Jesus crossed into Judea and started what turned out to be the last week of His earthly life. 10:1- the end of chapter 16, cover roughly the events of one week. This time, however, included His trial, death and resurrection.

In summary, Mark 1:12-9:50 cover roughly 3-1/2 years of Jesus' ministry. Mark 10:1-the end of chapter 16, on the other hand, cover approximately one week. In view of these facts, the emphasis, in Mark, in terms of time, falls upon chapters 10-16. The week of Jesus' trial, death and resurrection.

### **2. Scan the Gospel of Mark to identify the geographical movement of the story.**

If you study the Gospel of Mark from a geographical -point of view, you will make some interesting observations.

- a. 1:1-13 deals with the Baptism and temptation of Jesus. This of course signals the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
  - b. In 1:14 - 9:50 the events of Jesus' 3-1/2 year ministry take place almost exclusively in Galilee, in a variety of cities and villages around the sea of Galilee. Beginning with 10:1 to the end of the book, the location of Jesus' experiences took place in Judea, in and around the city of Jerusalem.
  - c. It is interesting that both the time line, (question one) and the geographical location of events focus on Mark 10 - 16. The suggestion of these observations is that the intent of the author of this Gospel record was upon the events of that final week in Jerusalem. This is the climax of Jesus' servanthood. Jesus showed His servanthood in teaching the people and healing the sick. His greatest expression of servanthood, however, was His confrontation of the religious system, His crucifixion and death for our sins, His resurrection from the dead to defeat our last enemy death, and establish His ministry until he comes again.
- ### **3. Study the story of the meeting of Jacob and Esau upon Jacob's return from Paddan Aram. The event is recorded in Genesis 32:1 - 33:20. Delve as deeply as possible into this event. (a). What additional information did you discover as you studied this event more deeply? (b). What kind of literature is this? (c). How can we make this useful for our understanding?**
- a. We will list the information we find in these chapters. We will place an asterisk beside information that was new when we wrote the study of Genesis entitled, Glimpses of God - II.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Overview of chapters 32 and 33.

Genesis 32	Jacob Wrestled with an Angel at Peniel
Genesis 33	Jacob met Esau

- (1). 31:3 - Jacob was obeying divine instructions when he left Paddan-Aram.
- (2). 32:2 - Jacob recognized the two angels he met as “God’s host.”
- (3). 32:3 - Jacob did not sneak back into the land. He sent messengers well in advance to tell Esau he was coming.
- (4). 32:4 - Jacob referred to Esau as “Adonai” “Lord,” And to himself as “your servant.”
- (5). 32:6, 7 - Jacob was not trusting in the size of his household to save him. He was frightened when he heard Esau was coming with 400 men.
- (6). 32:9 - He saw God as faithful - “God of my father Abraham,...Isaac,..”
- (7). He saw God as merciful - “Elohim,” and as Just “Jehovah.
- (8). 32:9 - He believed God would keep His word.
- (9). 32:10 - He was now humble, “I am not worthy...”
- (10). 32:11 - He believed God answered prayer.
- \* (11). 32:13 - He was giving where once he was a taker. I previously saw him as only selfish.
- (12). 32:23 - He was honest about himself before God.
- (13). 32:25 - He had great determination.
- (14). 32:28 - His character was transformed - “Israel.”
- (15). 32:30 - He recognized his blessings.
- \* (16). 33:3 - He went **ahead** of his family to meet Esau. I had only seen him as a selfish coward.
- (17). 33:5 - He saw his family as a gift from God.
- (18). He was humbled. He hoped he would be accepted, but he was not sure that he would be.
- (19). 33:10 - He was determined that the gift would be Esau’s even after he was accepted. This was new. I had thought of his gift as a way to buy the sympathy of his brother.
- (20). 33:11 - He saw what he had as God’s gracious dealing with him.
- (21). 33:13 - He was gracious - His gentle reversal when Esau wanted him to go with him to Seir (Edom). He was faithful even when it could have been costly to him.
- (22). 33:18 - He was faithful and obedient - He returned to Shechem, the place where he was sent.
- (23). 33:19 - He had forsaken the old ways.
- (24). 33:0 - He built an altar - He remembered it was God who brought him to this place safely.

b. There are several pieces of this information:

- (1). This gives greater accuracy to our understanding of the text.
- (2). It tends to clarify our understanding of Jacob and to enable us to see him more accurately with more mercy.
- (3). It illustrates for us just what God does and wants to do in His followers.
- (4). It gives us glimpses into the personality and character of God. only as we more fully know Him can we more fully place our full trust in Him.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

4. Turn to Genesis 22:1 - 24 and carefully study the conversation between God and Abraham. What understanding did you gain from a careful study of the conversation that you did not have before? In what ways does this conversation stimulate other conversations and events? How has this increased your understanding of the event?

**a. What new understandings did you find?**

- (1). God uses challenges like this to prove us. This is not for His discovery, but for ours.
- (2). 22:1 - This conversation is very personal - called Abraham by name,.
- (3). 22:2 - God designed this conversation, "on one of the mountains *"I will tell you about,"* to be an ongoing one with His servant.
- (4). 22:3 - No record of Abraham's question or challenge to this instruction. Abraham had an ultimate commitment to God.
- (5). 22:3 - Abraham obeyed exactly as God instructed him.
- (6). 22:4 - It was a three or four day journey. Abraham had plenty of time to think over the decision he had made to sacrifice his son.
- (7). 22:5 - He saw what he was doing as worship.
- (8). 22:7 - It was to be a burnt offering - this represents total surrender to God.
- (9). 22:8 - Confidence - God will provide (see for himself) a lamb.
- (10). 22:9 - God was specific - He told Abraham the precise place to make the sacrifice.
- (11). 22:10 - Abraham set his personal feelings aside in order to be faithful.
- (12). 22:10 - Abraham did not question how God would keep His promise concerning the lineage being like sand and stars.
- (13). God spoke personally to Abraham.
- (14). 22:11 - God wanted Abraham's faithfulness, not his sacrifice, thus he stopped Abraham from slaying his son.
- (15). 22:12 - God wanted nothing to be more important in our lives than He is.
- (16). 22:13 - God was faithful - He provided a ram for the sacrifice.
- (17). 22:14 - He is Jehovah Jireh - God is the great provider.
- (18). God blessed Abraham for his faithfulness.
- (19). 22:18 - Blessing will come to all nations as Abraham is blessed.

**b. How did this conversation stimulate other conversations and events?**

God used this experience as a basis to encourage Abraham in other seemingly impossible situations. It was the basis upon which God could say, in effect, "Because I was dependable in that situation involving your son, you can now depend upon me to keep my promise in these seemingly impossible situations as well.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

This is the whole idea behind God's identification of Himself as "The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob." He was saying, "I am the God who was faithful to Abraham, was faithful to Isaac and was faithful to Jacob." This was a powerful word of assurance to the people of Israel. People have said that this passage could not possibly deal with the God of the Bible because He could not possibly make such a request. If we study what God did in this passage it becomes very clear. Ultimately, God was not really asking Abraham to sacrifice his son. God was asking Abraham to demonstrate that nothing was more important than careful obedience to the command of God. There is a vast difference between the two concepts.

This study tells us some phenomenal things about Abraham's trust and faithfulness. It also tells us something about how personal and compassionate God really is.

There is a major understanding to be gained here concerning God and His faithful people. This relationship is very personal. It is driven by love, not force. This relationship is dependent upon unflinching faith and obedience on our part as well as total love and dependability on the part of God. It results in blessing that affects not only the faithful, but all the nations of the world. This is a beautiful picture of our relationship with God.

**5. Turn to Luke 15:11 - 32. Study the different relationships you find in this parable. Identify the relationships you discover. Describe each relationship in careful terms. How does each relationship contribute to the story Jesus was telling?**

**a. Identify the relationships you discover.**

- (1). The relationship between the father and the younger son.
  - (a). He was a good provider for his son.
  - (b). He was longsuffering even when his son was guilty of gross error - wanting his inheritance before the father died.
  - (c). Loving - The father watched for his son even though he had behaved badly.
  - (d). He endured humiliation lovingly - He restored his son even though he had committed what they felt was an unpardonable sin.
  - (e). He was overjoyed by his sons repentance, not his destruction.
  - (f). The father protected the son from vengeance of the neighbors - He ran out to meet him.
  - (g). He again trusted the son who squandered his inheritance. That ring was first century plastic, the credit card. This was the same as the family checkbook.
- (2). The relationship of the father with the older son.
  - (a). He entrusted everything to his care.
  - (b). He worked with him, though the older son/heir was in the process of taking control.
  - (c). The boy overstepped his bounds; the father humiliated himself to go out to bring in the angry son.
  - (d). He further humiliated himself by pleading with his son to come into the banquet.
  - (e). He did not eagerly punish his son for insolence.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

- (f). He accepted the insolence of the older son over “that son of yours,” rather than “brother.”
- (3). The prodigal son with his father.
  - (a). He was arrogant to consider asking for his inheritance in advance.
  - (b). He was selfish - He did not consider the results to his family when he acted so thoughtlessly.
  - (c). He was honest. He admitted that he was wrong and did not expect to be received as though nothing had happened
  - (d). He was thoughtful - he did not want to put his father on the spot by simply asking to be reinstated to the family.
  - (e). He was humble - he allowed his father to reinstate him, though he knew he did not deserve it.
- (4). The relationship of the Older Brother with the Father.
  - (a). He was responsible. He stayed with his father after the younger son fled.
  - (b). He worked hard.
  - (c). He was silently angry.
  - (d). He was honest, he refused to go into the banquet. It would appear that he had forgiven his brother if he went into the feast. That would have been wrong for him.
  - (e). He was a bitter man.
  - (f). He was insolent.
  - (g). He was rude to his father - “that son of yours.”
  - (h). He was inconsiderate of his father.
  - (i). He was not repentant.
  - (j). The story ends with the prodigal son restored, but the elder son was not.
- (5). The Prodigal with the Older Brother.
  - (a). He was inconsiderate of the work that would fall to his older brother this is just the same as we are with other children of God.
  - (b). Just as he rebelled against his father, we rebel against the will of God.
  - (c). Our selfish ways cause us to violate His will, but His response is mercy.
  - (d). When he came humbly to his father, he was restored. When we come humbly to confess to God with a contrite heart, we too are restored.
- (6). Older brother with prodigal
  - (a). He was angry.
  - (b). He was rejecting with his brother.
  - (c). He was unforgiving.
  - (d). He saw no place for repentance.  
Selfishness is characteristic of persons who rebel against the will and direction of God.
- (7). The father with the neighbors.
  - (a). He was honest - He let them know that the son had embarrassed the family and would be rejected.
  - (b). He also let them know that he forgave the son. This they would not readily accept.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

(c). He was open - he invited them to share this spontaneous feast.

### **5b - How does each relationship contribute to the story Jesus was telling.**

First, look at the whole chapter. Jesus was asked why he spent time with publicans and sinners. He answered them by telling them three parables in which something/someone was lost, found and rejoiced over.

- a. The lost sheep
- b. The lost coin.
- c. The lost sons

The religious leaders challenged Jesus. The story of the Lost son was the climax of Jesus' response. In this last response, Jesus used three parallels:

- 1. The prodigal - He represented the publicans and sinners with whom Jesus shared.
- 2. The Older Brother - The religious leaders who like the older brother did all the right things, but were as unforgiven as the older brother.
- 3. The forgiving father - A representative of God who judges when people do wrong, but forgives when they repent.

This was not an idle tale that Jesus taught. He was describing the actual conditions he encountered in this challenge. The publicans were indeed sinners. On the other hand, the Pharisees were as unforgiving as the older son was portrayed. Again, God was as willing to forgive as the father in the parable. The entirety of the parable was intended to answer the question, Why did Jesus spend time with publicans and sinners? The answer was that they were important; indeed, they were redeemable, though the Pharisees would never agree that they were.

6. **In John 2:1 - 11, the author includes several cultural elements which may not be applicable in our culture. Identify each cultural element. What does an awareness of these cultural explanations add to our store of knowledge concerning this story? How do these pieces of information affect the flow of the story?**

#### **a. Identify each cultural element.**

**The parceling out of the wine** - Wine was very important in Israel. It was extremely important at a local wedding. Because it was so important, they had a procedure for dispensing wine. When the feast began, they served the very best wine they could afford. As the celebration continued, and their best wine was consumed, they then turned to the wine of lesser quality. There were at least three grades of wine:

**The choice wine** - This was aged over a much longer period of time than the other wines.

**The cheaper wine** - This is sometimes referred to as "new wine" in the New Testament. It is good wine, but has not been allowed to age.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

**The very poorest wine.** This was sometimes called vinegar. This was the drink used by the soldiers and the impoverished. In this report, there are two kinds of wine - "the choice wine," and "the cheaper wine."

**The ruler of the feast** - There was a master of ceremonies at every feast and wedding. Unless it was his wedding, the eldest son, the heir, would serve in this capacity. He was the one who parceled out the wine so as to make sure that they did not run out. That would be the ultimate humiliation to run out of wine.

Despite the humiliation it would bring, this family ran out of wine. Whether this means they were extremely poor or just inappropriate planning for the evening, or the fact that Jesus brought at least five guests who were probably not invited, we do not know. We only know the dilemma was there.

The text speaks of "the master of the feast." This was a servant or friend of the groom. He filled the general role of host at every dinner the father planned. This person was in total control of the feast. If anything went wrong, he was the one that anyone would consult. That is the reason the "ruler of the feast" commented on the quality of this wine.

The text said that there were six stone water pots in the house. John tells us that these pots of water were "used by the Jews for ceremonial washing." A traveler must have his feet washed. It removed the dirt from the road on dry days and mud on other days. They were required to have their feet washed before eating. They were required to wash in three ways:

- Water was poured from the wrist down over the finger tips.
- The fist of one hand scrubbed on the palm of the other and then over the wrist.
- Finally water was poured over the finger tips and across the palm and over the wrist. Only then were they ceremonially clean and prepared to eat. You will remember the religious leaders chided Jesus because His disciples ate with unwashed hands. It was this rule to which they referred.

Each of the water pots held about 30 gallons of water. That would be plenty of wine for the entire wedding feast.

### b. What did these cultural elements add?

**The jugs were for the water of cleansing.** They were never used to store wine. Notice that they were completely filled with water. This eliminates the explanation of some that wine was added to the jars.

There were two parts to the miracle Jesus performed on this occasion:

- He turned water into wine.
- The drink that he made was not just wine, but the very best wine which would normally require a long aging process.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Jesus referred to his mother as, “woman,” or “dear woman.” This has sometimes been viewed as disrespect. Just the opposite is true. This is the same term Jesus used from the cross when He placed his mother in the care of John.

Jesus was not the host who took total control of the feast, yet he intervened and showed great compassion on his mother, the groom, who may have been John, and his family as he saved them from embarrassment and humiliation.

Remember, Jesus was just starting His ministry. In this experience, the people saw this miraculous power, His compassion and intense humanity as He cared for a very human problem and enjoyed the festivities.

**7. As you read the story of Peter at the trial of Jesus, Mark 14:53 - 72. Put yourself in Peter's place. How would you feel in each instance? What did this contribute to your understanding of the story?**

**a. How would you feel?**

- (1). v. 54 - Peter followed at a distance - I would remember my boasting of never denying Jesus. I would feel shame and guilt. I would feel deep sorrow.
- (2). v. 54 Peter went into the High Priest's Courtyard - I would feel confusion. I would want to be with Jesus no matter what. At the same time, I would be frightened that they might want to accuse me. I would experience a confusion of guilt and a desire to be faithful.
- (3). Jesus was there a long time. - I would grow increasingly tense and worried the longer the trial went on. There would be loud noises coming from the house where the mock trial was held. I would become increasingly frightened and indignant. Everyone knew it was unlawful for them even to meet like this, much less conduct a trial.
- (4). v. 68, Peter accused by a servant Girl - I wasn't thinking very clearly. The accusation was made by a slave girl. No accusation was valid if made by a slave or a woman. She was both. Still I would be terrified that they might believe her.
- (5). v. 68 -Peter lied - The servant girl accused Peter of being with Jesus the Nazarene. He lied. He denied being with Jesus. He said, “I don't know or understand what you are talking about.” I would be shocked at my ability to deny the one for whom I said I would die.

Peter was apparently on the first floor of the house while Jesus was upstairs in the midst of the trial. Peter left and went out into the entry way. This is a courtyard at the entrance. I would feel uncontrollable shame and terror mixed together. When the two are mixed, one can neither understand what is happening nor control his own responses any longer. Escape is his only hope.

- (6). v. 61 Peter denied it again - While outside, a servant girl (perhaps the same one) accused him of being “one of them.” Peter denied it again. This is another lie. I would feel even more frightened and trapped. If I stayed, they might get more suspicious and make more serious accusations. If I fled, they would be sure that I was one of those who were with Jesus. I would be both trapped and eager to flee at the same time. This usually results in being frozen in place.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

- (7). v. 70 The third accusation based on the fact his dialect and dress betrayed him as a Galilean - I would be as frightened as a caged animal and equally serious about the need to escape. My fear could no longer be hidden. It would now be out of control. I would freeze. If I stayed, they would continue to accuse me. If I ran they would be sure of my guilt.
- (8). He cursed himself and lied - Calling down curses upon yourself is intended to convince people of your sincerity. Otherwise they would consider it dangerous to expose oneself to a curse if you are not telling the truth. Peter did this, but it did not seem to convince them and it did not alleviate his fear.  
Peter took an oath saying, "I don't know the man you are talking about." An honest man doesn't need to take a dangerous oath, but Peter lied and he knew it. The pressure of their accusation and disbelief was getting to him. Were I in his position, I am certain that I would do as he did and more. Panic would be a mild word to describe how I would feel.
- (9). v. 72 The rooster crowed a second time - The thunder of what Jesus had previously said about this would be deafening. The self indictment of this situation would tear me apart.
- (10). v. 72 Peter remembered Jesus' words - Jesus' words would scream over and over in my head. I would no longer be able to face this interrogation. I would no longer be able to conceal the truth.
- (11). v. 72 Peter broke down and wept - I would come totally apart. Certainly, I would become incoherent and incapable of controlled action because of my sobs and guilt.

### **b. What did this add?**

Previously I knew that Peter felt badly about what he had done. This experience helped me to empathize with his pain and devastating distress. As I recorded these feelings, I felt like I was part of the experience. I saw a part of the guilt that I had experienced, but had never really understood.

This whole exercise gave me a new appreciation for what Peter did and what he became after the resurrection .

### **8. In Isaiah 53, the author gives a graphic picture of the coming Messiah. Describe this picture. What does the graphic picture add to our understanding? What kind of literature is this? What does this tell us about its interpretation?**

To begin the study, we must identify the things the prophet said about the Messiah in this chapter. They are as follows:

- 1. v. 2 - He grew up before him like a tender shoot out of dry ground.
- 2. v. 2 - We were not attracted by his beauty or majesty.
- 3. v. 2 - Nothing in his appearance would cause us to desire him.
- 4. v. 3 - He was despised and rejected of men.
- 5. v. 3 - He was a man of many sorrows.
- 6. v. 3 - He was familiar with suffering and grief.
- 7. v. 3 - He was one whom people would not want to view.
- 8. v. 3 - He was despised.
- 9. v. 3 - We did not think highly of him.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

10. v. 4 - He took our infirmities.
11. v. 4 - He carried our sorrows.
12. v. 4 - We thought of him as stricken of God.
13. v. 4 - We thought of him as smitten of God.
14. v. 4 - We thought of him as afflicted by God
15. v. 5 - He was pierced for our transgressions.
16. v. 5 - He was crushed for our iniquities.
17. v. 5 - His punishment brought us peace.
18. v. 5 - His wounds provided our healing.
19. v. 6 - Jehovah placed our iniquities on Him.
20. v. 7 - He was oppressed and afflicted but he did not defend himself.
21. v. 7 - He was led like a lamb to slaughter.
22. v. 7 - He was silent at his trial.
23. v. 8 - He was taken away to oppression and judgment.
24. v. 8 - He was killed with no child - name blotted out.
25. v. 9 - He was buried with evil men.
26. v. 9 - He was buried with the rich - where he would have been least comfortable.
27. v.9 - He was guilty of neither violence nor deceit.
28. v. 10 - God willed him to suffer and be destroyed for us.
29. v. 10 - His life was a guilt offering for us.
30. v. 10- He will see his offspring - a spiritual statement.

### What kind of literature is this?

This is prophetic literature. Written by a prophet, it provides two kinds of information. It announced God's condemnation on the life of sin. It also proclaimed the good news of hope to those who listened and read.

### What does this tell us about the interpretation of this chapter?

Because this is prophetic writing, we must consider this information in view of certain characteristics:

1. **It takes place in a specific historical setting.** Writing during the reigns of four kings of Judah - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, some of the worst and the best of the kings of Judah. It was a time of great turmoil, discomfort, frustration and uncertainty.
2. **There is great symbolism here,** as in most of the prophets,. In verse two, He is spoken of as a "tender shoot out of dry ground." In verse seven He was compared to a sheep.
3. **His task was to denounce sin** in the forms seen in the present situation. Isaiah denounced the sin of the realm with more skill and precision than almost any other prophet. He was graphic, but not bombastic. He said things like "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities." It was carefully worded, but unmistakable.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

4. **He celebrated the good news.** He talked openly and vividly about the Messiah's suffering for our sins. His ray of hope is brighter than that seen in the writings of many prophets.

In this chapter, if not the whole prophecy, the emphasis is not to focus on the sin of the recipients so much as to acknowledge their sinfulness and announce the good news of the redemption purchased by Messiah. Denouncing sin in all its ugly forms, Isaiah, in this chapter, described, in vivid detail, the extremity of his suffering and the beauty of our redemption. The chapter does not necessarily tell us something new. It conveys these truths at a deeper emotional level and with greater clarity than usually found in the prophets.

9. **Jesus used a startling hyperbole in Matthew 5:27-32. What is the hyperbole? In view of the nature of a hyperbole, what did Jesus mean by this teaching?**

A hyperbole is an exaggeration for purposes of effect. It is to exceed or diminish a statement beyond the fact in either direction in order to emphasize a particular teaching. It is not intended to be taken literally.

The hyperbole is stated in Matthew 5:29, 30.

*If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (NIV) Matthew 5:29-30*

This instruction is quite drastic to say the least. Seriously, if this statement was intended to be taken literally, then much if not all of the Christian world be blind in one eye and missing one hand. Again, if that were the case, there would be a conflict with the teaching of the rest of Scripture. Paul teaches, in I Corinthians 6:19 that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. That being the case, we should do nothing that would desecrate that temple in any way. Plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand, in my judgment, would desecrate the Spirit's temple.

It seems clear that Jesus meant this as a hyperbole, an exaggeration in order to emphasize a point. If that is the case, then Jesus' teaching would be on this order. Our obedience and eternal destiny are the most important things in our lives. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with their being the priority of our lives. Base all your decisions and choices on the fact that obedience to God is the single priority in your life. Make your eternal destiny more important than any other consideration as you make choices for your life.

10. **Study Psalm 23. Identify the graphic, symbolic statements. Explain what the author said in each one.**

We must remember that David was quite familiar with conditions relating to sheep. It is out of this background that he wrote about God.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- 23:1 - **“The Lord is my shepherd.”** - Shepherds were people with a very low reputation. It is not from this point of view that David wrote. Shepherds were also well known for their extreme devotion to their sheep. It is out of this background that David wrote. To say “the Lord is my shepherd” is to say God cares deeply for me and will care for every need of my life.
- 23:2 - **“He makes me lie down in green pastures”** - Sheep can live on very poor grass conditions. When they get into very green grass, they tend to keep on eating until they get sick and die. When the animal has eaten enough, it needs to be forced to lie down and rest or it will do itself harm. God makes me do the thing I should in order to protect my life.
- 23:2 - **“He leads me beside still waters”** - Sheep will not drink from troubled waters. The shepherd knows that and will attempt to find calm waters for their needs. God knows our limitations and seeks to care for us within the confines of those limitations rather than to force us to do what we should.
- 23:3 - **He restores my soul** - The Hebrew says - He brings back my life. The natural tendency of sheep is to wander. When we wander from God, it is His character to bring us back, rather than to allow us to continue to go away from His safety and from the rest of the flock.
- 23:3 - **He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake** - On the hillsides of Palestine, there are hundreds of paths where the sheep have grazed. It is hardly possible to follow any one of these paths. The sheep could not/would not follow a path. They need a shepherd to guide them, to go ahead of them and lead the way. That is the task of the shepherd.
- 23:4 - **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil** - There is a place called “the valley of the shadow of death.” David said that though he went through this dangerous place, the presence of God, his shepherd, would deliver him from the fear of what might happen there. This picture stresses the protection of the shepherd.
- 23:4 - **“Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”** The shepherds crook has many uses in terms of control of the sheep as well as a means of protection for the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd would gently touch the sheep with the crook and they would be assured that they were safe. As the sheep find comfort in the presence of the shepherds crook, so David found comfort in the means God used to watch over his life.
- 23:5 - **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”** - This does not suggest that God fixes lunch while arrows are flying. It rather reflects a Jewish cultural picture. If I eat with a person, I am saying to everyone that I accept that person. In the midst of people who would destroy David, God accepts him and offers him the meal of forgiveness and acceptance.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE KINDS OF LITERATURE

- 23:5 - **“You anoint my head with oil.”** The anointing of the head with oil suggests that the person has been chosen of God for a specific task. It is not just that God selects him for an oil bath. It is that God has chosen David to perform a specific task even though he came from an unknown family in a little known tribe of Israel. It is like God said, “I choose you, David.”
- The use of oil on the head was also a cultural expectation for a person who had traveled. It was a way of saying you are welcomed in my home.
- 23:5 - **“My cup overflows.”** - Both experiences of sorrow and joy were called “a cup.” David said that life was so full of joy that his cup of joy overflowed. The cup of sorrow was dealt with in the same way. Jesus said, in the garden, “Father if it is possible, let this **cup** pass from me.” Here, David said that his life was so blessed that it ran over with joy.
- 23:6 - **“Goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.”** - It is a reflection on the shepherd when you look at the places into which he takes his sheep. The fact that he led them in such a way that goodness and love were the conditions in which his life was lived speaks of the care of the shepherd for the sheep; the care of God for His people.
- 23:6 - **“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”** - You only invite people into your home if you are at peace with them; if you approve of them and affirm the way they live. David found such affirmation in God that he could count on being a house guest of God not for three days, as custom required, but forever.

In this chapter of the Psalms, David focused repeated attention on the fact that God watched over His people the way a good shepherd watched over his flock and would willingly give his life for them. This is the whole gist of the story of this Psalm.

**11. In Psalm 57:1, there is a vivid parallelism. Describe what the author said in this parallelism. What kind of literature is this? What rules would you follow in interpreting the verse?**

This verse parallels the life of David with that of a young eagle protected by its mother. The young eagle is safe and free to move about. When danger strikes, however, the mother eagle spreads her wings over the defenseless young bird and prepares to die if need be to protect the life of the fledgling. That is precisely the way God deals with us.

This is Poetry and must be considered in that light. As we indicated, in chapter five, there are a few rules of interpretation which one must keep in mind:

1. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme. If we try to force it to do so, we will certainly miss its message.
2. We must watch for vivid imagery. This will identify some of the most important portions of the poetry.
3. We must watch for parallelism. This tool is used to convey additional information and clarity. We must use it in that way.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

4. We must be alert to repetition. This is what you find in Psalm 136. It is one of the main sources of emphasis. The material which is emphasized is the most important information in the poem.
5. Watch for graphic language. This will tend to give you a grasp of the emotional tone of the poem.
6. We should never try to interpret Hebrew poetry in literal logic as you would one of Paul's epistles.

If we are alert to these rules, we will have our best opportunity to understand what the Psalmist was trying to convey to us.

## THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

Every portion of Scripture is made up of four main parts. They are as follows:

- Terms/words
- Structure
- General literary form -one of the seven kinds which we previously discussed
- Atmosphere

Let us look at each of these separately

### TERMS

A term is a word which is used in a particular way. The word "trunk" can be framed in such a way that it describes the rear portion of an automobile. Used in a different way, the word "trunk" describes the front part of an elephant. In another context, "trunk" is a facility to transport our belongings when on a trip. In still a different context, "trunk" describes the main stem of a tree. The meaning of a term can often be determined by the context in which it is used.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father said, "my son was dead..."

In most places, this word means that someone has ceased living. It obviously does not mean that in this instance. Jesus appealed to a Jewish understanding. When a person embarrassed his family, he was disowned and an actual funeral was conducted. In the minds of that family, this person was no longer living.

Because we are dealing with two Biblical languages, we must take special care to identify what the word meant when it was used; how it was used in the Biblical language. This, of course, can involve linguistic searches for meaning.

The Greek language is very precise. Like the German language, it tends to be quite scientific. John 1:1 is an example of just how precise it can be.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

Hebrew, on the other hand, is a romantic language like Spanish and Latin. Hebrew has great emotional depth, but it does not possess the precision of ideas found in Greek and German.

An illustration would be helpful. Psalm 23:5 is an excellent example.

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup runneth over. Psalm 23:5*

This is very graphic. It does not mean that God prepares a picnic lunch in the midst of a battle. David used several visual symbols with which the Jews were very familiar. If I offer someone food, it means that there is no alienation between us; there is forgiveness. David said, "Though the neighboring nations are eager to do battle with us and would seek to destroy me, God accepts me and offers me unconditional forgiveness."

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

David continued by saying, “Thou hast anointed my head with oil.” The anointing of the head with oil was a special symbol for Jews. People who had been chosen to be king were anointed with oil. Persons set apart to be priests were anointed with oil. The anointing was a special sign that the person had been chosen by God for specific divine service. This is precisely what David suggested.

David continued, “My cup runneth over.” The Jewish people thought of their tears as having character. They had small tear cups in which they collected their tears of joy and a separate one to collect their tears of sorrow. They spoke of their experiences of joy as “a cup of joy,” while they spoke of their experiences of sorrow as their “cup of sorrow.” In this instance, David spoke of his blessings as so vast that his cup overflowed.

In this verse, David was showing just how bountifully God had blessed him and related to him, even though he had sinned.

In any study of a Biblical passage, an understanding of the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words is absolutely essential. An excellent example of this is found in John 21:15-17. In this passage Jesus asked three questions and Peter gave three answers. In the English text, it is presented in this way:

JESUS	PETER
Do you love me?	You know I love you
Do you love me?	You know I love you
Do you love me?	You know I love you

It appears that Jesus asked the same question three times and Peter gave the same answer three times.

If you look at the Greek text, however, you will see a very different presentation.

JESUS	PETER
Do you love me - (agape) - love without any limitation	You know I am fond of you - (phileo) - love with very definite limitations
Do you love me - (agape) - love without any limitation	You know I am fond of you - (phileo) - love with definite limitations
Are you fond of me - (Phileo) - love with definite limitations	You know all things. You know that I am fond of you - (phileo) - love with definite limitations

One does not have to think too long to realize that what was said in the English version and what was said in the Greek version are drastically different messages. We will study this at length later in this volume.

### STRUCTURE

The structure of a sentence or passage can be defined as the way words are put together. The structure - the way words are put together to achieve specific meaning - can seriously affect their meaning. This can be well illustrated with an observation of Paul's statement in Ephesians:



## THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

*Let him who stole steal no more, let him work with his hands. Ephesians 4:28*

If one just moves the emphasis, this is what it does to the meaning of the text:

*Let him that stole steal; no more let him work with his hands.*

The difference between the two is painfully obvious. What happens in a study of Scripture may be less obvious, but it is just as true.

Every sentence, whether in the Bible, or the daily newspaper, must have a subject and a verb. When you are trying to understand one of Paul's sentences, which is five verses long, the identification of the structure is particularly helpful in figuring out what the apostle was talking about. In such sentences, there is a subject, verb and a series of phrases and/or clauses which modify the subject and/or the predicate. A careful awareness of the structure will go a long way toward enabling us to accurately interpret a sentence or passage.

### GENERAL LITERARY FORM

The general literary form of a book is an identification of the kind of literature it is. You will remember that we described seven of these previously. Again, it is crucial that we determine the kind of literature we are studying as the first step in the process of Biblical understanding.

### THE ATMOSPHERE

We seldom hear anyone talk about the atmosphere of a passage. This is unfortunate since it is so vitally important to our understanding. The atmosphere of a passage is the emotional feeling an author creates through the words, structure and literary form he uses. It can be the logic of Romans. It can also be the emotionally energized words of the Song of Solomon. It can be a thrilling passage from the book of Revelation, the deep pathos of Lamentations.

The whole issue of atmosphere is extremely important because it will almost always correspond to the intent of the passage.

In Genesis 50:15-21, Joseph's father had just died. The ten brothers feared that Joseph would now take revenge because they had sold him as a slave. The atmosphere was electric with tension and fear. The tension was broken when Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." The atmosphere was changed by these words. When Joseph had kissed each one, a sign of forgiveness and acceptance, they breathed a sigh of relief and then spoke with him.

You can find the same kind of atmosphere in the story of Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat during a storm, Mark 4:35-41.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE**

As we indicated earlier, there are four main parts to every passage of Scripture: general literary form, atmosphere, terms and structure. In the following exercises, we will pursue each of these parts with each verse under consideration.

1. **The Gospel of John includes some vivid images to identify Jesus. Identify the main ingredients in each of the following passages:**
  - a. **John 10:7**
  - b. **John 10:11**
2. **Identify the main ingredients of Matthew 5:8**
3. **Identify the main ingredients of Hebrews 7:25**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

As we indicated earlier, there are four main parts to every passage of Scripture: general literary form, atmosphere, terms, and structure. In the following exercises, we will pursue each of these parts with each verse under consideration.

### 1. The Gospel of John includes some very vivid images to identify Jesus. Identify the main ingredients in each of the following passages:

#### a. John 10:7

*Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep." John 10:7*

The portion of this verse that we wish to focus our attention upon is the words "I am the door of the sheep."

#### GENERAL LITERARY FORM

There are several different kinds of literature in the Scriptures. In the Gospel of John we are dealing with a book that is historical in nature. In view of this fact, we must view everything in this passage with this fact in mind. When we deal with Biblical books which are historical in nature, there are some specific concerns which must be addressed.

- We study the events
- We study the conversations.
- We attempt to determine the timeline of the book
- We study relationships
- We study the cultural information it includes.
- We attempt to place ourselves in the story to develop a sense of empathy.

Not all of these investigations will be appropriate in every search.

#### THE EVENTS

We should read the entire story in order to understand what was happening. You will find it in John 9 and 10. Questions had developed about the man who was born blind. His parents were afraid of being evicted from the temple if they told the religious leaders how their son regained his sight.. The parents suggested that the religious leaders ask their son. He refused to call Jesus a sinner and was thrown out of the temple. The implication of this was that he could not take part in the day of atonement and that forgiveness of his sins would be denied him. As chapter 10 begins, Jesus taught about the door of the sheepfold. This was a direct reference to the man having the door of the temple closed against him. The religious leaders closed the door to forgiveness for this man who had been healed. Jesus on the other hand opened wide the door to restoration to God.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### THE ATMOSPHERE

The atmosphere of the context of chapter nine is charged and irritated as the leaders questioned the man born blind. This charged atmosphere continues, in chapter 10, as Jesus speaks to the issue. In John 10:1-6, Jesus drew a parallel between the temple and the sheepfold. The people would immediately identify with what He said. By means of this parallel, Jesus identified these religious leaders as “thieves,” “enemies of the flock.” Throughout the paragraph, Jesus continued with the image of the sheep and the sheepfold.

Jesus also described a good shepherd:

- The sheep know his voice - he is familiar with them.
- The shepherd knows the name of each sheep.
- The good shepherd leads his sheep.
- The sheep follow the good shepherd - they trust him.

Only then did Jesus identify Himself in two ways in John 10:7-18.

As Jesus spoke, the religious leaders had to be filled with rage. It was clear that Jesus was drawing a contrast between the religious leaders and Himself. Jesus was much more direct and aggressive than he had been previously. Though the text does not say, the crowd certainly knew what Jesus was saying and as on other occasions, they rejoiced.

### THE TERMS

In John 10:7, Jesus said, “I am the door of the sheep.” The word “door” is “thura” (θύρα) and means “a portal,” “an entrance,” “a gate,” “a door.” Having discussed the care of sheep in the previous paragraph, Jesus turned to yet another image the Jews understood well. For safety and comfort, a shepherd tried to put his sheep in a protected enclosure each night. He was the one who opened the door and welcomed the helpless animals into the safety of his care. He would then lie down across the entrance to keep out those who would harm the helpless. He, in fact, became the door.

The religious leaders were just the opposite. They threw people out of the temple if their statements did not favor the position of the religious leaders. These people who needed the help and comfort of God were barred from worship and thus from the forgiveness they sorely needed.

### THE STRUCTURE

Structure has two forms in this part of Jesus’ message.

**General structure** - There is an overall contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders. In John chapter 9, the religious leaders were harsh to those they served. They denied them the protection they sought and needed so badly. In 10:1-18, however, Jesus is portrayed as the one who protects the helpless and defends the needy. He was what the helpless needed. The people, the sheep, were just the ones the leaders could use for their source of power and control.

**Specific structure** - The structure of the sentence, in John 10:7, is interesting. If you decide to diagram the sentence, it would look something like this:

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

I I am I door  
I I the  
I of the sheep

### Structural observations:

1. The subject of the sentence is "I." Jesus was speaking of Himself.
2. The verb of the sentence is "am." Jesus described his nature, not His actions.
3. The object of the sentence is "door." It defines what Jesus is.
4. The modifier "the" indicates that there is only one door.
5. "Of the sheep" describes what kind of door Jesus is.
  - a. From their cultural perspective, "the door of the sheep" provided a picture with which every person present could readily identify. They knew exactly what He said.
  - b. The focus of this personal description was that Jesus was the protector of the helpless.
  - c. Jesus' self-disclosure stresses the fact that His mission was to protect the helpless.
  - d. Jesus' self-disclosure describes His mission to thwart the designs of the evil one.

### **b. John 10:11**

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11*

Because this verse is part of the same passage as that described in part "a" of this question, the information regarding General Literary Form, The Events, The Atmosphere and the General Structure would be exactly the same. We will now focus our attention on the other ingredients of the passage.

### **THE TERMS**

We will focus our attention, first, on the sentence, "I am the good shepherd." The Greek text is more emphatic. It reads, "I am the shepherd the good."

The word "shepherd" is "poimen" (ποιμήν) which was used literally and figuratively to describe a keeper of the flock, the helpless.

Jesus added the modifier "good" to the description of Himself as shepherd. This word "good" is one of three different words in the New Testament translated "good:"

1. **Agathos** - something/someone good in character; something/someone morally honorable. The emphasis is on the quality of the goodness.
2. **Kalos** - Something/someone intrinsically good; something naturally, essentially, inherently good as opposed to someone who was not good, but by great effort became good. The emphasis is on the origin and source of this goodness. It is what Jesus is, not what He became.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

3. **Chrestos** - That which is pleasant, kindly and gracious.

The word that Jesus used was "kalos." He is the one who is intrinsically, inherently good. This does not represent a quality to which He attained, but which was eternally a part of His character.

## SPECIFIC STRUCTURE

I am | shepherd  
| | the  
| good

**Structural observations:**

1. Again, the subject of the sentence is "I." Jesus was talking about Himself.
2. The action word of this sentence is "am." Jesus was talking about His nature and not about His actions or task.
3. The object of the sentence is "shepherd." A shepherd was one who provided extensive care and protection for the helpless. It describes Jesus as a man of compassion .
4. There are two modifiers which describe this "shepherd."
  - a. He is "the shepherd" This suggests that there is only one who fits this description.
  - b. He is the "good" shepherd. This descriptive term only has meaning if there are some shepherds who are not "good." The context, of course, points to the religious leaders who filled this description quite well.

Jesus continued this self revelation by adding, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." There are two possibilities concerning Jesus' intention in this second sentence:

- He could be saying that because He is the good shepherd and because of the meaning of the word "good," which Jesus used, this goodness expresses itself in sacrifice on behalf of the helpless.
- He could have meant that laying down His life for the sheep is the reason he could call Himself "good."

I strongly recommend the former possibility. Jesus was inherently good in eternity before He lay down His life for the sheep.

"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

shepherd | lays down | life  
| | the | | his  
| good | for the sheep

Observations.

1. The subject of the sentence is "shepherd."
2. The thing the subject does (verb) is "lay down His life".
3. The "life" receives the action of the subject.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

4. The subject (shepherd) has two modifiers.
  - a. "The" shepherd suggests that there is only one shepherd that qualifies.
  - b. "Good" modifies shepherd in two ways:
    - (1). The word "good" "kalos" describes the quality of the shepherd's character.
    - (2). The designation of a "good shepherd" sets him in strong contrast with those who are not "good." It appears Jesus was contrasting Himself with the religious leaders.
5. The "good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." This gives us a few insights:
  - a. The motive of the "good shepherd" was on behalf of the sheep, and not selfish.
  - b. The "good shepherd" is compassionate.
  - c. The "good shepherd" is sacrificial.
  - d. His actions were voluntary and not forced.

### 2. Identify the main ingredients of Matthew 5:8

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Matthew 5:8*

#### GENERAL LITERARY FORM

This statement is found in the Gospel of Matthew, a New Testament book which is historical in nature, but is not a complete history of Jesus life.

#### THE EVENTS

This statement is found in what we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus saw the crowds and began to teach. As you observe this sermon, or teaching, it becomes clear that Jesus described the normal lifestyle of those who are a part of His kingdom.

#### THE ATMOSPHERE

The context, in chapter four, was upbeat and exciting. Jesus was victorious over the temptation presented to Him. He went immediately to the area of Galilee where he preached, healed the sick and delivered the demon-possessed. His reputation was widespread and growing. Crowds were large.

Against this very positive background, Jesus described what it would be like to live in His kingdom. He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

#### THE TERMS

There are several words that need careful attention:

1. **"Blessed"** - the word for "blessed" is "makarios" and means "fortunate," "happy," or "well off." The people Jesus was about to describe were supremely blessed.
2. **"Pure in heart"** - The word "pure" is "katharos" . There are three basic Greek words for "pure":
  - a. "Hagnos" - something/someone that was never contaminated

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- b. "Katharos" - Something/someone that was once defiled, but has since been purged. From this idea we get our word catharsis.
- c. "Eilikrines" - something that has no alloys or impurities in it.

The word in our text is "katharos." Jesus was talking about those whose hearts were once defiled, but in their forgiveness it has been cleansed; prepared for divine use.

- 3. **"See"** - "they will **see** God." The word for "see" is "optimai" and means "to gaze with eyes wide open," "to inspect closely." In the Old Testament it was well understood that if a person saw God, he/she would die. The tense of the word "see" is Future Middle Active. One might translate it as, "He shall see for himself and go on seeing God for himself."

Was Jesus talking about now or about eternity? The text is not helpful. Certainly, he will see God in eternity, but we cannot say that is what Jesus was saying.

The Jews of the Old Testament believed that if a person saw God he would die. Moses at the burning bush was a good example. Jesus was saying there will come a time, now and/or in eternity, when the pure in heart will see God and live.

### THE GENERAL STRUCTURE

In overall terms, there is a long list of things that Jesus wanted to say about the nature of His kingdom. Our text is simply one of these ingredients of His kingdom.

#### Specific Structure

Pure in heart | ( are ) | blessed

| | the

| FOR

| they | shall see | God

#### Observations:

- 1. There are at least two possibilities as to the understanding of the words of Jesus in this verse.
  - a. Because they are pure in heart, they shall see God.
  - b. The form of the blessing of the pure in heart is that they shall see God.  
My personal preference is that because they are pure in heart, they are going to see God.
- 2. The subject of Jesus' statement is "pure in heart." This suggests that being cleansed in heart is a distinct possibility for the child of God. There is hope for those of us who have faltered, but have been reclaimed by God.
- 3. The verb of the sentence is "are." Observe that in the diagram, the verb "are" is in parenthesis. This means that the word does not appear in the Greek text, but is essential for the completeness of the sentence. In English, we might say, "go to work." Literally, there is no subject for that command. We understand that the unwritten subject to be part of the sentence. The entire sentence would be, "(you) go to work." The word "are" falls into the same category in this sentence.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

4. The object of the sentence is "blessed." This is what happens to the pure in heart right now - they are blessed. That blessing takes the form of seeing God. In some sense, there is a present connotation to this blessing.
5. The final statement in the sentence is introduced by the word "for." This usually suggests that an explanation is forthcoming. "They shall see God" explains the way the pure in heart are blessed.

### 3. Identify the main ingredients of Hebrews 7:25

*Hence, also, he is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25*

### GENERAL LITERARY FORM

This verse comes from an epistle. This literary form focuses on logical presentations. We must therefore be keenly aware of the logical dimensions of the sentence. In this epistle, the author wrote to Christian Jews who had lost everything except each other and their God. Repeatedly throughout the epistle, the author urges the readers to look at Jesus.

### THE EVENTS

This sentence is placed in the second of three major divisions of the epistle. The three divisions are as follows:

Chapters 1 - 4 - Jesus is a superior person.

Chapters 5-10 - Jesus had a superior priesthood.

(Chapter 11) - a parenthesis in the story. It deals with what faith looks like in the obedient under fire.

Chapters 12, 13 - Superior expectations of the obedient.

In the second major division of Hebrews, there are six chapters. An overview of the division looks like this:

Hebrews 5-10 - Jesus had a superior priesthood

5	Jesus was a Superior Priest
6	Jesus' Priesthood was Superior to Levi's
7	The Melchizedekian Priesthood Described
8	A Superior Covenant
9	A Superior Sacrifice
10	Superior Results

In the chapter where the author described the details of just how great the priesthood of Jesus was, you find the words of our text.

Let us look at the chapter in which these words are found.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

7:1-3	A Description of Melchizedek
7:4-10	Melchizedek Compared with Abraham
7:11-25	Melchizedekian Order Surpasses the Levitical Order
7:26-28	Description of Jesus' Priesthood

Verse 25 is the conclusion of the paragraph which points out how the Melchizedekian Priesthood surpasses the Levitical Order.

### THE ATMOSPHERE

It is easier to identify and describe the atmosphere of an historical event than of a logical presentation in an epistle. Still, there is an observable atmosphere in this chapter of Hebrews. The atmosphere is very positive and upbeat. The chapter has been pointing out just how superior the Melchizedekian priesthood is to that of Levi. It points out the weaknesses of the Levitical system and the strength of the Melchizedekian system. As point after point is described there is a rising sense of excitement.

### THE TERMS

There are six terms in this sentence that need more careful observation concerning their meaning:

- a. **"Able"** - The word is "dunamai" and means "to be able," "to be powerful." It is from this word that we get our word "dynamic," and "dynamo." This verb tense is the Present Indicative Middle. One might translate it, "He was able himself..." The user of this tense focuses attention on the uniqueness of Jesus' ability to save when the Levitical system was helpless to do so.
- b. **"Save"** - The word is "sodzo" and means "to save," "to deliver," "to protect," "to heal, or "to make whole. The purpose of Jesus' activity was "to save," "to make us whole." It was to heal those who were broken and devastated by sin.
- c. **"Forever"** but in the Greek it is "Completely" - The word for "completely" is "Panteles." It is a compound word:
  1. pan - all, any
  2. Telos - goal, the end, uttermost, completion. This adverb tells how thoroughly Jesus saves. It is not just the canceling of sins committed. He saves to the uttermost. He cancels the guilt of every sin and strengthens against every expression of sin.
- d. **"Drawing near"** - The word is "proserkomai." It is a compound word. It is made up of the following:
  1. pros - meaning toward, near
  2. erkomai - to come, to accompany, to resort

This word describes more a direction of life than an exact location. It is a personal attitude toward God which longs for His presence.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF A PASSAGE

- d. **"Always lives"** - Jesus is ever alive. This is exciting. Priests served at the altar from age 25 to age 50. At that time they ceased serving and interceding for the people. Jesus ever lives to intercede for us. There is never a time when we cannot call upon Him to meet our needs.
- f. **"Intercession"** - The word is "entungkhano." It is a compound word:
  - 1. En - it speaks of position, instrumentation. It indicates direction.
  - 2. Tugehano - To bring, to travail, to secure. This word focuses upon the intensity of Jesus' intercession on our behalf. He is always in travail, seeking the Father on our behalf.

### GENERAL STRUCTURE

This sentence is quite complex in its structure. The focus of the entire sentence, however, is on "He," Jesus.

Specific Structure

Hence also

|

| He | is able | to save

| | | forever

| |

| | Those who draw near to God

| | through him

|

| since

|

| He | lives

| | to make intercession

| | for them

| always

Observations:

- 1. This is the conclusion (therefore) to the paragraph which describes how the order of Melchizedek surpasses the order of Levi.
- 2. The subject of the sentence is "He." This is all about Jesus.
- 3. The verb is "is able." Whatever else the text may tell us, it describes his great power, which the Levitical priests did not have. It talks about what Jesus is able to do.
- 4. The recipient of the subjects action, the object, is "to save." Salvation is at the heart of what Jesus came to do. Anything less than this is unworthy of His mission.
- 5. Notice that there is an interconnection between Jesus ability to save and the burning desire of the saved to come near to God.
- 6. The saving is accompanied by Jesus' unchanging ministry of intercession on our behalf.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

7. Jesus' ministry has no termination point. We never need worry about His ceasing the ministry of intercession before God's throne. This is in sharp contrast to the Levitical priests who have a very definite termination date for their ministry.

As you reflect over this exercise, it is hoped that you can sense that though this is very early in the study, still a great deal of vital information has been produced. This is only the beginning. Much more can be discovered in this fashion.

## INTRODUCTION TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

There are four parts to an Inductive study of a Biblical book. They are as follows:

- Observation
- Interpretation
- Application
- Correlation

Each of these phases of the study will be taken up in the order listed above. As we will indicate later, you should not be too concerned if you discover these phases overlapping. They are listed in a particular order, but we know that as you use this process, you will discover some overlapping in one area or another. This should not be a concern. It is natural and will do no harm to the study.

### OBSERVATION

By observation, we mean asking questions. It is a way of saying, "what does this text say? The text itself, of course, is crucial in determining what it says. the context surrounding the text is almost as important as the text in the search for its meaning. In this chapter, we want to look at each part of Inductive study in general terms. We will consider each part, in more careful detail, in separate chapters.

There are seven levels of observation. We will identify them here. We will deal with each level, in depth, in the chapter *"INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION"*.

#### 1. The Observation of the Whole

This level of observation asks the most general kinds of questions about our study of a Biblical book:

- a. What kind of literature has the author presented?
- b. What is this book about?
- c. How does this book progress?

In order to discover this information, we usually find it necessary to give each chapter a title of seven words or less. From reflective study of these titles, answers can be discovered and deeper questions raised.

In observation, we make no attempt to answer the questions we raise. That will happen later. We are content, for now, to simply raise general questions. If answers present themselves, we do not turn away, but that is not our primary concern in this particular search.

#### 2. The Observation of Major Divisions of the Book

In order to identify the major divisions of a book, one needs to know the general content. One very helpful way to discover this information is to study the chapter titles which were just described. In this step in observation we will also ask pointed questions about the relationships between the major divisions of the book.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### 3. The Observation of Chapters

With few exceptions, (Philemon, II John, III John, Jude), Biblical books are each made up of multiple chapters. These chapters make up the major divisions of each book. In the observational process we want to ask as many questions as possible about each chapter and their relationship to other chapters.

In Biblical books which are historical in nature, it is relatively easy to choose a title. When you are studying an epistle, however, it is much more difficult. In order to accomplish this, it has been helpful to reverse steps three and four. In this process, one would give a title to each paragraph and on the basis of studying these titles, choose a title for the chapter. An illustration might prove helpful. Think, for a moment about Colossians, chapter three. Having read the chapter, you might give the paragraphs titles like these:

3:1-4	Exhortation to Focus on Christ
3:5-11	Exhortation to Holy Living
3:12-17	Description of Holy Living
38-4:1	Description of Holy Family Relationships

As you can see, the four paragraphs deal with different topics. You will also notice, however, that they also deal with related issues. Just reading the chapter could make it difficult to give it a title. Having given a title to each paragraph, It was less difficult for me to give a title to the chapter - Focus on Christ and Holy Living. The fact that you do each step is very important. The order in which the steps are done should be chosen to accommodate your comfort level.

### 4. The Observation of Paragraphs

Each paragraph within a chapter contains one basic idea. This idea focuses on one facet of the central idea of the chapter. We need to ask as many questions as possible about this elaborated idea.

### 5. The Observation of Sentences

Every paragraph is made up of sentences. This step in observation requires that we ask every possible question about each sentence in the paragraph. You may have noticed that with each step, in the observational process, our questions become less general; more specific.

### 6. The Observation of Words.

Every Biblical sentence, paragraph, chapter, major division and book is made up of words. In observation, we want to ask penetrating questions about every word of a given text.

### 7. The Observation of Structure

Structure is the way words are put together to achieve the goals of the author. Every sentence from John 11:35 - "Jesus wept." - to the most complicated sentence in Romans, has a specific structure. We must identify this structure in order to understand what the author was really trying to say. We do this, in observation, by asking every possible question.



## INTRODUCTION TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

### INTERPRETATION

In the Interpretation phase of inductive Bible study, we answer all the questions which were raised under observation. Another way of looking at it is to say that in the Interpretation phase we ask the question, "what did the author **mean**?"

Because Interpretation answers the questions raised in Observation, we will look carefully at all the questions raised in the first phase. This also means that we will be answering questions at seven distinct levels:

1. Questions about the whole book
2. Questions about the major divisions of the book
3. Questions about each chapter of the Biblical book
4. Questions about each paragraph in each chapter
5. Questions about each sentence in every chapter
6. Questions about each word in each sentence
7. Questions about the structure of every sentence in the book

We will deal with the answers to these questions in the chapter describing Interpretation.

### APPLICATION

The application phase of Inductive study asks the simple question, "How does this passage impact my life?" What are the implications for the way I live my life every day? In order to accomplish this task, we must discover several pieces of specific information:

1. What are the specific events or teachings of the passage under study?
2. We must understand, clearly, the current situation with which we are concerned or involved.
3. We must determine to what extent the biblical story matches the modern situation or conditions.
4. We must prayerfully consider what action this investigation demands of us as followers of Jesus.

We must admit that quite often very little effort, either in preaching or in Bible study, is invested in this portion of searching Scripture. Nevertheless, it is extremely important. It may be that some of the misinterpretation and misuse of Scripture could be avoided if people took the extra time to determine what the appropriate application of a given text should be.

### CORRELATION

This is the last phase in the process of Inductive Bible Study. Unfortunately, so much time is invested in Observation and Interpretation that this phase is often not considered at all. At least in part, this fact contributes significantly to the frightening amount of misinterpretation one encounters in books, sermons in church and on radio and television.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Correlation means to bring something into a mutual relationship with something else. Simply put, the correlation of Scriptural discoveries in one passage must correspond with teachings elsewhere in Scripture. This is a marvelous tool to help protect us from focusing our attentions and efforts on interpretations which are clearly in contradiction of teachings in other parts of the Scriptures.

We will describe and illustrate this phase of Inductive Bible study in the chapter *"INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION"*.

## INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

There are four major parts to inductive Bible study. They are as follows:

- **Observation** - asking questions
- **Interpretation** - answering questions
- **Application** - applying truth to life as we live it
- **Correlation** - determine whether the teaching you find in a passage can correlate with the teachings of the rest of Scripture.

These procedures will be pursued in the order listed and in separate chapters.

There are seven different levels of observation. They are as follows:

- Observation of the whole **book**
- Observation of **major divisions**
- Observation of a **chapter**
- Observation of **paragraphs**
- Observation of **sentences**
- Observation of **terms**
- Observation of **structure**

### The Observation of the Whole Book

This level of observation asks the most general kinds of questions about our study of a Biblical book.

- a. What kind of literature has the author presented?
- b. What is this book about?
- c. How does this book progress?

There is just one major idea to be found in a good book. Because of this, thesis writers spend many hours trying to identify the thesis idea of their work. If we are to engage in meaningful Bible study, it is crucial that we discover the central idea in the book we study. The length of some books of the Bible, Genesis with 50 chapters, Matthew with 28 chapters, makes it almost impossible to discover this central idea without some written assistance. This assistance, at least for us, takes the form of giving each chapter a brief title. There are several ways this can be done. One way is to give each chapter in the book a brief title of seven words or less.

I would scan a chapter in a few minutes just to see what the chapter covers. I choose to limit these titles to seven words or less, if possible. If it is necessary to use more words to summarize the meaning of the chapter, I would not hesitate to use them. Let me illustrate this with the book of Mark

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
1	The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
2	Jesus Changed Lives - Healed Paralytic, Called Levi
3	Intense Opposition Begins
4	Parables of the Kingdom of God
5	Jesus Healed Demoniac; Woman With the Issue; Jairus' Daughter
6	Jesus' Rejection and Miracles
7	Healing in Tyre
8	Miracles Pointing to the Messiah
9	Teaching of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection
10	Perils of Riches and Power
11	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
12	Religious Enemies Attack Jesus
13	Jesus Taught Disciples About End Times
14	Betrayal, Denial and Trial of Jesus
15	Trial, Death and Burial of Jesus
16	The Resurrection of Jesus

Having concluded the chart of the whole book, it is now important to study the chart to see what major divisions exist in the book. We should keep in mind that even very short books, which have only one chapter, still have major divisions.

If you study the summaries of the chapters of Mark you would notice these divisions.

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
1	The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
2	Jesus Changed Lives - Healed Paralytic, Called Levi
3	Intense Opposition Begins
4	Parables of the Kingdom
5	Jesus Healed Demoniac; Woman With Issue; Jairus; Daughter
6	Jesus' Rejection and Miracles
7	Healing in Tyre
8	Miracles Pointing to the Messiah
9	Teaching of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection
10	Perils of Riches and Power
11	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
12	Religious Enemies Attack Jesus
13	Jesus Taught Disciples About End Times
14	Betrayal, Denial and Trial of Jesus

## INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
15	Trial, Death and Burial of Jesus
16	The Resurrection of Jesus

If you look closely you will notice that chapters one through nine take place in Galilee and around the Sea of Galilee. Chapters 10-16, however, take place in and around the city of Jerusalem. Also, chapters one through nine cover the three and one half years of Jesus' ministry. Chapters 10-16, however, cover slightly more than one week.

Since most of our illustrations in this chapter will come from Genesis, let us take a brief look at that book. A casual survey of the book of Genesis may help us see how we can get some help in this process. Look at the table which follows and you will see that there are major sections in the book of Genesis which give us some help in finding the information we need.

CHAPTERS	CONTENT
1 - 3	Creation Story
4, 5	Adam's Family
6 - 10	Noah and the Flood
11	The Tower of Babel
12-25	The Story of Abram/Abraham
26	The Story of Isaac
27 - 35	The Story of Jacob
36	Esau's Lineage
37 - 50	The story of Joseph

The table will only be helpful as we study it. We can accomplish this by making observations about it. These might be helpful:

1. Observe the column entitled "chapters." Which of the segments does the author invest with the greatest amount of attention?
2. The oldest son was the most important person in the family. In view of this fact, why does the author spend nine chapters dealing with the story of Jacob, the younger brother, and only one chapter dealing with Esau? It should be noted that the one chapter dealing with Esau was just a listing of his lineage, when he was the oldest, usually the most important son?
3. Again, why were 14 chapters devoted to the story of Joseph, the eleventh son in the family, and not one single chapter given over to the story of any of the 11 brothers?
4. Is there any significance to the fact that the individual stories seem to be in a general chronological order?
5. In the story of Abraham, Isaac seems to be ultimately important. Why, then, is only one chapter given to the study of his life and very little more is said about him?
6. Chapter 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, seems to be a parenthesis in a book dealing with the lives of several men who stood out in the history of the people of Israel. Just what does this parenthesis have to do with the rest of the story?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

7. As you look at the story of Genesis, can you see a general progression from beginning to end?

There are dozens more questions that one could ask at this very general level. These, however, will give you some idea of what must be done in this initial observation of the book. As we have indicated before, in observation we only ask the questions. We will answer these questions in the next phase of our study which is called "Interpretation."

### OBSERVATION OF THE MAJOR DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

A major division of a book is one of two or more sections into which the author divides the material which he wishes to present in the book. Earlier, we said that Genesis 6-10 - Noah and the Flood - was a major division of Genesis. For purposes of illustration, let us look more closely at this major divisions of the book of Genesis.

CHAPTERS	SUMMARIES
6	Noah Commanded to Build an Ark
7	The Flood
8	The Flood Ceased; Noah Emerged from the Ark
9	Canaan Views Noah's Nakedness
10	The Lineage of Noah

At this point, our task is to ask every possible general question concerning this overview of chapters six through ten. Remember? We are asking questions, not answering them. That will come later.

1. Where is the climax of this story?
2. Who are the major participants in this story?
3. What are the major events in this story?
4. Where does the conflict emerge in this story?
5. How is the conflict resolved?
6. What does God do in this story?
7. What does this division contribute to the overall message of Genesis?
8. Why was Noah chosen?
9. Why did God choose to flood the earth?
10. What does this tell us about God.?
11. How does chapter nine - Canaan Views Noah's nakedness - fit into the division of Genesis dealing with Noah?

These and many more questions could be asked concerning this major division of the book of Genesis. This early in the study, we are not prepared to answer these questions, but that is not our task in the **Observational** stage. We are asking questions to set the stage for continued study.

## INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

### OBSERVATION OF A CHAPTER

In every chapter, there is at least one paragraph. Each paragraph contains one basic piece of information concerning the central idea of the book. Thus, it is important to find out about the central idea of the chapter. An illustration from Genesis may prove helpful:

In Genesis chapter 32, where Jacob wrestled with an angel at Peniel, there are three paragraphs in the chapter:

32:3 - 12	Jacob Planned the Meeting With Esau
32:13 - 21	Jacob Instructs Servants About Meeting Esau
32:22 - 32	Jacob Wrestled With the Angel at Peniel

You will observe that the previous chart begins with verse 3. This is because verses one and two are in reality a part of the paragraph which ends chapter 31.

Throughout this study, we have chosen to use the paragraphing of the American Standard Version of the Bible. It appears to us to be more clearly aligned with the Greek and Hebrew text, in this matter, than the other versions.

As you look at this table, you can see that each paragraph adds some information about Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Peniel. Let us illustrate this idea. Verses 3 - 12 tell what the issue is in this whole chapter. Jacob knew that his life could be in danger. Still he had to meet his brother face to face, no matter what happened. In this first paragraph, Jacob planned the way it would be done. Having planned this encounter; Jacob, in 32:13-21, instructed each member of the family and their servants concerning the way each one of them were to deal with this frightening encounter. Only then could Jacob's dilemma come to the surface. Despite what Jacob had once been, he was now determined to receive the blessing of God. Now righteousness was important to him in a way it had never been before. The final paragraph describes how he showed his determination to receive the blessing of God no matter the cost. This was the reason behind the determination to meet Esau face to face.

There are a host of questions that can be asked about the paragraphs of this particular chapter.

1. Why did Jacob decide to meet his brother at this point?
2. Jacob had always fled trouble. Why did he change now?
3. Why did Jacob send the huge gifts to Esau?
4. Why did Jacob line up his family as he did?
5. Why did Jacob wrestle with the angel?
6. Why did Jacob want to know the angel's name?
7. Why did the angel change Jacob's name?
8. Why was the angel unable to overpower Jacob?
9. Why did Jacob name the place Peniel? What does the name mean?
10. What is the significance of the author's explanation of Jacob's limp?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Again, at this point in our study, we do not concern ourselves with the answers, just asking questions that point the way to more intense study.

### OBSERVATION OF TERMS

Terms, words, are the building blocks of every sentence and idea. It is seldom possible to translate a word from one language to another with exactly the same meaning and tone it had in the language of origin. Add to this the fact that thousands of years have passed since the books of the Bible were written. Because of the way languages change, we have an almost insurmountable task before us. Specifically, until we know the meaning of the words the author used, we cannot complete the first step of Bible study -**observation** - **what does the text say?** Everything in Bible study depends on a precise understanding of the words of the text. This is the reason we will deal with the Greek and Hebrew in the final two divisions of this book. A problem develops if one does not know the Greek or Hebrew language. Another volume which my son and I have written will go to press shortly. This book describes how a person who does not know Greek or Hebrew can use those testaments and discover the basic meaning of a text. Books such as Strong's Concordance and The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament words will also be very helpful in this respect.

The precise meaning of a word can drastically change the meaning of a sentence. For instance, In Luke 2:7, the author said,

*and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*  
Luke 2:7

The word “inn” is not the best word one could use in this translation. In the Greek text, the word translated “inn” is “kataluma” (κατάλυμα). This is a room on top of a Jewish home which was given to guests because it was cooler than the rest of the house. In Luke 22:11, 12, Jesus told the disciples to ask the owner of the house, where the “upper room” (κατάωμα) was, where he and his disciples were to celebrate the Passover. It is the same kind of place where Peter stayed in the home of Simon the Tanner, in Acts 10. If this is the meaning of “inn,” then, it suggests that Joseph and his very pregnant bride-to-be were not welcomed in the guest room of his parents' or relatives home because they would be ostracized in the community if they welcomed people who were obviously considered sinners.

There is a second word, in the New Testament, which is also translated “inn.” The word is “pandoxeion” (πανδοχεῖον). This was a public place where caravans would stop for the night. They were often spoken of as brothels. This word appears in Luke 10:34, the story of the Good Samaritan. Had the word in Luke 2:7 been “pandoxeion,” it would have suggested that so many people had come to be registered for taxation that public accommodations were strained to the limit. Unfortunately, we have taken this word translated “inn” to mean a first century motel. That is hardly what Luke was saying. It is easy to see how the meaning of this word colored the intent of the author in this sentence.



## INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

Verb tenses also add significantly to the meaning of a word. Many people in the church can quote Romans 12:1 from memory. It says, "...offer your bodies as living sacrifices..." In the English, this looks like something you do and it is completed. It would be a completed act which is done once for all. Indeed, whole doctrinal positions on holy living have been developed on the basis of this understanding.

In the Greek text, however, that is not the understanding that is conveyed. The verb is called a First Aorist Active Infinitive. One might translate it "...offer and never stop offering your bodies..." This describes an ongoing attitude toward my daily walk with God much more than a unique once for all action which was completed at some point in time past. It is not difficult to see the vast difference between the two possible meanings.

### OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE

As we indicated in the previous chapter, structure is the way words are put together to convey the message the author wishes to share. Every sentence has structure, though it sometimes seems difficult to discover. Let us look at some examples of this structure. In John 11:35, the author tells us something about Jesus. He said, "Jesus wept." Though there are only two words, it is a complete sentence. The subject of the sentence is "Jesus" - He is the one who is doing the action. The verb or action word in this brief sentence is "wept." This tells us what Jesus did. If you look at the Greek text you would note that it is called a "First Aorist Active Tense." This is action which is oblivious to time. The focus is on the action itself, not the time. It intensifies what Jesus did. The author could have written this in the past tense in such a way that it stressed the shedding of tears and it was done. That is not what John did. He put a focus on the intensity of that weeping.

In the previous section of this chapter, we referred to Paul's statement in Romans 12:1. Let us look at that verse again.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1*

There are a host of questions that can be asked concerning this verse.

1. What is the subject of this sentence?
2. Why does Paul refer to the readers as "brothers"?
3. Why does the sentence begin with the word "therefore"? What does that tell us?
4. Why does Paul use the word "urge"? The Greek would read "urge and keep on urging" Why would he say that?
5. What does Paul mean by "present"? Again, the Greek would read, "present and go on presenting." Why would Paul say it this way?
6. Why did Paul preface his exhortation with the words "in view of God's mercy"?
7. Why does Paul speak of the presentation of their bodies as "living sacrifices"? What does this mean?
8. Why does Paul insist that their bodies be holy?
9. What is it that is pleasing to God?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### 10. What does Paul mean by "spiritual act of worship"?

Again, we do not concern ourselves with the answers to these questions while we are in the observational phase. We will come to that in the next phase.

You will note that if you compare the questions we asked under observation of the whole book with those under observation of words or structure, we have moved from the very general to the very specific.

The observational phase of Bible study asks every possible question about the text under consideration. In this observational phase, we will ask a whole range of questions from the most general to the most specific. It is an attempt to search out, as carefully as possible, what the author said.

## **PRACTICE WITH OBSERVATION**

1. In a short period of time, scan the book of Ruth. Give each chapter a title.
2. Make observations about the book as a whole.
3. Make observations about chapter one.
4. In chapter one, there are four paragraphs: 1:1-5; 1:6-14; 1:15-18; 1:19-22.
  - a. Scan each paragraph and give it a title of seven words or less.
  - b. Make observations, ask questions, about 1:1-5.
5. Turn to Luke chapter 15.
  - a. Observe the structure of this entire chapter.
  - b. Give titles to the major divisions of the chapter.
  - c. Study these major divisions.
  - d. What purpose did you find for Jesus' message in this chapter.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH OBSERVATION

### 1. Read the book of Ruth. Write a title, of seven words or less, for each chapter.

1:1-22	Naomi Returns from Moab to Bethlehem
2:1-23	Ruth Gleaned The Fields of Boaz
3:1-18	Naomi Seeks a Husband for Ruth
4:1-22	Boaz Married Ruth

### 2. Ask as many observational questions as you can based upon your titles.

- Where did you see God at work in this book?
- What is the climax of this story?
- Who are the important characters in the story?
- What is the relationship between chapter one, (Naomi's Return From Moab to Bethlehem) and chapter four, (Boaz Married Ruth)?
- Who is the central figure in this book?
- How would you describe the movement of the story line of this book from chapter one through chapter four?
- What overall message did you find from your preliminary study?

### 3. Make observations about chapter one.

- When did this story take place?
- What conditions prevailed at the time of this book?
- What is the significance of their place of origin?
- What is the relationship between 1:1-5 and 1:6-14?
- How would you compare or contrast the picture of Ruth and Orpah as presented in chapter one?
- Describe what each character in chapter one did?
- In 1:1-5, Elimelech took his family from Bethlehem to Moab. In 1:6-14, Naomi and Ruth returned from Moab to Bethlehem. What is the significance of this information?
- What general relationship can you observe, in this chapter, between Naomi and her daughters-in-law? How does this relate to the flow of the story?
- In 1:19-22, the author described the arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem. How did he describe that arrival?

### 4. In chapter one there are four paragraphs: 1:1-5; 1:6-14; 1:15-18; 1:19-22.

- Scan each paragraph and give it a title of seven words or less.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

1:1-5	Naomi's Husband and Sons Died in Moab
1:6-14	Naomi Returned to Bethlehem, Orpah Remained
1:15-18	Ruth Declared Allegiance to Naomi and to God
1:19-22	Naomi and Ruth Arrive in Bethlehem

**b. Make observations, ask questions, about Ruth 1:1-5.**

1. What is the significance of Elimelech's economic status?
2. What is the significance of the place from which this family came?
3. What is the significance of the destination to which Elimelech and his family went?
4. The author mentioned that the sons married Moabite wives. Why would this be important?
5. In verse five, the author described the loss of the two sons as a particularly desperate situation. Why would he do that?

**5. Turn to Luke chapter 15.**

**a. What title would you give this chapter?**

Jesus Taught Three parables About Lostness

**b. The chapter begins with a challenging question:**

**1. What is the question?**

In Luke 15:2, the author told us that the Pharisees and Scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." The question was really, "Why does this man, who is supposed to be holy, receive and eat with sinners"?

**2. Who asked the question?**

The question came from Pharisees and Scribes. These were the experts in understanding and carrying out the letter of the law.

**3. Why would they ask this question?**

It was widely understood, in that day, that if you received a person and particularly if you ate with them, that you accepted the individual and affirmed them as they were. The people in question were tax collectors whom strict Jews considered unforgivable traitors and blasphemers. Such persons were not allowed to enter the temple and were thus considered bound for destruction.

**4. What answer did Jesus give?**

## INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION

Jesus did not answer the question that was asked. He answered by telling three parables about lostness - The Lost Sheep; the Lost Coin; the Lost Son. In each parable, He stressed the value of the lost; the joy of being found; the fact that these things can be found. In effect, Jesus was saying that He received and ate with sinners because they were important and redeemable in the sight of God.

- c. **There are four paragraphs in this chapter - 15:1-7; 15:8-10; 15:11-24; 15:25-32:**

1. **Give each paragraph a name.**

15:1-7	The Lost Sheep
15:8-10	The Lost Coin
15:11-24	The Father and the Lost Younger Son
15:25-32	The Father and the Lost Older Son

2. **What do the four paragraphs have in common?**

- (a). Each paragraph deals with lostness.
- (b). Each deals with something very important to the owner.
- (c). In each instance it was the owner who made unusual efforts to find the lost.
- (d). In each instance, the lost was found.
- (e). In each paragraph there was rejoicing when the lost was found.

3. **What message do you find in each paragraph?**

We must keep in mind that in these parables, Jesus was dealing with the grumbling of the Pharisees and Scribes. Their grumbling dealt with the unforgivable character of the tax collectors. In each paragraph, Jesus told the Pharisees and Scribes that these so-called unforgivable characters were absolutely important and definitely forgivable. They were of ultimate value in the sight of God. Therefore, though the Pharisees would have nothing to do with tax collectors, Jesus received them and ate with them because they were absolutely important and forgivable in the sight of God.

You may be surprised that this chapter is a series of questions rather than answers to the questions found in the previous chapter, "The Practice of Observation." You will remember that the Observation phase simply raises the questions without attempting to answer them. This chapter is an attempt to do just that. The questions that are raised under Observation will be dealt with when we come to the Interpretational chapters.





## THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS

Earlier in this study, it was suggested that before we embark on serious study of a Biblical book we must ascertain the central idea of the book. One of our most helpful tools in this pursuit is the identification of chapters by giving each one a name or title.

One of the best reasons to give a name to each chapter of a book is that it helps a person gain a grasp of the overall scope of the book. Did you ever go into a bookstore and discover a book whose title caught your eye? It is almost automatic. You remove the book from the shelf and browse through the table of contents. In that table, the author has given you a title for each chapter. A survey of these titles will often tell you whether you are interested in reading the book or not. This is because these titles give you a quick summary of the book.

A list of chapter titles for a Biblical book will do exactly the same thing for you. It will enable you to gain at least an idea of what the book is about.

A list of chapter titles is also helpful because it is visual, not just a series of mental notes. As you look at the titles of the chapters of a Biblical book, you begin to see the progression of thought the author has in mind for this book.

If you just scan the following chapter titles of the book of Genesis you will notice that there are major divisions to the book:

CHAPTERS	CONTENT
1 - 3	The Creation Story
4-5	Adam's Family
6 - 10	Noah and the Flood
11	The Tower of Babel
12 - 25	The Story of Abram/Abraham
26	The Story of Isaac
27-35	The Story of Jacob
36	Esau's Lineage
37 - 50	The Story of Joseph

As you reflect on these major divisions, you begin to gain an impression of what the author was trying to do. Pieces of information begin to stand out:

1. In general terms, the book follows historical chronology.
2. At least twice in the book, the eldest son is ignored and emphasis is placed on a later son - Jacob and Joseph.
3. The progression of the book is basically chronological, but it is not a continuous story-line. It is as though it is a collection of separate stories. That may be the case. It is just as likely that the author has used these stories to present a totally different message. It is my considered opinion that the book of Genesis uses the life-stories of these people to tell us something dramatic about God.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

The use of chapter titles helps to focus our thinking as we study. Remember, there is only one basic idea in a book. Each chapter of the book contains only one facet of that central idea. By using chapter titles, we find help in keeping our study focused on the central theme of the book. That is very important. We are able to see the entire book in the light of the theme. This makes us less apt to misunderstand particular statements in the text out of context. This will greatly lessen our possibilities for misinterpretation.

Many of the books of the Bible are quite large. The Psalms have 150 chapters. Imagine trying to keep the basic idea of this book in mind without some visual assistance. Genesis is 50 chapters long. Isaiah is 66 chapters long. In the New Testament, Matthew is 28 chapters long and Luke has 24 chapters. We are very visual people. We tend to understand things more clearly when we are able to see what is being taught. For most of us, there is no way we can keep the basic progression of any of these books in mind without some visual assistance. Making a chart or table of these chapter titles helps to provide the kind of visual help we need.

There are some who are concerned because they noticed that in some instances the chapter really begins in verse two or later. That is true. In Genesis 27 and 28, there is a strange situation. The closing paragraph of Genesis 27 begins in 27:46. The paragraph ends in 28:9. You will find the same problem in Genesis chapter 50. The final paragraph of chapter 49 begins at 49:28, but it ends in 50:3.

There are some things that we should keep in mind. This process takes place very early in our study. The titles we give the chapters are tentative information, at least initially. The more you practice giving a title to a chapter, the better you will be able to do it. You will find that on a rare occasion you will change a chapter title, but not very often.

Again, whether the chapter begins at verse one or three, it will have little if any effect on the title you would assign to that chapter. Assigning a title to a chapter is not the end of the study process, but it is a very helpful tool.

Another difficulty presents itself. There are some books, especially in the New Testament, that are made up of only one chapter - Philemon, II John, III John, Jude, Obediah. If you give the one chapter a title, you have given a title to the entire book.

Consider an illustration of this situation, the book of Obediah. There are five paragraphs in this prophecy, but only one chapter. In a study such as this, we treat the paragraphs as we would treat individual chapters.

1-4	The Pride of Edom will be Destroyed
5-9	Edom's Greed Will be Punished
10-14	Warning to Edom: Do Not Plunder Judah
15-16	Promise of Edom's Disaster
17-21	Judah Will One Day Punish Edom

Reflecting on this table makes clear several pieces of information:

1. This prophecy was addressed to Edom.
2. Edom participated in the plundering of Jerusalem and Judah in general.
3. The prophet announced that Edom will one day be punished/destroyed by Judah.

## THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS

You can gain the same benefit from giving the paragraphs a title as you would from titling the chapters of a larger book. It will have exactly the same effect upon your study as it does with the larger books.

### CONCLUSION

As we said very early in the study, this is not a short-cut. It is a lot of work. It is worth every minute of it.

Giving each chapter of a book a title may seem like a meaningless, time-consuming task. It does take time, but it can be an important phase of your initial study. It will help you identify the central idea in the book. This information can go a long way toward helping you avoid the misinterpretation of a given passage. If it achieves that goal, it will be worth much more time and work than it consumed.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS**

You may remember, from the previous chapter, that the purpose of giving titles to the chapters of a book is to help us discover the central idea of the book and to discern the author's idea of the flow of the book.

1. **Scan the book of Mark. Give a title to each of the 16 chapters. (There is a difference of opinion over whether chapter 16 ends at 16:8 or 16:20.. Use whichever one you feel is appropriate).**
2. **What is the central idea in the Gospel of Mark?**
3. **On the basis of your titles, describe the flow of the book of Mark. (By flow, we mean the way the author moves from one section to the next and to the climax.)**
4. **Give a title to each paragraph in the book of Philemon.**
  - a. **What is the central idea in this epistle?**
  - b. **On the basis of your titles, describe the flow of the Epistle to Philemon.**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS

In this exercise, we are trying to not only give a title to each chapter of a given book, but to also use that information to help us grasp what the author was trying to convey when he wrote it.

1. **Scan the book of Mark. Give a title to each of the 16 chapters. (There is a difference of opinion over whether chapter 16 ends at 16:8 or 16:20. Use whichever one you feel is appropriate).**

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
1	The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
2	Jesus Changed Lives - Healed Paralytic; Called Levi
3	Intense Opposition Begins
4	Parables of the Kingdom of God
5	Jesus Healed Three: Demoniac, Woman with Issue of Blood, Jairus' Daughter
6	Jesus' Rejection and Miracles
7	Healing in Tyre
8	Miracles Pointing to the Messiah
9	Teaching of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection
10	Perils of Riches and Power
11	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
12	Religious Enemies Attack Jesus
13	Jesus Taught Disciples About End Times
14	Betrayal, Denial and Trial of Jesus
15	Trial, Death and Burial of Jesus
16:1-8*	The Resurrection of Jesus
16:1-20*	The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

\* - You will notice that we have given a title for both choices for chapter 16. This way whichever one you choose there will be a title to compare with yours.

### 2. What is the central idea in the Gospel of Mark?

We want to identify the central idea of the Gospel of Mark and then describe how we arrived at this conclusion.

It appears that the central theme of Mark is "Jesus Christ: The Suffering Servant."

Here is the process by which we arrived at that conclusion. As you view the titles, there are two major divisions of the book:

Chapters 1 - 9 - The basic Ministry of Jesus.

Chapters 10 - 16 - The final service of Jesus' Ministry

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

You will observe, on the table, that chapters 10 - 16 have a darker boarder around them. It is to identify this fact.

Notice, also, that chapters 1 - 9 take place mostly around the Sea of Galilee. Further, observe that chapters 10 - 16 take place in and around the city of Jerusalem.

Again, chapters 1-9 cover three and one-half years of Jesus' ministry. Chapters 10-16, however, cover basically the final week of his life. This establishes an emphasis in the book. It focuses upon the events of chapters 10 - 16, the last week of His earthly life.

Look at the table again. All through chapters 1-9, Jesus was healing and teaching. He was ministering to the needs of others. He was the servant of everyone - the Jews and Gentiles alike. Chapters 10-16, however, focus mostly on what happened to Jesus because he served others. It is in this section that Jesus took the towel and bowl and washed his disciples' feet. His greatest acts of servanthood were His death upon the cross, for our redemption; His resurrection from the dead, to destroy death on our behalf; His ascension to the Father, to intercede on our behalf. All of these pieces of information point to the fact that Jesus was a servant.

### **3. On the basis of your titles, describe the flow of the book of Mark. (By flow we mean the way the author moves from one section to the next and to the climax.)**

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark begins not with the lineage of Jesus, but with the beginning of His ministry. Priests, at the initiation of their ministries, were baptized. To symbolize the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was baptized. The first experience of His ministry was a prolonged conflict with the forces of evil.

Immediately following this conflict, Jesus returned to Galilee to begin His ministry to people. The balance of the first major section, chapters 1 - 9, is devoted to Jesus' ministry of service - healing, encouraging, teaching. This demonstrated His claim to being the Son of God, the Messiah. This major section took three and one half years to complete.

Beginning with chapter 10, Jesus moved out of Galilee and into Judah on His way to Jerusalem. In this major section, chapters 10 - 16, the author covers essentially one week in the life of Jesus and focuses on the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus. The relationship between chapters 1 - 9 and 10 - 16 is one of cause and effect. What Jesus did and said in the first segment became the basis for the accusations of the Jewish leaders in the final segment.

As we said earlier, the central theme of the Gospel of Mark is: Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant. The climactic act of servanthood is in the final chapter - the Ascension. He has completed His work of redemption and then went to be with the Father to intercede for His people until they too have been welcomed into His eternal presence.

### **4. Give a title to each paragraph in the book of Philemon.**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHAPTERS

PARAGRAPHS	SUMMARY
1 - 3	The Salutation
4 - 7	Paul Thanked God for Philemon
8 - 20	Paul's Request - Consider Releasing Onesimus
21 - 22	Paul's Second Request - Prepare a Room
23 - 24	Greetings from Fellow Workers
25	The Conclusion

### 5. What is the central idea in this epistle?

The central idea of the epistle to Philemon is this: Christians must express their Christian faith in their conduct in a non-Christian world that will not understand or accept such a response of love.

### 6. On the basis of your titles, describe the flow of the epistle to Philemon.

Paul began the epistle identifying himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." This is the only epistle Paul wrote where he identified himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Even in the prison epistles, Paul did not identify himself in this way.

In the first two paragraphs, verses 1 - 7, Paul described, in glowing terms, the spiritual life and ministry of Philemon. Paul described the outstanding Christian example of Philemon. The apostle proceeded to urge him to demonstrate this example by receiving the run-away slave, Onesimus, as a Christian brother, rather than punishing or killing him as other slave-owners would pressure him to do. Paul was pressuring Philemon to demonstrate his Christian witness in a situation where non-Christian slave owners would be furious with his actions. Paul was saying, no matter how others may feel, we as Christians must demonstrate how our lives and values are changed by Jesus Christ.

Paul increased the pressure by accepting full responsibility for whatever loss the run-away slave may have cost Philemon. Paul then reminded Philemon, however, that he owes Paul his very life.

Paul increased the pressure again by risking their friendship in an attempt to get Philemon to make the right decision. He instructed Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul. The pressure was raised another notch when Paul asserted his strong confidence that Philemon would do even more than Paul was pressuring him to do.

The final pressure was placed on Philemon by Paul when he instructed Philemon to prepare a guest room for him because Paul was going to come to visit; he was coming to see for himself just how Philemon brought solution to this dilemma. This is the climax of the flow of the book.



## THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES

We have already established several basic ideas about good writing:

- A good book is the embodiment of a single idea.
- Each chapter of a good book is a single facet of the single idea which is described in the book.
- Each paragraph in a chapter contributes a single piece of information concerning the main idea in the chapter.
- Each sentence contains a single, important piece of information which is significant in the rounding out of the message of the paragraph of which it is a part. The sentences in the paragraph tell the single message intended in that paragraph.
- Again, each word in a sentence is deeply involved in the formation of the single statement of that particular sentence.
- Until we take the time to carefully observe each sentence, we can never claim to know the real message of the paragraph, chapter or book.

Let me illustrate this idea from the book of Hebrews. If you give a title to each of the thirteen chapters of the epistle, you will discover these major divisions of the epistle:

CHAPTERS	SUMMARIES
1 - 4	Jesus, the Superior Person
5 - 10	Jesus, the Superior High Priest
(11)	Parenthesis - An Illustration of What Happens When People Take God Seriously
12, 13	The Author's Superior Expectations of the Recipients

If you look carefully at the first division, chapters 1 - 4, the picture of Jesus, the Superior Person, this division breaks down in the following manner:

CHAPTER	SUMMARY
1	Jesus is Superior to Angels
2	Jesus Became a Man
3	Jesus was Superior to Moses
4	The Coming Rest

Now, look at chapter one. It is made up of two paragraphs:

PARAGRAPH	SUMMARY
1:1-4	Jesus, a Message from the Father
1:5-14	Jesus, Superior to the Angels

In the paragraph, 1:1-4, there is a single sentence. Now we want to observe the structure and message of this sentence. The sentence reads as follows:

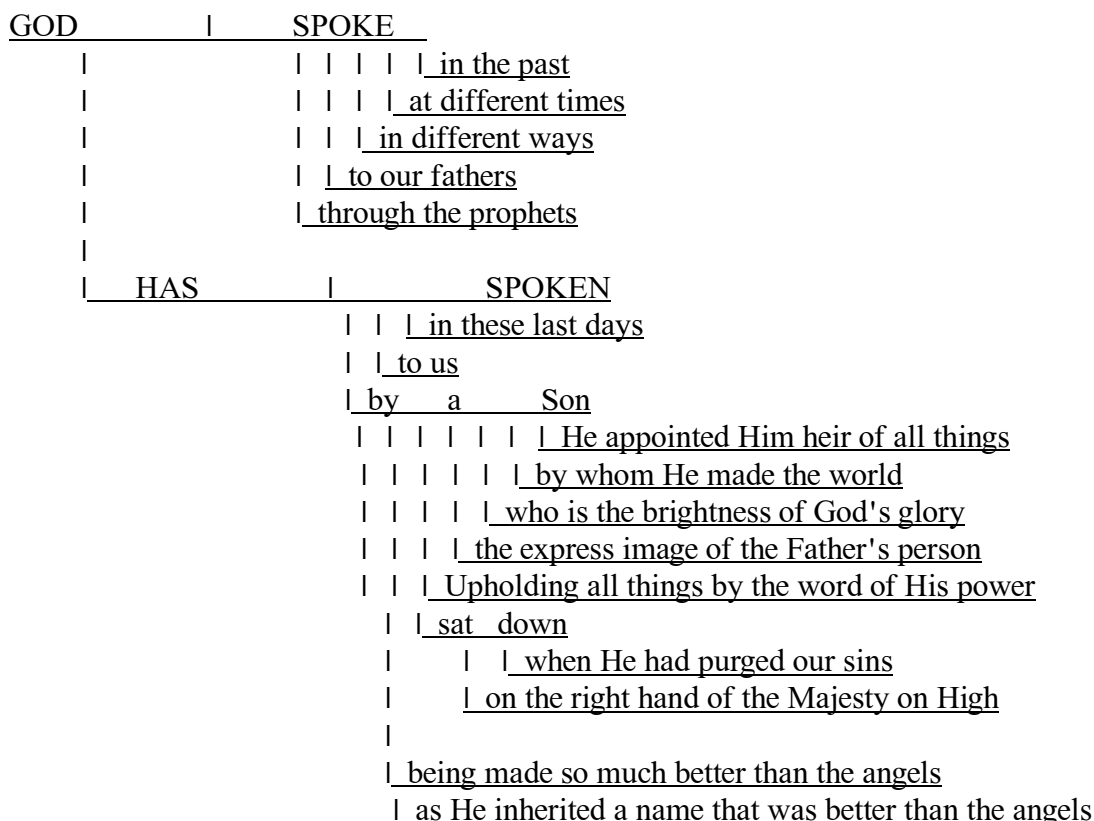
## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. Hebrews 1:1-4*

We should note, however, that other translations have divided this sentences into two to four different sentences. The Greek text does not do that.

Diagramming may be a new idea to you. If you are not familiar with it, you may want to get a text book which describes the process. These can be secured from the local school or bookstore.

We would diagram the sentence as follows:



Imagine trying to grasp this entire sentence without some visual means to assist you. As you probably know, this kind of sentence is not unusual in the epistles, especially in the writings of Paul.

Each line in the above diagram is a specific question to ask concerning the sentence and its meaning. Take for instance, just the first part of the sentence: "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners..."

- Why does the author begin the book with the word "God?"

## THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES

- Why does the author refer back to the fact that "God spoke to our fathers"?
- Why would the author speak of "divers portions"? What does that mean?
- What does the author mean by "in divers manners"?
- What is the author trying to say in this sentence?
- Why does the author use so many descriptive statements about Jesus?
- What does all this have to do with the readers of this epistle?
- What does the prophets message have to do with the author's message in this epistle?

As you can see, diagramming is useful not only in understanding the sentence, but also in preparing the student to observe the sentence in a meaningful way. There is almost no end to the questions one can ask about such a sentence. With each meaningful question comes additional insights into the mind and message of the author of the epistle.

Depending on what version of the Bible you use, you may have noticed that in some translations there are two or more sentences in Hebrews 1:1-4. This is an attempt to bring greater clarity to the text. In the Greek text, however, there is only one sentence. This is one consideration when one is choosing a translation to use in Bible study.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the observation of sentences. This is the cornerstone of the observational phase of our study. If one is not careful here, there is a good chance that the entire study will be flawed. Again, it is time consuming and extra work. It is worth all the time and effort required.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES**

- 1. In John 8:11, Jesus said, “Go and sin no more.” If you are able, diagram this verse and then ask observational questions about it. If you cannot diagram the sentence, make observations about the structure and content of this verse.**
- 2. Diagram and make observations about I Peter 2:9, 10. If you are not able to diagram the sentence, make observational questions about the structure and content of the verses.**





## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES

You will remember that this is an exercise in "observation." That being the case, we will raise questions, but make no attempt to answer them at this point. That is the function of "interpretation."

1. **In John 8:11, Jesus said, "Go and sin no more." If you are able, diagram the verse and then ask observational questions about it. If you cannot diagram the verse, make observations about the structure and content of the verse.**

This verse contains more than one sentence. We will deal with the entire verse sentence by sentence.

And

I she I said I "no one Lord"

We need to point out that the woman was answering a previous question by Jesus. He had asked, "Did no one condemn you?"

### **Observational questions**

- a. This seems like an obvious question. Jesus had been there through the entire experience. He had heard the accusations of the men, but He had also seen them leave when confronted with their own sinfulness. Why would Jesus ask such a question?
- b. Why did this sinful woman call Jesus Lord?

**Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way."**

JESUS I SAID  
I I I CONDEMN I YOU  
I NEITHER DO  
(YOU) I GO  
I AND  
I (YOU) I SIN  
I NO MORE

### **Observational questions:**

- a. Why would Jesus refuse to condemn this obvious violation of one of the ten commandments?
  - b. Why didn't Jesus pursue the issue and report her to the religious authorities for her sin?
  - c. Jesus told the woman "go and sin no more." What did He mean by that command?
2. **Diagram and make observations about I Peter 2:9, 10. If you are not able to diagram the sentence, make observational questions about the structure and content of the verses.**
    - a. Verse nine begins with the word "but." This signifies a contrast. What is being contrasted here?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"**

but                    a chosen race  
|  
|                    a royal priesthood  
I you I are                    a holy nation  
|  
|                    a people for God's own possession

- b. Why was it necessary for Peter to remind these Christians of these facts?
- c. What is a "chosen race?" Why was this fact important?
- d. What is a "royal priesthood"? Why was this fact important?
- e. What is a "holy nation?" Why would that be important?
- f. What is "a people for God's own possession?" Why would that be important?

**"that you may proclaim the excellency of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."**

The diagram of this part of the sentence would look something like this:

I That  
I you I may proclaim I the excellence of him  
| | out of darkness  
| who I called I you  
| into His marvelous light

- a. The connective "that" suggests a description of purpose. What purpose was Peter trying to highlight?
- b. What does Peter mean by "proclaim?"

**"who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."**

- a. What is this darkness?
- b. What is "His marvelous light"?
- c. What did Peter mean when he said "He called you..."?
- d. What is to be gained by mentioning this contrast between "darkness" and "light"?

**"For once you were not a people, but now you are people of God."**

For  
I You I once were not a people  
I but  
I now you I are people of God

- a. What does Peter mean by, "a people"?
- b. Why were they not "a people"?

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF SENTENCES

- c. The word "but" signifies a coming contrast. What two things are being contrasted here?
- d. Why did Peter make this contrast?
- e. What did Peter mean by "a people of God"?
- f. What is the importance of being "a people of God"?

**"...you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."**

You | had not received | mercy

| but

| you | have now received | mercy

- a. What does Peter mean by "mercy"?
- b. Why had they not received mercy?
- c. What brought about the change so that they did receive mercy?
- d. Peter has used three sets of contrasts in this verse. Why would he do this? What benefit could these produce?



## THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS

Ultimately, words are the basic tools of all verbal communication. It is, therefore, essential to have an excellent grasp of their meaning.

A "term" is a word used in a given context. The word "trunk" is a case in point. In one context the word "trunk" refers to a part of a tree. In another context, however, the word "trunk" refers to an appendage to an elephant. We use the word "trunk" in another context to identify a container for clothes. In still another context the word "trunk" identifies the back part of an automobile. In each instance, the context provides the definition of the word. This happens equally as often in Scripture. This makes it important to do more than look up the meaning of the word in a dictionary or lexicon. You must see, from the context, what the appropriate meaning is.

Earlier we referred to Jesus' questioning of Peter following the resurrection. From the English text, it would appear that Jesus' question and Peter's answer used the very same term. The Greek text presents a totally different situation. This must be understood in a completely different light.

Even if you do not know the Greek, there are hints that should help us realize that there is some kind of change in the questions and responses. First, Jesus asked Peter the question. The previous context indicates that Peter denied Jesus three times. Second, the question and answer appear to be identical the first two times. The question angers Peter the third time. Was this because Jesus asked three times or because Jesus asked a different question? This, only the Greek could clarify. Third, after each of Peter's responses, Jesus exhorted him to engage in active service which would demonstrate this level of affection.

None of these clues would clarify the issue. Each of them should catch our attention and cause us to ask further questions about the meaning. We will offer suggestions later about how you can do this for yourself.

It is also important to be clear about the inflection of a word. This is so important that a misunderstanding of it can mislead you concerning the message of the author. In Romans 12:1, Paul wrote:

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1*

If you take these words seriously, Paul wants them to present themselves to God. It would be something you do and it is done. Frankly, I tried to do this and it was never accomplished. It was a total frustration to me. I discovered that the Greek word suggests something completely different. A reasonable translation of the verse might be:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present **and keep on presenting** your bodies a sacrifice that lives..." This is different. It is not a one-time presentation. It is something I do and never stop doing. Each day I present my body as a love-servant to God. Hopefully I will do that at an increasing depth of love and commitment.

The tense of a verb is as important as the meaning of the word itself. When you make observations of terms, remember to ask questions about this when you do observations about John 1:1, momentarily

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Again, this presents a problem if you do not know the Greek or Hebrew language. This problem, however, is not insurmountable. My son and I have just written a book which teaches a person how to use both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament when they do not know the languages. It will not make one a Greek or Hebrew scholar, but will enable one to understand more clearly what these more precise versions present.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

A diagram of the sentence might look like this:

THE WORD | WAS  
| in the beginning  
| and  
|  
| THE WORD | WAS  
| with God  
|  
| and  
|  
| THE WORD | WAS | GOD

This is called a complex sentence. The text appears to suggest that "Word" describes a person and not a sound. "Word" is capitalized in the English. This suggests that the "Word" represents deity. This is an attempt to explain rather than translate the text. In the Greek text, it is not capitalized. Now we need to ask several questions as we observe the terms in this sentence:

1. What does the "Word" mean?
2. Does "Word" mean the same thing in each of the three phrases in the sentence?
3. In each phrase of the text, the verb "was" is in the past tense.
  - a. Why is it in the past tense?
  - b. Why didn't John use the present tense - "The Word is God."
4. Why does John begin the sentence and this Gospel with the words "in the beginning"?
5. What "beginning" was John talking about?
6. John said, "the Word was with God." What did he mean "with God"?
7. In the second phrase, John said, "The word was with God." In the third phrase he said, "The word was God." How can we understand the difference between these two statements?

As we said earlier, the idea of the whole observational process is to ask every possible question which pertains to the text. Again, we do not concern ourselves, at this time, with the answers. That will come later. In observation we are like an inquisitive five year old who asks "why" about every word that you say.

## THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS





## **PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS**

We have become quite familiar with the wording of the Biblical text. This can cause us to think that we understand the meaning of words and their meaning in the context when in fact we do not.

- 1. Read Mark 10:17-29 very carefully.**
  - a. Pick out the words you feel need to be observed.**
  - b. Make observations about these words.**
  - c. Reread the passage in view of these discoveries.**
  - d. What difference did this process make in your understanding?**
- 2. Read Romans 6:1 - 14 very carefully. Follow the same procedure as you did with Mark 10:17 - 29.**
- 3. Read Romans 12:1, 2 very carefully. Follow the same procedure you did with Mark 10:17 - 29 and Romans 6:1 - 14.**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS

We have become quite familiar with the wording of the Biblical text. This can cause us to think that we understand the meaning of words and their meaning in the context when in fact we do not. To ask observational questions about words in a given text will help protect us from these kinds of assumptions.

We must keep in mind that this is the "observation of terms," not "the interpretation of terms." Because of that fact, we will raise the questions in this chapter, but prefer to answer them under interpretation.

### 1. Read Mark 10:17-31 very carefully.

#### a. Pick out the words you feel need to be observed.

- |                 |                   |                 |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Good         | 5. Kingdom of God | 9. Saved        |
| 2. Teacher      | 6. "Loved him"    | 10. Present age |
| 3. Inherit.     | 7. Children       | 11. First       |
| 4. Eternal life | 8. Eye of needle  | 12. Last        |

#### b. Make observations about these words.

##### 1. "Good"

- (a). The man used the word "good" to identify Jesus. Does this imply that there were some teachers who were not "good"?
- (b). What does the man mean by "good"?
- (c). What difference would it have made if the man had just said "Teacher," as they were prone to do?

##### 2. "Teacher"

- (a). What is a teacher?
- (b). Why would this man speak of Jesus as a "teacher"?
- (c). What does the man's use of "teacher" say about Jesus' reputation?

##### 3. "Inherit"

- (a). What does the word "Inherit" mean?
- (b). Why would the man use this word to speak of eternal life?
- (c). How do you deal with the apparent conflict between "doing work" and "Inherit" as the young man spoke of it?

##### 4. "Eternal life"

- (a). What does "eternal life" mean?
- (b). How does "eternal life" differ from life as the young man knew it?
- (c). Why would "eternal life" be so important to a young man?

##### 5. "Kingdom of God"

- (a). What did Jesus mean when He used the word "Kingdom"?
- (b). How does this kingdom differ from other kingdoms?
- (c). What does this kingdom have to do with the amazement of the disciples?

##### 6. "Loved him"

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (a). What does this word "loved" mean?
  - (b). In the story, what was responsible for this response?
  - (c). How can one explain this situation?
7. "Children"
- (a). What does this word "children" mean?
  - (b). Why would Jesus address His disciples, grown men, as "children"?
  - (c). What does the use of this word imply?
8. "Eye of a needle"
- (a). What is an "eye of a needle"?
  - (b). What illustration/parallel was Jesus making with this word picture?
  - (c). What would the disciples have understood by Jesus' statement here?
9. "Saved"
- (a). What does the word "saved" mean?
  - (b). What is the background of the word?
  - (c). What is the difference between "enter the kingdom of God" as Jesus spoke, and "saved" as the disciples spoke?
10. "Present age"
- (a). What is an "age"?
  - (b). What did Jesus mean by "present age"?
  - (c). What did this have to do with the young man's question?
11. "First"
- (a). What does the word "first" mean?
  - (b). How is the word "first" used in this context?
  - (c). Jesus' statement, in verse 31, is a contrast. With what does Jesus contrast this statement?
12. "Last"
- (a). What does the word "last" mean?
  - (b). How is the word "last" used in this context?
  - (c). What is the difference between "first" and "last" in this sentence?

**c. Reread the passage in view of these discoveries. What difference did this process make in your understanding?**

There is a significant difference in at least part of what I understand, concerning this passage. There is a major increase in my understanding of the specifics of the text having done this exercise. I believe that this is a major advantage that the process provides for me.

2. **Read Romans 6:1 - 14 very carefully. Follow the same procedure as you did with Mark 10:17-29.**
- a. **Pick out the words that you feel need to be observed; that have an effect upon the meaning.**

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS

- |                   |                         |                                   |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Grace - v.1    | 6. Resurrection - v. 5  | 11. "Consider yourselves" - v. 11 |
| 2. Baptized - v.3 | 7. "Old self" - v.6     | 12. "Sin reign" v. 12             |
| 3. Buried - v.4   | 8. Slaves - v. 6        | 13. Mortal v. 12                  |
| 4. Glory - v.4    | 9. "Body of sin" - v. 6 | 14. Instruments v.13              |
| 5. United - v. 5  | 10. Master - v.9        | 15. Present - 13                  |

### **b. Do observation of these words.**

- (1). "Grace" (v. 1)
  - (a). What does "grace" mean?
  - (b). What does "grace" have to do with the question Paul was answering?
  - (c). Can sin make "grace" abound?
- (2). "Baptized" (v. 3)
  - (a). What does the word "baptize" mean?
  - (b). What does Paul mean "baptized into Christ Jesus"?
  - (c). What is the difference between being "baptized into Christ Jesus" and being "baptized into His death"?
- (3). "Buried" (v. 4)
  - (a). What does the word "buried" mean?
  - (b). What does this word have to do with Paul's argument in this paragraph?
  - (c). The word "buried" was used as a word picture in this description. How would you describe this picture?
- (4). "Glory" (v. 4)
  - (a). What does the word "glory" mean?
  - (b). What does Paul mean by "glory of the Father"?
  - (c). How can the "glory of the Father" bring resurrection?
- (5). "United" (v. 5)
  - (a). What does the word "united" mean?
  - (b). In what way is "united with Christ in the likeness of his death," like "united in the likeness of his resurrection"?
- (6). "Resurrection" (v. 5)
  - (a). What is a "resurrection"?
  - (b). How does being united with Christ in death transfer to being united in his resurrection?
- (7). "Old self" (v. 6)
  - (a). What is the "old self"? How can it be recognized?
  - (b). How can the old self be crucified?
- (8). "Slaves" (v. 6)
  - (a). What is a slave?
  - (b). What is the relationship between being slaves and doing away with the body of death?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (9). "Body of sin" (v. 6)
- (a). What is a "body of sin"?
  - (b). How does one crucify the "body of sin"?
  - (c). How does the "body of sin" makes us "slaves to sin"?
- (10). "Master" (v. 9)
- (a). What does "master" mean?
  - (b). In what way can death be "master" over Jesus"?
  - (c). What was Paul's point in this sentence?
- (11). "Consider yourselves" (v. 11)
- (a). What does Paul mean when he said, "Consider yourselves to be dead to sin"?
  - (b). What does this have to do with reality?
- (12). "Sin reign" (v. 12)
- (a). What does Paul mean when he said, " Do not let sin reign in your mortal body"?
  - (b). What are the implications of this idea of sin reigning?
  - (c). What are the signs of sin reigning in one's life?
- (13). "Mortal (v.12)
- (a). What did Paul mean by "mortal"?
  - (b). Why was it necessary to emphasize he was talking about a mortal body?
  - (c). How does this word change the content of the paragraph?
- (14). "Instruments" (v. 13)
- (a). What does the word "Instruments" mean?
  - (b). How can our bodies be instruments of unrighteousness?
  - (c). Notice that in verse 13, Paul drew a contrast between being an instrument of unrighteousness and an instrument of life and godliness. Explain what he meant by this contrast.
- (15). "Present" (v. 13)
- (a). What does the word "present" mean?
  - (b). In Romans 6:13, Paul said, "Do not present the members of your body to sin. What does this mean?

### 3. Read Romans 12:1, 2 very carefully. Follow the same procedure you did with Mark 10:17 - 29 and Romans 6:1 - 14.

#### a. Pick out the words you feel need to be observed.

- |                            |                                    |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Urge - 12:1             | 6. Acceptable to God - 12:1        | 11. Prove - 12:2       |
| 2. Brothers - 12:1         | 7. Spiritual act of worship - 12:1 | 12. Will of God - 12:2 |
| 3. Present - 12:1          | 8. Conform - 12:2                  | 13. Good - 12:2        |
| 4. Living sacrifice - 12:1 | 9. Transformed - 12:2              | 14. acceptable - 12:2  |
| 5. Holy - 12:1             | 10. Renewing mind - 12:2           | 15. Perfect - 12:2     |

#### b. Make observations about these words.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF TERMS

- (1). "Urge" - 12:1
  - (a). What does the word "urge" mean?
  - (b). What is the usual emotional tone when this word is used?
- (2). "Brothers" - 12:1
  - (a). What does the word "brothers" mean?
  - (b). Why would Paul call these Christians "brother"?
  - (c). How does their understanding of "brother" differ from ours?
- (3). "Present" - 12:1
  - (a). What does the word "present" mean?
  - (b). How did Paul use the word "present" in this verse?
- (4). "Living sacrifice" - 12:1
  - (a). What is a "living sacrifice"?
  - (b). How can a life be both a sacrifice and living at the same time?
- (5). "Holy" - 12:1
  - (a). What does the word "holy" mean?
  - (b). What is a "holy sacrifice"?
  - (c). How does it differ from other sacrifices?
- (6). "Acceptable to God" - 12:1
  - (a). What does this phrase mean?
  - (b). How would they know when they had obeyed this command?
- (7). "Spiritual act of worship" - 12:1
  - (a). What is a "spiritual act of worship"?
  - (b). Why would he say, "Spiritual act of worship"? Are there other kinds?
  - (c). Identify two or three things that would be "spiritual acts of worship."
- (8). "Conform" - 12:2
  - (a). What does the word "conform" mean?
  - (b). What did Paul mean by this command?
- (9). "Transformed" - 12:2
  - (a). What does the word "transformed" mean?
  - (b). How does one recognize a "transformed" person?
- (10). "Renewed mind" - 12:2
  - (a). What did Paul mean when he said, "renewal of your mind"?
  - (b). What transformation does the Renewed mind bring about?
- (11). "Prove" - 12:2
  - (a). What does the word "prove" mean?
  - (b). How does Paul use this word?
- (12). "Will of God" - 12:2
  - (a). What did Paul mean when he said, "the will of God"?
  - (b). How did Paul characterize the "will of God"?
- (13). "Good" - 12:2
  - (a). What did Paul mean by the word "good"?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

(b). How did Paul use the word in this context?

(14). "Acceptable" - 12:2

(a). What does the word "acceptable" mean?

(b). What kinds of things are "acceptable"?

(15). "Perfect" - 12:2

(a). What does the word "Perfect" mean?

(b). If God's will is "perfect," How can imperfect people keep it?

**c. Reread the passage in view of these discoveries. What difference did this process make in your understanding of the text?**

The general idea of the text is basically the same. The meaning of the text is much deeper, more specific and demanding upon me and upon my obedience to Christ. The call upon my Christian life is much clearer than it was before this study was done.

As indicated earlier, we will deal with the Interpretation of these terms in a later chapter.



## THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE.

Structure is the relationship and interrelationship between terms. Structure exists at every level of writing from the whole book to the shortest phrase. We will illustrate this from different passages. Structure is ultimately important to an understanding of any given text. To illustrate this, look at an advertisement that I saw in a newspaper some years ago. They were announcing a program where they would call individuals in the community. The company would ask the person a question and if they knew the answer, he/she would receive a large sum of money. The printed offer was as follows: "We call, you collect." As written, the message is that they would call and the person receiving the call could collect. Look at that statement for a moment. If you remove the comma, you change the meaning completely. It would then look like this. "We call you collect." The meaning of this statement is very different. It sounds as though the ad was saying that the company would call and you would have the privilege of paying for the call. This gives an indication of just how powerful structure can be.

First, let us look at the way one diagrams a sentence. You will remember, that we said, earlier, that every sentence has a subject and a verb. There is a very short sentence in the Bible that shows just what we are trying to explain. In John 11:35 you will find these words: "Jesus wept."

In a diagram, the sentence would look like this:

Jesus | wept

In this sentence, "Jesus" is the subject; the one that the sentence is about. The verb, the action taken by the subject, is "wept."

Structure can be observed which ties the major divisions of a book together. In the book of Romans, for instance, there are two major divisions of the book:

1 - 11 - The theological description of the problem

12 - 16 - the practical emphasis. Here Paul exhorts the recipients to put his recommended solutions into practice in their lives.

The word that ties these two divisions together is the Greek word "toigar" (τοίγαρ) which means "therefore." It is a very strong emphasis. One might describe the author's intent in these words, "On the basis of the problems identified and the theological basis spelled out in chapters 1 - 11, Paul therefore urges the recipients to deal with these issues of faith by practicing what they believe in a specific way."

Another example can be found in the book of Hebrews. There are four major divisions in the book:

1 - 4	Jesus is a <b>Superior</b> Person
5 - 10	Jesus is a <b>Superior</b> High Priest
(11)	(an illustration of what happens when people take this faith seriously)
12, 13	The Author's <b>Superior</b> Expectations of the Recipients.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Again, one might describe the author's intent in these words, "Because Jesus is the Superior Person; and because He is our Superior High Priest; and because we have the excellent examples of numberless people who have taken this faith seriously: therefore, the author urges the recipients, with 32 specific exhortations, to live a Superior Christian life in a practical way in the midst of intense persecution.

There is, also, real evidence within the confines of a major division of a book. As we indicated earlier, the chapters of a major division of a book lift up individual facets of the one idea being described in this division. Let us look again at the book of Hebrews.

1	Jesus is Superior to the Angels
2	Jesus Became a Man - They Could Not
3	Jesus was Superior to Moses
4	Conclusion -We have a High Priest Who Overcame

The conclusion the author puts forth is that Jesus endured all the temptations that are common to human beings, without sinning. On the basis of this confidence, we are urged to hold fast our faith and to come boldly to the throne of grace for help in our time of need.

Each of the four chapters identified above form individual pieces of evidence which supports the affirmation that Jesus is a superior person - worthy of our trust.

Structure also exists between sentences. This structural element identifies the fact that though there are two separate sentences, the author intended for them to be tied to each other. Let me illustrate this from the Epistle to the Romans.

*What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. Romans 4:3, 4*

Observe that the two sentences are tied together by the use of the word "now." Verse three is a question. Verse four, however, is an explanation concerning the question listed in verse three. The word "now" suggests that the author has presented the first step in his logical presentation. "Now" he moves to the next logical step in the description of his idea. Usually, when you see the word "now" in the epistles, you can anticipate that such a logical move is in process.

There are also structural ties within a sentence. Hebrews 12:1, 2 form a single sentence.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1, 2*

The structure of this sentence is not very obvious as you read it. This is one place where diagramming is most helpful. The diagram of this sentence would look something like this:

Therefore - since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us

## THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE

| LET US | LAY ASIDE | EVERY ENCUMBRANCE

| AND

| LET US | LAY ASIDE | EVERY SIN

| which so easily entangles us

| AND

| LET US | RUN | THE RACE

| with endurance

| that is set before us

| AND

| (LET US) | FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS

| the author and perfecter of faith

| who for the joy set before Him

| endured the cross

| despising the shame

| has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In the confines of this lengthy sentence, there are the first four of the 32 exhortations of chapters 12 and 13. No one of these exhortations is sufficient in itself. All four of these exhortations are equally important. The author identifies this fact by the use of the structural tool - the word "and." It is as important to lay aside every sin as it is to run the race. Just as the word "therefore" ties this sentence to the previous sentence and major division, so the word "and" ties each of the four exhortations together and makes them inseparable from each other.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE**

1. Read Romans 3:9 - 20 and 3:21-26 very carefully.
  - a. Make observations about the structure of these two paragraphs.
  - b. Indicate what effect this study had on your understanding of Romans 3:9 - 26.
2. Read carefully Romans 1:18-23; Romans 1:24,25: and Romans 1:26, 27.
  - a. Make observations concerning the structure of these three paragraphs.
  - b. Indicate how each paragraph relates to the others.
  - c. Indicate what affect this study has on your understanding of Romans 1:18 - 27.
3. Read I Peter 2:9 very carefully.
  - a. Make observations concerning the structure of this sentence.
  - b. Indicate how each part of the sentence relates to every other part.
  - c. What effect did this study have on your understanding of the sentence?



## **ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE**

We must remind ourselves, again, that in the observational process, we ask the questions which will help us discover the answers to the question, "What did the author **say**?" We will give the answers to the questions, but this will be done under Interpretation.

### **1. Read Romans 3:9 - 20 and 3:21 - 26 carefully.**

#### **a. Make observations about the structure of these two paragraphs.**

##### **Romans 3:9 - 20**

- 1) Paul quoted seven passages from the Old Testament in this paragraph. Why would he do this? Where did Paul find these quotations? Look at the content of the quotations. How do they relate to each other?
- 2) What does Paul emphasize in this paragraph?
- 3) What is Paul's major emphasis in this paragraph?

##### **Romans 3:21 - 26**

- 1) What is the relationship between this paragraph and the previous one?
- 2) The paragraph begins with the word "but." What does this suggest?
- 3) There is a serious contrast in this paragraph. What two things are being contrasted?
- 4) How does Paul deal with the sacrifice of Christ?

##### **The relationship between 3:9-20 and 3:21-26**

- 1) How would you summarize the content of 3:9-20?
- 2) How would you summarize the content of 3:21-26?
- 3) What is the structural relationship between the two paragraphs?

#### **b. Indicate what effect this study had on your understanding of Romans 3:9 - 26.**

Because this is a study in Observation, we do not attempt to give answers, but simply raise questions.

### **2. Read carefully Romans 1:18 - 23; Romans 1:24, 25; Romans 1:26, 27**

#### **a. Make observations concerning the structure of these paragraphs.**

##### **Romans 1:18-23**

- 1) The paragraph begins with the word "for." What does this suggest?
- 2) Look at the way verses 19, 20 and 21 begin. What does this suggest concerning the structure of the paragraph?

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- 3) Look carefully at verses 22, 23. What do these verses suggest concerning the people and what they have done?

### **Romans 1:24, 25**

- 1) How does this paragraph begin? What does this tell you concerning the structure of the paragraph?
- 2) What logical connective do you find used in this paragraph?
- 3) How does the paragraph end? What does this tell you about the content of these two verses?

### **Romans 1:26, 27**

- 1) How does this paragraph relate to the previous one?
- 2) Verse 27 begins with the words, "And in the same way also..." What does this tell you about the structure?
- 3) In verse 27, Paul used these words: "Men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." What literary relationship do you find in this statement? What does that tell you?

#### **b. Indicate how each paragraph relates to the others.**

- 1) Read 1:18 - 23 and 1:24, 25 carefully. What is the relationship between the two?
- 2) Now, read 1:18 - 23 and 1:26, 27. What is the relationship, if any, between these two paragraphs?
- 3) Read 1:24, 25, and 1:26, 27. What is the relationship between these two paragraphs?

#### **c. Indicate what effect this study has on your understanding of Romans 1:18-27.**

Because this is a study in Observation, we do not attempt to give answers, but simply raise questions.

### **3. Read I Peter 2:9 very carefully.**

#### **a. Make observations concerning the structure of this sentence.**

- 1) With what connective does the sentence begin? What does this suggest?
- 2) Identify the logical relationships you find in this sentence.
- 3) There are four descriptions of the people. What does this suggest?
- 4) Peter used the connective "that" following the first portion of the sentence. What does this suggest will be coming?
- 5) Twice in this sentence, Peter used the connectives "but now." What does this suggest?



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE OBSERVATION OF STRUCTURE

- 6) In the two closing segments of the sentence, there are two expressions of a literary relationship. What is that literary relationship? What does this suggest for our understanding?

As we indicated earlier, there is no effort, in this chapter, to answer these questions. We simply want to raise the questions which help us understand what Paul said. We will attempt to answer the questions under the chapters on Interpretation.



## INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

By way of review, Observation asks questions. It is to ask, what did the author **say**? By contrast, Interpretation answers the questions raised in our observations. Interpretation asks, What did the author **mean**?

There are three phases or parts in the interpretational investigation.

- **The definitive phase** - This is discovering the basic meaning of the particular words and phrases of a passage. This involves the use of the dictionary and the lexicon, as well as looking carefully at the Greek or Hebrew text. Some will not know how to do this. Earlier, I told you of the book that my son and I have written that will help such persons to accomplish this task.
- **The rational phase** - This is an attempt to discover the basic reasons which underlie the parts previously defined.
- **The implicational phase** - This is an attempt to discover what is implied by the meaning of the words and the reasons for the parts defined.

We repeat, asking and answering questions are crucial to the whole process of Inductive Bible Study.

### The Definitive Phase of Interpretation

In general, this second part of our study, Interpretation, seeks to answer every question we have asked up to this point. There is, however, more to the process than that. Let us now examine the definitive phase of Interpretation more carefully.

We described this phase by saying we want to discover the basic meaning of the particulars of the passage. Under "Observation," we asked questions about terms. For instance, in Mark 4:21, Jesus said,

*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? Mark 4:21*

The observational question was simple, "what is this bowl?"

In the Definitive Phase of Interpretation of terms, we discover an answer to that question. This "bowl" is a clay pot with a lid. This lid has two holes in it to allow air to keep the lamp lit, when not in use, without consuming vast amounts of fuel. Remember, they had no matches.

Interpretation involves the answering of questions at every level that were raised under Observation.

It is interesting to talk about the precise meaning of a given word in the text. This can be exciting. The problem, for some, is that this can also be frustrating and confusing if you do not happen to know the Greek or Hebrew languages. We understand that frustration. We remember those same frustrations when we had to either rely on other people for this information or simply do without it.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

There is help. You can learn to use the Greek and Hebrew Testaments even though you do not know the language. My son and I are currently working on a book that will enable you to translate the Greek or Hebrew words in the Bible for yourself. It will not make you a Greek or Hebrew scholar, but it will enable you to discover the meaning of the words in both the Old and New Testament for yourself.

Interpretation also involves the answering of questions about structure. Under the observation of structure, one would ask, "What is the structure of Hebrews 12:1, 2. Under the Definitive Phase of Interpretation, we now seek to isolate an answer to the Observational question. Hebrews 12:1, 2, form a bridge between the definition of the problem (chapters 1 - 11) and the solution to which the author exhorts the readers (chapters 12, 13.) Hebrews 12:1, 2, form the structural link which ties the first three major divisions of the book, (the problem and the theological basis for the author's idea) to the practical exhortations which form the concluding division of the book.

We will also deal with interpretational answers concerning form and atmosphere. Under Observation, we asked, concerning Luke 1:46-55, Mary's Magnificat, and 1:67-79, Zechariah's Song; they are both in poetic form rather than prose. Why is this? In the Definitive phase of the Interpretation of form, we seek an answer to that question. First, both of them are songs. Hebrew songs were in poetic form. Second, both songs reach a height of emotion which prose is usually inept at describing. In both instances, the emotional level of the content demands poetic expression.

In the Observation of Atmosphere, we would ask what is the atmosphere present when Jesus began washing the feet of his disciples, following the Passover meal?

In the Definitive Phase of the Interpretation of Atmosphere, we would pursue the answer to that question. The text describes Peter's reaction, but not of anyone else. It is interesting that the Gospel of Mark, which we think was dictated or at least resourced by Simon Peter, does not mention this incident. John tells the story in chapter 13. In verse six, Peter expressed shock saying, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Peter, also, showed resistance saying, "You shall never wash my feet." This resistance must not be mistaken for rejection. Peter later said, " Lord, not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well." Peter appears to have been put off by the idea of Jesus being the lowest servant in the house. This is all that the text says about the atmosphere. I believe that there is a place for a holy, conservative imagination. If I had been there, I believe I would have felt guilt and shame that I failed to take the humble place and finally Jesus had to do the task. I think I would have been ashamed of my stubborn pride in waiting for someone else to take the lowly place.

Another illustration of this can be found in the story of Joseph and his brothers. The definitive question in the Interpretation of Atmosphere would be, "How did the eleven brothers feel when Joseph identified himself as their brother?" Or how did Peter feel when he heard the rooster crowing and saw Jesus looking at him?

Again, Interpretation seeks to answer the questions raised during Observation. This applies to every word and situation that required definition during that process.

## INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

### The Rational Phase of Interpretation

As we indicated earlier, the second phase of Interpretation is the answering of Rational questions. Definitive questions seek the answer to the question "what?" The Rational phase asks and answers the question "why?" It seeks to discover the basic reasons which underlie the parts previously defined.

We want to answer rational questions about terms. In Mark 4:21, Jesus talked about a strange situation where a person might place a lamp under a bowl or a bed. The Rational question asks "why?" The rational phase of interpretation seeks an answer to that question.

We must remember that they did not have matches with which to start fires or light a lamp. They needed a way to preserve a flame without wasting a lot of fuel. They accomplished this by placing a burning lamp inside a bowl. This bowl had a lid with two holes in it. These holes would let in enough air to keep the flame alive, but not enough to consume a lot of fuel by burning with an open flame. Jesus used a common scene to make a point. Jesus drew a parallel picture. When you want to see at night, you do not put the lamp in the bowl to preserve the flame and fuel; you put it high on the wall to give light to the whole room. By the same token, when we share the Word of God, as He had just mentioned in the parable of the Sower, we expose everything and everyone to the word of God. The Gospel will expose our actions and motives for what they really are.

The Rational Phase of Interpretation also answers questions about structure. Two illustrations from Hebrews should prove helpful for our understanding. In the Rational Phase of Observation, we asked why the author of Hebrews would write this kind of letter to suffering Christians. In the New Testament, all the books written to suffering Christians encouraged their readers to look to Jesus. Hebrews was written to Christians who had lost everything except each other and suffered almost everything except death. The structure of Hebrews appealed specifically to persecuted believers. Look at Jesus, He is the superior person (1-4); Look at Jesus, He is our superior High Priest (5-10); Look at the lives of the many people who held true to their faith in God and overcame in persecution. Now, therefore, because Jesus is greater than angels and Moses; because His priesthood is greater than the whole Levitical system, I want you to live a superior, overcoming life in Christ.

The author projected that if suffering Christians took seriously the superiority of Jesus, they could overcome persecution as saints of old had done.

Now we want to pursue the same process, but at a level of structure within a chapter. The Rational question would read as follows: "In Hebrews 1:5-13, the author made a long series of quotations from the Old Testament. In Hebrews 1:5, the author claims that the Scripture says things about Jesus that God never said about angels. The author then proceeded to quote from both Psalms 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14. Either of these quotes would verify the author's statement. Why did he require two quotations? In the Rational Phase of Interpretation of structure, we attempt to answer this question. It is true, either quotation would verify the author's assertion. Two pieces of information apply to this issue and every Jewish reader would be aware of them:

The Old Testament Law, in Deuteronomy 19:15, asserted that truth is established at the mouth of two of three witnesses. This is the primary reason for so many quotations.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

It was, also, understood in the Jewish culture that if one used a quotation from the Law to support his claim, it could not be challenged in court. This is exactly what Jesus did. The Apostle Paul did this and so did the author of Hebrews. It is also the repeated reason that when Jesus confirmed his assertions with two or three Old Testament quotations, the New Testament says, "They had nothing to say."

*And they had nothing to say. Luke 14:6*

In the Rational Observational Phase, about Form and Atmosphere, we looked at Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55, and Zechariah's song, Luke 1:68-79. Almost all of the rest of the 24 chapters of Luke are written in prose, but these two songs are in poetic form. Why would Luke record them in poetic form rather than prose?"

Now, in the Rational Interpretational phase, about Form and Atmosphere, we seek an answer. First, Luke reported these songs in poetic form because that is the way both Mary and Zechariah gave them. Notice that the content of both songs was extremely emotional. Mary had discovered that she, a poor, unknown, unmarried Jewish girl was to give birth to the Messiah. Zechariah, on the other hand, on the one day in his entire life when he was allowed to serve at the altar, was told that he was going to be a father. In fact, he was going to have a son. He and Elizabeth had waited for years. They had endured the ridicule of neighbors who humiliated them saying that he, a priest, was childless because God was punishing him for some terrible sin he had committed. What a relief! These two poetic expressions contain such deep sweeping emotions, no prose, regardless of how skillfully written, could ever convey the depths of pathos or soar to the heights of excitement celebrated in these two lofty songs. They are also written in poetic form because they were sung. They were not read or studied.

### **The Implicational Phase Of Interpretation**

In this phase of Interpretation, we seek to discover the implications of the information we discovered in the definitive and rational phases. To clarify this, we will return to illustrations we used earlier.

In the definitive phase of Interpretation, we discovered the meaning of the bowl mentioned in connection with the lamp in Mark 4:21. In the Rational Interpretational phase, we discovered **why** Jesus used this image of the lamp and the bowl.

We come to the final, Implicational phase of Interpretation. At this point, we must answer the question, What are the implications of these truths for our life today? We do not use oil lamps and we have no bowls such as they used in that day. Notice the context where the image of the lamp and the bowl was used, Jesus was talking about sharing the word of God with others. The implications of the lamp and bowl are serious. We do not learn the word of God to keep it safely for ourselves. We rather learn the Scriptures so that we can share it with others. That word will illuminate everything that we and others do in life. To keep the word of God for ourselves is as foolish as putting a lamp in the bowl to preserve fuel when we need light to see in the darkness.

## INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

There are also implications involved in structure. In the Implicational Phase of Observation of structure, we asked what are the implications for my life, created by the fact that the author of Hebrews wrote to suffering Christians. He did not try to cheer them up and encourage them. He rather told them to look at how great Jesus was and be encouraged by that fact to persevere. We have never suffered for our faith. When that time comes, and it probably will, we should remember that we need to focus our whole attention on just how great Jesus really is. That is really all the encouragement we need.

Again, in the Implicational Phase of Observation of atmosphere, we asked the question: What inferences can be drawn for our lives from the atmosphere of Mary's song? In the Implicational Phase of Interpretation of Atmosphere, we will seek to answer that question. Interestingly enough, there is an atmosphere of joy, wonder, awe and excitement which pervades Mary's song. It was clear to all who heard it or read it that this announcement, though a great honor for Mary, brought with it the greatest possible potential for misunderstanding, ridicule, and rejection. She would be rejected most by those closest to her, those who should have been supportive. This seems strange to us, but it should not. Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house." Matthew 13:57. It seems to us, people who take a strong stand for righteousness should be praised. Nevertheless, we will discover that when we take such a stand, the great privilege of suffering for Christ will be equaled by the humiliation and rejection offered to us by those who should care the most. If we know this in advance, the rejection should not be so terribly devastating.





## **PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION**

- 1 Study Luke chapter 15 very carefully.**
- 2. Now look carefully at 15:1-7**
  - a. The Definitive phase - What does this parable mean?**
  - b. Answer the Interpretational Definitive questions concerning terms, structure and atmosphere.**
  - c. Answer the Interpretational Rational questions concerning terms, structure and atmosphere.**
  - d. Answer the Interpretational Implicational questions concerning terms, structure, atmosphere and form.**
- 3. Read Luke 15:8-10 carefully.**
  - a. Interpret, give answers to, the questions raised under general observation.**
  - b. Give answers to the Definitive questions raised under Observation, concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
  - c. Give answers to the Rational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
  - d. Give answers to the Implicational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
- 4. Read Luke 15:11-30 very carefully.**
  - a. Interpret, give answers to, the questions raised under general Observation.**
  - b. Give answers to the Definitive questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
  - c. Give answers to the Rational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure, and form or atmosphere.**
  - d. Give answers to the Implicational questions raised under Observation, concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**

You will find assistance by referring to your work on the Practice of Observation



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

### 1 Study Luke chapter 15 very carefully.

For our purposes here, we will do a brief overall observation of the chapter before moving into the interpretive work.

There are four paragraphs in the chapter. A brief summary of each paragraph appears on the following table:

15:1, 2	Pharisees Murmured About Jesus' Company
15:3-7	Parable of the Lost Sheep
15:8-10	Parable of the Lost Coin
15:11-32	Parable of Lost Sons (Merciful Father)

Observe that there are three parables in the chapter dealing with lostness. The entire chapter grows out of the challenge of the Pharisees to Jesus because he kept company with tax collectors and sinners.

Observe that in each parable the lost was found; there was rejoicing and celebration when the lost was found.

It seems clear that the purpose of the chapter was to provide an answer to the murmurings of the Pharisees concerning Jesus spending time with the tax collectors and sinners, people the Pharisees considered unredeemable; people the Pharisees would have shunned.

### 2. Now look carefully at 15:1-7

Observe that there are two paragraphs in this passage. As you can see in the above table, the first paragraph, 15:1, 2, deals with the source of the confrontation - Jesus spent time with publicans and sinners. The second paragraph, 15:3-7, is a parable of the Lost Sheep. It was a scenario that everyone who heard Jesus would understand.

#### a. The Definitive phase - What does this parable mean?

There is a cause and effect relationship between the two paragraphs - 15:1,2 and 15:3-7. The cause was the Pharisees confrontation with Jesus about His befriending the tax collectors. The effect was Jesus explanation of why he befriended these outcast people.

Jesus explained that when a shepherd found a lost sheep, which had relatively little value, he would really rejoice over that restoration. The implication was that the outcast tax collectors were much more valuable than the sheep and that God wanted them to be restored. The Pharisees, of course, felt that the outcasts were unredeemable. This was one of the basic conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders.

The basic idea in this parable is that every human being can be lost, but can also be saved. It is God's desire that all should be saved. When one is saved, there is great rejoicing in heaven, even if the Pharisees do not join in the celebration.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### b. Answer the Interpretational Definitive questions concerning terms, structure and atmosphere.

This is the first step in the interpretational process. It is an attempt to define the meaning of specific terms involved in the text. We will then turn our attention to defining the meaning of the structure of the passage that Jesus used. Following this step, we will look at the atmosphere that was created in this passage and how this affects the meaning of the passage.

#### TERMS:

1. **"tax gatherer"** - These were Jewish people who contracted with the Roman government to collect taxes from the Jewish population. This was tragic, in several ways, in the minds of the Jewish people.
2. **"Sinners"** - This was the usual word for "sin," "hamartano." The word literally means "to miss the mark," "It is the most general term for moral misdirection. It was usually used to identify thieves, prostitutes and murderers.
3. **"Receive sinners"** - The word "receives" means "to show hospitality," "to admit a person," "to take into your home."
4. **"Eats with them"** - In ancient times one never ate with anyone if they were at odds with that person. Laban wanted Jacob to eat a meal with him so that they could not be enemies. Joseph ate with his brothers so that they would realize that he would do them no harm.
5. **"Lost"** - This word really means "to destroy." It is a spiritual designation rather than a physical one. One can be in total control and be spiritually lost, destroyed. It was a parallel statement. A person can be as spiritually lost as the sheep was physically. Jesus used the word in this way.
6. **"Repent"** - Repentance is a change of the mind. This is one who changes his/her life for the better. In almost every New Testament occurrence, it is a repentance from sin toward righteousness.
7. **"Righteous"** - It is "the quality of being just," it is sometimes used to describe "right actions."

#### STRUCTURE:

The structural feature of this passage is the relationship between the two paragraphs. As indicated earlier, it is a cause and effect relationship. When seen in this light, the intensity of Jesus' remarks carry a much greater impact. It is as though Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I spend time with people you consider unredeemable and evil because in the sight of the Father, they are redeemable and they want to be changed." This was something that Pharisees were supposed to be concerned about, but obviously they were not.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

A secondary structural concern is the parallel. Jesus drew a parallel between something that the Pharisees could understand and something they could not understand. They understood rejoicing when a lost sheep was found. Jesus drew a parallel between the lostness of the tax collectors and the lostness of the sheep. He also drew a parallel between the finding of the sheep and the finding of lost individuals.

### ATMOSPHERE:

We need to remember that there was an air of frustration and confrontation in this exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees were upset because they believed that Jesus was an enemy of the truth, but a growing number of people were flocking to hear Him and accept His teaching. If you keep this confrontation in mind as you read this parable, you would be aware of just how angry the Pharisees would be when Jesus mentioned that there was more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner (tax collector) who repented than over the 99 (Pharisees) who needed no repentance. The emotional climate could not have been worse.

Just the fact that Jesus would dare to respond to their attack was an affront to the Pharisees. They were accustomed to everyone accepting their word just because they said it.

### c. Answer the Interpretational Rational questions concerning terms, structure and atmosphere.

#### TERMS:

**"Tax gatherers"** - Because these Jewish tax gatherers cooperated with the Romans to tax their own people they were considered traitors. Second, because they not only gained the percentage the Romans agreed to, but also went beyond that and taxed that people at whatever rate they thought they could get, they were really despised by most everyone as thieves. Third, the Jewish people thought that they should give their allegiance only to God. It seemed to them that it was blasphemy for a Jew to collect tax for a pagan government.

**"Sinners"** - The Jewish religious leaders considered these thieves, prostitutes and murderers unredeemable. They were forbidden to enter the temple and could not, therefore, avail themselves of the benefits of the sacrifices. They were like spiritual lepers.

**"Receive sinners"** - The importance of this was that they believed that if you received a person into your hospitality, you were responsible for them and their safety. It also meant that you accepted them for what they were. For this reason, the Pharisees would have nothing to do with tax collectors or sinners. Jesus receiving these people said, to the religious leaders that He approved of their lifestyle. That was not true, but they believed it. In reality, Jesus did not approve of the sins of the people, but he loved the people.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**"Eat with them"** - In the time of Jesus, if a person would receive a tax collector and eat with him, that person forever gave up their right to give witness in court, even in their own defense. They felt that if a person would accept a tax collector, you could never trust him to tell the truth or trust his judgment.

**"Lost"** - These tax collectors and sinners were Jews. The Pharisees thought of them as lost as the Gentiles. The basic confrontation here was not whether they had done wrong. Jesus would have agreed that these people had done wrong. The issue was that in the minds of the Pharisees they were not redeemable. Jesus was contending that there was no one who could not be redeemed. There was no decree in the Old Testament that restricted some people from being forgiven while others could be forgiven.

**"Repent"** - The issue over repentance was simple. Jesus knew these people could repent. Pharisees believed that there was no way for this kind of sinner to repent. For this reason they were barred from the temple and from the sin offering for atonement.

**"Righteous"** - Pharisees were the people of Israel who were doing everything according to the letter of the law. In spite of this, they were still guilty of gross violations of the law. It appears that Jesus was referring to them when He spoke of the 99 who needed no repentance. They dealt carefully with the things of the law that showed. They were quite lax about the things of the law that did not show - the expressions of mercy, etc.

### **d. Answer the Interpretational Implicational questions concerning terms, structure, atmosphere and form.**

#### **1. The implication of terms**

(a). **"Tax gatherer"** - In our times, the tax-gatherers are called the "Internal Revenue Service." It sometimes crosses our minds that these folks can be as wrong as the tax gatherers of whom Jesus spoke.

If that were the case, and I am not sure that it is, then the implication here is that they too can be forgiven. There is no sinner who is beyond the forgiveness of God. There are not levels of sins - just sins. All of them are forgivable.

Another concern is that of considering the sins of others. In this passage, the Pharisees were evaluating the sins of a group of people. Jesus, ever so carefully, suggested that there was more rejoicing in heaven over the repentance of these terrible sinners than over the righteousness of the Pharisees.

**"Sinners"** - There is a natural tendency to evaluate the sins of others more severely than our own. Jesus did not allow the Pharisees to get away with that practice. All of us are sinners. We may sin in different ways with different problems, but it affects us all.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

**"Receive sinners"** - The issue here was how one deals with the presence of people who do wrong things. The Pharisees avoided and shunned them. Jesus sought them out and shared His loving concern with them. In our society, young people who are involved in the drug culture are a bit the same. Our tendency is to be like the Pharisees and stay away from such people. We tend to think of them as bad news. We need to see what Jesus did with such people. He loved them and sought to minister to them and bring about change in their lives. He did not approve of their lifestyle, but loved them as persons. We can share, as He did, with the people in our prisons. We can befriend them and seek to bring about change in their lives.

**"Eat with them"** - The practice of eating with a person was symbolic in that culture. You never ate with a person with whom you were not at peace. Eating with them was a sign of peace and good will. Jesus ate with publicans and sinners to indicate that He loved them and desired to minister to them. We do not have that understanding in our culture. Still it is possible for us to share some way for them to know that we love them and want to be at peace with them.

**"Lost"** - The tendency in our culture is to pretend that no one is lost. We need to acknowledge that we all are lost, but that all may be found and restored. If we believe this, then there is incentive for us to witness this good news to those in need; to consider everyone as candidates for the grace of God.

**"Repent"** - In words or deeds, we sometimes act as though some people are unredeemable. No efforts are made to reach out to them with the Gospel. This is usually the poor, people of color or people who choose different lifestyles from our own. This is not really different from the attitude of the Pharisees in this parable. In the Old Testament, the people who brought their sacrifice were forgiven. In the New Testament the message is "whosoever will..." It cannot be different for us now.

**"Righteous"** - The Pharisees discovered that one can do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. The temptation is to think of people who are different from ourselves as unrighteous and ourselves as righteous. The Pharisees certainly thought so. Righteousness is not just doing all the right things, or appearing to do so. It is being right toward God, and that only God can evaluate. Programs that did not originate within our denomination are not necessarily bad. People who do not worship in exactly the same way we do are not necessarily wrong. People who favor a program which differs from ones which we feel are important are not necessarily unrighteous. If a group does not grow as fast as others, that does not mean that they are less righteous in their approach. In fact, it may be just the opposite. Being righteous is an inner quality visible only to God, but expressing itself in loving, kindly deeds toward all.

### 3. Read Luke 15:8-10 carefully.

This is the parable of the Lost Coin. Though it is very short, the parable follows essentially the same format as the parable of the Lost Sheep. In 15:3-7 the rejoicing was over finding the lost sheep. In 15:8 - 10 the rejoicing was over finding the lost coin.

This parable draws a parallel between the joy in finding the lost coin and the heavenly joy when one sinner repents.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### a. Interpret, give answers to, the questions raised under general observation.

- (1). One might ask, why would Jesus specify that this was a woman who lost the coin?
- (2). Why would Jesus use the number "ten" to identify the coins? Why not "eleven"? These two pieces of information tell us something about Jesus' message. The number of coins was our first clue. This was the number of coins a woman would sew on her headcovering to indicate that she was married. It was a bit like wearing a wedding ring today. Only a woman would wear these coins.
- (3). Having told one parable about lostness, why would Jesus tell another? Jesus was establishing truth. According to the Old Testament law, truth was established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. As with so many of Jesus' parables, He took something that they knew very well and used it to illustrate something that they did not know well at all.

### b. Give answers to the Definitive questions raised under Observation, concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.

#### Definitive questions about terms

1. **"Ten silver coins"** - To speak of "ten coins" would indicate that this woman was married.
2. **"Lamp"** - This is a lamp that was usually placed on a lampstand in the corner of a room.
3. **"Lost"** - We have defined that in the previous parable. This is the same Greek work that was used in the previous parable.
4. There are several other words, but they have been previously defined.

### c. Give answers to the Rational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.

1. **"Ten silver coins"** - By identifying that this was a woman and that she had ten silver coins, Jesus told us something about her.
  - a. She was married. The ten coins were like our wedding rings. These coins were sewn on her head covering. Thus everyone would know that she was married.
  - b. The fact that they were silver meant that she came from a family that was somewhat well-to-do. The wealthy families used gold coins.
2. **She lost one coin** - The people who heard Jesus would have known immediately that this was a sign of disgrace. When a man divorced his wife, he would cut one coin from her head covering. Everyone would know that she had been divorced. In most instances that would result in her being outcast by the other people in the community.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

3. **"what woman...does not light a lamp..."** This would be necessary because there was usually only one window in the house. If a person was to see anything that small, they would need a lamp.
  4. **"...sweep the house"** - The homes of most common people, in that day, had dirt floors. This would create a great deal of dust. To alleviate this problem, they would place straw on the floor to keep down the dust. If you dropped a coin the size of a dime into this floor covering, it would be almost impossible to find without going through the straw carefully and then sweeping the floor until you found it. That is what Jesus described.
  5. **"Rejoice with me..."** - The women of the neighborhood would understand just how important this coin was to her. It would be a very real celebration for them as well as for her. Jesus drew a parallel between this celebration and the joy of the angels when a sinner repents.
- d. Give answers to the Implicational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
1. The issue in this confrontation is whether or not these sinners were redeemable. Jesus contended that they were. The religious leaders scoffed and claimed that they were unredeemable scum.
  2. "I have found the coin which was lost." One must be careful not to read too much into the meaning of a parable. However, if the woman found the coin which was lost, then it is safe to say it belonged to her in the first place. Granted, the message of Jesus was that the lost can be found and redeemed. The implication of that is that in Christ, God found and redeemed that which had been His in the first place.
  3. It was the searching and receiving back by the one who had not been lost, the woman, that found the coin. This, of course, is a parallel to what Christ did on our behalf.
- 4. Read Luke 15:11-30 very carefully.**
- a. Interpret, give answers to, the questions raised under general Observation.**
- This is a third parable about lostness. This time, Jesus chose the story of a man and his two lost sons. You will observe the increase in the importance of the main figures of each parable. It began with the sheep, then the coin symbolizing marriage and finally the man's sons. This third parable is difficult because of our previous training. We have been constantly reminded of the errors of the younger son. The older son also sinned, but our training has focused on the younger one.
- Like the two previous parables, this one is also in response to the challenge of the Pharisees concerning Jesus' sharing with the publicans and sinners.
- b. Give answers to the Definitive questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.**
1. **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (a). **"Distant country"** - In the Greek, this is "chora makros" which means an empty expanse a long ways away.
- (b). **"Squandered"** - This is a graphic word taken from the wheat harvest picture. When they winnowed the wheat, to separate the grain from the hulls, they threw it up into the air to let the wind blow away the hulls. This is the word that Jesus used to describe what the young son did with his inheritance.
- (c). **"Loose living"** - "Loose" means "excess," "riot," "profligacy or depraved," "a life abandoned to vice," "to be shameless in wickedness."
- (d). **"Attached himself"** - Literally "to glue," "to join," "to keep company." The word itself gives us no indication concerning the reason for attachment or the means used.
- (e). **"Longing"** - "to set the heart upon," "to covet." This is a very strong desire. It is a form of lust.
- (f). **"Coming to himself"** - This is one place where our understanding matches theirs. It described a process of thinking in which one begins in detachment from self and reality, but returns as the pondering process continues.
- (g). **"I have sinned"** - "to miss the mark," "to err," "to trespass." As indicated earlier, it is the most common word for spiritual misdirection.
- (h). **"I am no longer worthy"** - "deserving," "suitable for praise."
- (i). **"My son was dead"** - "a corpse"
- (j). **"Entreating him"** (15:28) - This is the word "parakalo" from which we get "paraclete" the name for the Holy Spirit. "To implore," "to pray," "to intreat." This is the strongest, best form of begging.
- (k). **"My child"** (15:31) - The word for child is "teknon" and stresses the fact of birth. It emphasizes that the child belonged to the parent, that he was dearly loved and accepted.
- (l). **"Dead and has begun to live..."** - this is an action that has begun and continues to increase. This statement does not mean that the younger son had been resurrected. It, rather, suggests that he had been forgiven and restored to his place in the family.

## 2. DEFINITIVE QUESTIONS CONCERNING STRUCTURE

The basic structure of Luke 15 is a cause and effect relationship.

- a. The cause was the Pharisee's determination to trap Jesus; to force Him to say something that they could use against Him.
- b. The effect was that Jesus responded with three parables that would silence the accusations of His religious enemies.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

The secondary structure was the use of a parable to describe two parallel situations. Jesus told them about a young man who sinned and was forgiven and then added another part to the story about a young man who was just as wrong, but thought he was right and there was no mention of his forgiveness. This, of course, was aimed directly at the Pharisees.

### 3. DEFINITIVE QUESTIONS CONCERNING ATMOSPHERE

The atmosphere of this parable is a mixture.

- There is great joy at the finding of the son who was "lost."
- There was great embarrassment and sorrow at the inability of the older son to realize he, too, was lost.

There is a serious confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees in this parable. Though the Pharisees initiated the confrontation, Jesus won the struggle.

#### c. Give answers to the Rational questions raised under Observation concerning terms, structure, and form or atmosphere.

### RATIONAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING TERMS

- (a). "**Distant country**" - A distant country can have more than one meaning. Remember, Jesus was telling a story to Jewish people. For Jews, going to a "distant country," in terms of miles, was not very safe. There was another understanding of "distant country." To the east of the Sea of Galilee was an area known as the Decapolis - a series of ten Roman cities built specifically to be little copies of Rome and its culture. These cities were as far distant from the Jewish culture as it could possibly be. In all probability it was to one of these that Jesus suggested the boy went. The mention of the famine is additional information which supports such a view, since there was an area where this was a regular happening.
- (b). "**Squandered**" - Jesus painted a doubly bad picture of the boy. It was a terrible thing for a Jewish boy to request his inheritance before his father died. It was just as bad to throw away his inheritance for which the father had worked so hard. The decadence Jesus described would also offend the sensibilities of the Jewish hearers.
- (c). "**Loose living**" - Jewish people considered people involved in such a lifestyle as unforgivable. Such people would be barred from the temple and the sacrifices for sin that were offered there.
- (d). "**Attached himself**" - The text is not too helpful here, but there are some clues. When this son came home, he was not wearing shoes. Family members wore shoes, slaves went barefooted. There were basically three ways a person became a slave. A person could be taken captive during a time of war; a family in financial difficulty could sell one of their children as a slave in order to improve their financial situation; a person could be taken as a slave if he/she was in financial difficulty and could not pay a debt. It appears that the latter situation fits the story Jesus told.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (e). "**Longing**" - The use of this word gave the hearers a sense of the intensity of the boys desperation.
- (f). "**Coming to himself**" - In these words, Jesus gave His hearers an idea of how disoriented the young man had become. He was saying that such choices were not rational and reflected a condition where the individual was beside himself.
- (g). "**I have sinned**" - The use of these words suggests just how terrible the man's actions and decisions were. This is the only way Jesus could parallel the guilt of the people to whom the Pharisees objected. Jesus was going to tell of the forgiveness of these terrible sins. This deals with the fact that the Pharisees thought the tax collectors and sinners were beyond being forgiven. Jesus knew that they could be forgiven.
- (h). "**I am no longer worthy**" - The position of being a son was considered an honor. If a son abused that privilege, it was removed from him. This is what the son was talking about and the reason for the statement.
- (i). "**My son was dead**" - If a son brought embarrassment upon his family, they would hold a funeral for him as though he had died. After the funeral, the father would make an announcement that he had no son by that name and that the name could never again be used in his presence. When the father used these words, it was a way of saying that the family was so embarrassed by the boy's actions that they held a funeral and disinherited him. He was no longer a member of the family. Interestingly enough, Jews thought that tax collectors could no longer be considered Jews; they were no longer members of the family.
- (j). "**Entreating him**" - This is a picture of the father doing a very humiliating thing to get his son to do the right thing. A Jewish father should never have to beg his heir to do anything. Jesus was comparing the prodigal to the tax collectors and the older son to the Pharisees. It was a way of showing that they were not quite so pure as they wanted everyone to think.
- (k). "**My child**" - The use of this term for his son was a way of saying that though the older son did some terrible things, still the father claimed him and gave him the honor of sonship.
- (l). "**Dead and has begun to live**" - Jesus was not talking about resurrection. As we mentioned earlier, a son who humiliated his family was disowned and considered dead. To say that he has "begun to live again" is to say that he has been reinstated to the honored position as son.

## RATIONAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING STRUCTURE

- (a). Why would Jesus feel the need to use a third parable when it follows the same pattern as the previous parables?

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

Though this parable follows the same general pattern as the two previous ones, it is not exactly the same. Notice that the first parable dealt with a single sheep. The second parable dealt with a single coin. The third parable, however, is called the Prodigal son, but it deals with two prodigal sons. In fact, the loving, forgiving father is the central character in this parable, not the sons.

The law of the Jews demanded that truth was to be established by the word of two or three witnesses. Jesus gave them a full measure of His witness.

The first two parables answer the questions of the Pharisees. The third parable, however, deals with the message Jesus really wanted to give to these accusers. This is an excellent teaching tool. One must let the student look at a situation objectively and draw their own conclusion that this was wrong. This is preferable to putting them on the defensive by saying that they are wrong. That is exactly what Jesus did. He wanted them to know that the tax collectors were sinners, but not more so than the Pharisees themselves.

- (b). In view of the purpose of these parables, Jesus was apparently drawing a comparison/ a parallel between the prodigal on the one hand and the tax collectors on the other. Why would he do that?**

The fact that the Pharisees challenged Jesus in this matter suggests that they felt a spiritual superiority to Jesus and everyone else. This, of course, was an inappropriate self-evaluation. In the three parables, Jesus did two things:

- (1). He answered the question the Pharisees presented to Him.
- (2). He refocused the issue for them. In effect He was saying, the problem is not whether these people are redeemable or not. The issue is that you feel superior to them and everyone else and that is false. Every human being is redeemable. If you study Jesus' other dealings with the Pharisees, you will notice that repeatedly Jesus refocused their questions and challenges to deal with their own self-righteousness.

### RATIONAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING ATMOSPHERE

- The parable itself includes two extremes in atmosphere:
  - a. It is extremely joyful - the prodigal has returned and has been restored. This resulted in a big celebration.
  - b. It is appallingly sad. The older son humiliated and embarrassed his father because he would not obey his direction and accept the prodigal.
- It is intensely confrontive. The Pharisees challenged Jesus for spending time with the tax collectors and sinners. If a person shared with another person, it meant that you accepted them. Jesus wanted them to know that you can accept the person and reject their sin.
- It was instructive; a classroom atmosphere. Jesus explained why he spent time with these sinners. In this teaching atmosphere, Jesus was also confronting the Pharisees with the implications of the truth.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- d. Give answers to the Implicational questions raised under Observation, concerning terms, structure and form or atmosphere.

### 1. IMPLICATION OF TERMS

- (a). **"The distant country"** - This could be a long way away, but it could also be next door. The "distant country" has little to do with distance, but with the difference between what it is and what we know people ought to be.
- (b). **"Squandered"** - This can be wasting of money on unworthy things, but it can also deal with our use of our skills and our time. It can still be "squandering" even if we are not involved in some activity that nice people think of as quite offensive.
- (c). **"Loose living"** - What Jesus described as "loose living" would have been confirmed by most Jewish people. It is possible that the things that God would consider "loose living" could be accepted by religious people, but still considered evil in the sight of God.
- (d). **"Longing"** - There is a cause and effect relationship between our actions and the consequences of what we do. Jesus was suggesting that when people do wrong it will inevitably lead to consequences that leave us longing not only for what we want, but also what we need to survive.
- (e). **"Coming to himself"** - Jesus' use of this phrase was subtle and appropriate. He was suggesting that when people do wrong, they are really beside themselves. Society may not declare this to be the case, but ultimately it is. It is difficult to learn the lesson that only God's way is wise and reasonable.
- (f). **"I have sinned"** - We need to remember that disobedience is not just an oversight; not a mistake; not a forgetful activity: it is sin. You will also notice that when the boy spoke to his father, he said that he had sinned "against heaven and in your sight." Our actions may involve a person, but they always involve our relationship to God.
- (g). **"No longer worthy"** - Sin always involves one's sense of worth. We are unworthy of God's blessing and really unworthy of His forgiveness. The fact that His grace covers our unworthiness only heightens our awareness of just how unworthy we are.
- (h). **"Son was dead"** - In the Jewish culture when a child embarrassed the family, a funeral was held and he was officially dead as far as that family was concerned. Sin has that kind of affect on our lives. One can be very much alive physically, but spiritually dead.
- (i). **"Entreated him"** - It needs to be clear in our minds. God is more anxious for us to be restored than we are to receive that restoration. The father pleaded with his disobedient son. God, in Jesus Christ, does exactly the same in our spiritual lives. It is one piece of evidence of just how great His grace really is.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION

- (j). **"Dead and begun to live"** - This describes just how miraculous our restoration really is. Just as Jesus was once physically dead and then was alive again; in the same way we were once spiritually dead and because of the gift of God, we are alive again.

### 2. THE IMPLICATION OF STRUCTURE

The implication of the cause-effect structure is that Jesus was being very direct and specific. They asked a question and He answered it.

The purpose of Jesus' response was not to simply prove the Pharisees wrong, though He did. He wanted them to see these people from God's point of view; to see themselves from a divine perspective.

### 3. THE IMPLICATION OF ATMOSPHERE

Jesus' addition of the part of the story involving the older son indicates that He was concerned about the Pharisees because they could see the problem for the tax collectors, but could not see their own error.

Jesus' attitude is obvious in His use of the parable instead of an attack. He knew that the Pharisees would not respond positively if He just attacked their position. He wanted them to see the error and then apply it to their own situation. He gave them every opportunity to do this. They were unable, or unwilling, to see their own weakness, but He still gave them the opportunity.





## THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

A literary tie is a word used to tie a word to another word, phrase, clause sentence, paragraph or division. There are several kinds of these literary ties. They differ in terms of the purpose for which they are used.

### Literary Ties which Indicate Time

These words, in one way or another, give us an indication of time in the story being told. This is important, in our study of Scripture, in two ways:

- It gives direction, in terms of time designations, to the study.
- Without studying the passage carefully the appearance of these words will tell us something in this text is affected in terms of time. We can immediately search for what that is. It is an excellent conservator of time spent in studying Scripture. It also gives clear direction to our understanding of what the text is teaching.

In Revelation, chapter 11, John identified a series of events that are going to happen concerning two witnesses for God.

*And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came to them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon their enemies beheld them. Revelation 11:11*

As soon as you see the word "after," you know that John is dealing with a sequence of events. You also know that the event, upon which John focused, followed some other event. Timing is of utmost importance in a study of an Apocalyptic passage. In this particular passage, the two witnesses will be dead, but not buried for three and a half days. John has focused his readers attention, in verse 11, on the events which come "after" those three and one half days,. The use of the word "after" is our first clue.

Another word that identifies time. in the Scripture, is "then." The word "then" identifies a point in a sequence of two or more events. This happened and "then" that happened. It identifies a situation where one thing happens following something else.

*Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. I Corinthians 15:7, 8*

Paul was teaching the Corinthians about the resurrection of Jesus. Paul defended the resurrection of Jesus by identifying specific individuals to whom Jesus had revealed Himself following the resurrection. Paul identified the people in this order:

- James
- the twelve
- More than 500 brothers (most still living)
- all the apostles
- Last - to me.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

The word "then" identifies a point, in the sequence of events, which follows some other specific event. In this instance, it identifies the appearance of Jesus to the twelve following the appearance to James.

The word "before" also identifies time in a specific way. "Before" identifies a person or event that precedes something else.

*Jesus said unto them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58*

The Jewish leaders were threatened by Jesus' growing popularity. They wanted to discredit Him by calling Him a Samaritan. Jesus made a specific claim, "...if a man keep my words, he will never see death." John 8:51. This enraged the Jews. They remarked that Abraham died, the great prophets died; but you say that if a man keeps your words, he will never taste death. In the heat of that argument, Jesus said, "**Before** Abraham was born, I am." Jesus claimed existence for Himself prior to, "before" the birth of Abraham. It is not difficult to see why the Jewish religious leaders were furious.

The word "when" also identifies a time designation. This word pinpoints one time in parallel with or at the same time as another event.

*The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, **when** they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there. John 11:31*

In this passage, John has associated two events with each other.

- People noticed Mary leaving the house quickly.
- These people followed Mary

The time of their following coincided with Mary's quick departure from the house. It is not always true, but the use of the word "when" usually identifies such a scenario.

The word "as" identifies a totally different reference to time. This word, like "when," pinpoints its time reference to another event. The word "as," however, identifies a time frame that is ongoing rather than a precise event like hitting a drum or closing a door. "As" one event is in process, another event also takes place.

*And it came to pass, **as** we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. (ASV) Acts 16:16*

Luke was describing an event - a servant with a spirit of divination met them - in the midst of another event - "**as** they were going to the place of prayer." There is a durative, ongoing time quality to the use of the word "as" which is not present with the word "when."

Though each of these five words are quite different from each other, all of them identify time in a very specific way and affect the meaning of a text accordingly.

## THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

### Words Which Identify a Logical Sequence

Paul's letter to the Roman Christians is well known for its crystal-clear logic. An integral part of Paul's logic is his use of words which identify the direction of the logic which follows them. The word "for," for instance, very often identifies the fact that Paul is going to give a reason for what was previously stated.

*For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; Romans 1:11*

Paul said that he prayed that he might be blessed by God's will to come to Rome. The reason he gave was "for I long to see you." Paul's request to God was prompted by his desire to see the Roman believers.

The word "since" is usually used to give an awareness of time. Paul sometimes used the word to indicate that an explanation for the previous statement is in process.

*For **since** by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. I Corinthians 15:21*

In the context of this verse, Paul described the meaning and importance of the resurrection. In this verse, he said, in effect, "Because a man brought death upon the human race, in the same way, a man, Christ Jesus, brought resurrection from this terrible death." The word "since" focuses our attention on the fact that a reason is being given.

There are other words Paul used in this epistle that identify a logical sequence by indicating that a result is about to be described.

Paul used the word "so" or "so then" to identify the fact that a result is forthcoming.

*It does not, **therefore**, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." (NIV) Romans 9:16*

***So then**, it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.(NASV) Romans 9:16*

Observe that the above quote from the New International Version uses the word "therefore." The New American Standard Version uses "so then" and the American Standard Version uses "so then." This presents a problem for our study of connectives. In my own study, I use the connectives that are found in the Greek text. This is usually also found in the American Standard Version. Throughout this book, however, the quotes from the Bible are all from the New American Standard Version - (NASV), unless identified otherwise.. This accounts for the fact that in the introductory sentence, I spoke of the word "so" or "so then," but the quote uses "therefore."

Having quoted God's message to Moses about mercy, Paul immediately followed this with the resulting conclusion. Paul's conclusion was produced by his awareness of the divine announcement.

Paul also used the word "for" to indicate the result or conclusion of a logical progression.

***For** the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. Romans 9:17-18*

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Paul used an "if... then..." clause to identify a result in a cause and effect relationship in the following verse:

*I do not set aside the grace of God, for **if** righteousness could be gained through the law, ("then" understood) Christ died for nothing. Galatians 2:21*

Paul made his major point in this verse - **If** we say that righteousness came through the law, **then** Christ died unnecessarily.

Paul's most common way of identifying a coming result or conclusion is through the word "therefore," or "wherefore." One of the best known examples of this is found in the Epistle to the Romans.

*I urge you **therefore**, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1, 2*

This word "therefore" (τοίγαρ) in effect says, on the basis of everything we have said thus far in the book, this is the way I want you to live.

There are other words or phrases in the logical sequence whose function is to indicate purpose. They identify the reason something is as it is. One of these is "so that."

*Therefore the promise comes by faith, **so that** it may be by grace, and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. (NIV) Romans 4:16*

In chapter four, Paul identified the fact that Abraham received the promise and that his faith counted for righteousness before the law was given. Paul continued, his logical presentation, "**If** living by the law makes one an heir, **then** faith is useless and the promise of God is worthless."

Paul concluded his description by saying the promise comes by faith "so that" (indicating purpose) it is the product of grace which is available to everyone. The moment you see the words "so that," you know that a purpose is forthcoming.

### Comparison

A comparison is the association of things which are similar. There are several words which identify a logical sequence by indicating a comparison is forthcoming. Paul used the word "as" to accomplish this task.

*As he says also in Hosea: "I will call those who were not my people, 'my people' who are not my people, [and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.'" Romans 9:25*

In Romans 9:22-24, Paul described people, Jews and Gentiles, whom God called to be vessels of honor. In 9:25, Paul draws a comparison with a statement in Hosea that says, God will call a people which are not his people; and would call her beloved which was not his beloved. Paul introduces this comparison by saying, "As he says in Hosea..."

## THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

Another word which identifies such a logical sequence by pointing out a comparison is the word "likewise."

*and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. Romans 1:27*

In Romans 1:26, Paul described how God gave up disobedient women to vile passions. Paul continued by indicating that he did the very same thing with the disobedient men. Paul anticipated this comparison with the word "likewise," as reported in the American Standard Version:

*For this cause God gave them up unto the vile passions for their women changed the use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. (ASV) Romans 1:26, 27*

*For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (NASV) Romans 1:26, 27*

You will notice that though the New American Standard used "in the same way" instead of "likewise," it carries the same meaning.

Again, there is a phrase that identifies a logical sequence by pointing out a comparison with these words - "even as."

*David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. Romans 4:6*

Paul, in Romans 4:4, spells out a principle - for a person who works the repayment is not grace, a gift, but the payment of what is due to him. Paul continues, in verse four, with the contrast, the person who does not work for righteousness, but believes on the one who justifies his faith is counted as righteousness. Paul then turned to scripture to substantiate his principle by quoting David. Paul introduced this by the words, "Even as David..."

In the second section of Hebrews, chapters 5 - 10, the author compared the priesthood of Jesus and the Levitical priesthood.

*So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but he who said to Him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee;" Hebrews 5:5*

The words "so also" indicate that the author compared the priesthood of the Levites with that of Jesus. The comparison is that in the same way that the Levitical priests did not choose to be priests, but were chosen of God for that task, so Jesus did not decide to be a priest, but was chosen by the Father for that task.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

### Contrast

A contrast is the association of things that are opposites. A logical sequence, particularly those of Paul, may be clarified by the identification of an upcoming contrast.

The most common word used to anticipate such a contrast is "but."

*But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath, and indignation. Romans 2:8*

In this passage, Paul described the difference between the reward God gives those who by patience in well doing seek glory and honor and incorruption versus the reward of those who are factious. He announced this contrast by the use of the word "but." You will find the same thing in Romans chapter four.

*Now to the one who works, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. Romans 4:5*

### Repetition

Repetition is the recurrent use of the same term, phrase or clause. You will find this in the book of Leviticus. The word "holy" is found 544 times in the Bible. 77 of those occurrences are in the book of Leviticus. If you study the book of Leviticus, you will note that the word "holy" is a key to the understanding of the book. Again, Psalm 136 is another example of repetition.

*Give thanks to the God of gods. for his lovingkindness is everlasting. Psalm 136:2*

The phrase "his love endures forever" or "his lovingkindness is everlasting," appears 26 times in the 26 verses of this Psalm. The basic message of the Psalm is that there are no boundaries for God's lovingkindness. The repetition of this phrase is interspersed with brief historical statements, but the repeated phrase is the message that the Psalmist wants to drive home.

I Corinthians 13 focuses its complete attention on the nature of love. It describes, in careful detail, what this quality of God looks like in the life of a believer. This is repetition of an idea.

In the book of Philippians, Paul uses the word "joy" six times and the word "rejoicing" nine times in the five short chapters. These are all expressions of repetition in one form or another.

### Climax

A climax is an arrangement of materials in such a way as to move from the lesser to the greater and to the greatest importance.

The book of Job is a confusion of arguments between Job and his friends. It reaches a climax when, at the end of the book, God spoke to Job and to his friends.

The book of Genesis reaches a dramatic climax when Joseph spoke to his brothers and told them who he was. He, then, told them that they had intended their dealings with him to cause him harm, but that God meant these things to accomplish good. No novel ever reached such a feverish pitch of climax as this statement by Joseph to his brothers.

## THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

Look at the book of Exodus. Many people think of Exodus as simply a record of the trek of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. It is that, but it is more. The story of the Exodus reaches its climax not when Israel arrived at Canaan, but when the tabernacle was completed:

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34, 35*

The coming of the cloud, the symbol of God's presence, was the climax of the book.

### Causation and Substantiation

Causation and substantiation is the movement from the cause to the effect. The Apostle Paul was master of this tool of writing. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul describes a chain of cause and effect relationships where sin leads to serious consequences. It begins with the fact that these people refused to have God in their knowledge. Because of this, they did not give Him thanks. They professed to be wise, but had become foolish. They ended up worshipping animals and birds instead of the Creator of all things. In verse 24, this led to their being given up to the lusts of their heart and ended up in vile passions among both men and women. Paul listed a long list of evil preoccupations in which they became involved. All of this grew out of their refusal to have God in their knowledge.

Again, Paul was master of the tool of substantiation. Substantiation is to establish by evidence, it is to give reason to accept an idea or position. In Romans 8:12-17, Paul talked about those who are led by the Spirit of God. In 8:18-30, Paul identifies what that involves. He talked about the first fruits of the Spirit being found in the lives of those who have been adopted into the family of God. He talked about the Spirit praying for these new members of God's family when they are unable to pray intelligently or with the fervency that the Spirit will pray for us. This is important for every child of God. In our times of trauma, we can never pray with the fervency and wisdom with which the Spirit prays.

### Interrogation

Interrogation is the use of questions to teach a truth rather than to use prose as was usually done. Again, Paul was the one who used this so successfully. Jesus was also master of this means of teaching. In Romans chapter 6, Paul used a series of questions to teach the recipients that grace is not exalted if they continue to sin in order to show its greatness.

Jesus often used interrogation to emphasize a point that He was trying to convey to His listeners. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used this tool.

*And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life span?  
Matthew 6:27*

Jesus could have made a direct statement that we are helpless to make ourselves taller than we are. By the use of the question, He made a much more dramatic and forceful statement of the same truth. This, of course, was a favorite teaching tool of the Jewish teachers of the time of Jesus.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Each of these literary tools and relationships adds dramatically to the teaching of Scripture. If we are aware of them, it will help us to more carefully understand what the author of the Biblical text is trying to convey for our discernment.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS**

In this exercise, you will be asked to answer two questions about each of the following passages:

Ephesians 2:11 - 13    John 21:15 - 19

Job 42:1 - 6            Psalm 103:11 - 18

Romans 1:18 - 32    I Corinthians 13

Romans 3:1 - 8      Ecclesiastes 12:9 - 14

The questions are as follows:

1. Identify the literary relationship being used in each passage.
2. Identify the information this literary relationship helped you discover.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

### 1. Study each passage listed below.

- Identify the literary relationship being used in that passage.
- Identify the information this literary relationship helped you discover.

### 2. The list of passages.

It should be clear, as we begin, that it is possible to discover more than one relationship in a given passage. One relationship may predominate, but it is possible to find more than one type of relationship in a passage. We will try to be sensitive to this possibility as we continue.

#### a. Ephesians 2:11-13

In these verses, Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians of a time when they were “separated from Christ.” When they were “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,” when they were “strangers from the covenant,” “when they had no hope,” “When they were without God in the world.” Notice, however, that Paul immediately follows this with what their lives are like in the present. Paul used the words, “but now...” and in so doing identified two specific relationships:

- Contrast** - The word “but” almost always identifies two things or qualities which are quite opposite from each other. In this instance, Paul contrasts their former life of being “separated from God” with their present life of “being in Christ Jesus.” He contrasts their being strangers to the covenants of the promise,” with their current life of “being nigh in the blood of Christ.”
- Time** - The use of the word “now,” in verse 13, suggests that Paul was creating a time relationship in these verses. Verses 11 and 12, describe the quality of their lives before they became followers of Jesus. Verses 13 and 14, however, describe the quality of their character once they had become Christians. It is a then/now situation.

#### b. Job 42:1-6

The book of Job is an interesting book to study. In general overview, the book looks like this:

Location	Summary
1:1-5	Job: Righteous and Prosperous
1:6-2:10	Satan Challenged God over Job's Faithfulness
2:11-37:24	Three Friends and Elihu Comfort Job
38:1-41:34	Jehovah Spoke to Job
42:1-6	Job Confessed to God
42:7-9	Jehovah Denounced the Three Friends
42:10-17	God's Blessings Realized

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

As you study this overview, a design becomes apparent:

1:1 - 5	Introduction
1:6 - 2:10	The Problem Emerges
2: 11 - 37:24	Unsuccessful Search for Solution
38:1 - 41:38	God Intervenes
42:1 - 6	The Solution
42:7 - 9	The Friends Were Judged
42:10 - 17	Blessing Was Realized

It seems clear that the climax comes between God's challenge and Job's confession. The actual point of climax comes in the words of Job when he said,

*"Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me.' I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:4 - 6*

If one studied the book without realizing that this was the point of climax, one might still interpret the message accurately. One would probably miss the great intensity of this astounding confession.

### c. Romans 1:18-32

In these verses, Paul presented a vivid picture of Cause and Effect relationships. We want to demonstrate this situation in the text. Verse 18 illustrates the cause and effect relationship all by itself:

1. **The cause** - "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness..."
2. **The effect** - "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness..."

Throughout the rest of this passage, you will find other expressions of Cause and Effect.

Verses 19-23 give a detailed explanation of the effect, the judgment God imposed on people who hinder the truth in unrighteousness. Paul said:

1. God's power and deity are visible to sinners in His creation. 1:20
2. This led to their refusal to give God glory and the darkening of their hearts. 1:21, 22.
3. This led to their exchange of the "glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of corruptible man..." 1:23
4. The effect of all of this was that it led to God giving them up to the lusts of their hearts." 1:24

### d. Romans 3:1-8

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

It was a tradition among Jewish rabbis to teach by asking questions. Should you ask them a question, they would usually answer by asking another question. If you said, "How should a Jewish man read torah?" His answer might well be, "So, how should a Jewish man read torah?" This was not just a Jewish style. It was a conviction that this was the most effective way to teach. The Apostle Paul was a well trained Jewish teacher.

In Romans, chapter 2, Paul dealt with what Jewish religious leaders taught in view of their conduct. He anticipated their question, so he asked it of them. He said,

*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?*  
*Romans 3:1*

He then answered the question in Romans 3:2 by saying:

*Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. Romans 3:2*

Paul knew that this would lead to another question, so he asked it:

*What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? Romans 3:3*

Again, in Romans 3:4, Paul answered his own question. Now, he could just have given them the information without asking the question. He did not. He knew that posing the question would cause them to think about it more deeply.

### e. **John 21:15-19**

Jesus was also very adept at teaching by asking questions. He could have simply confronted Peter in regard to his commitment. He chose, rather, to teach His disciple at a much deeper level.

The encounter, recorded here, took place following the resurrection. Jesus had prepared breakfast for the disciples who had gone fishing. After breakfast, Jesus confronted Peter:

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my lambs."*  
*John 21:15*

Jesus used the Greek word for love - "agape" (ἀγάπη). This is a form of love that has no limitations.

*"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you. "Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." John 21:15b*

Peter had to answer with a different Greek word for love - "phileo" (φιλέω). This is love with some very definite limitations..

Again, notice the way Jesus questioned Peter:

*He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"*  
*John 21:16a*

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

This, again, is the unconditional love of which Jesus previously spoke. Peter answered a second time:

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, " Shepherd my sheep."  
John 21:16b

Again, Peter spoke of love which has definite limitations. This is a very different response from what Jesus asked.

A third time, Jesus asked Peter a question.

*He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"*  
John 21:17a

This time, however, Jesus used the same word Peter used - (phileo). Peter was upset. He said,

*Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love me?"*  
*And he said to Him, "Lord you know all things; you know that I love you."*  
John 21:17b

Through prolonged, intensive questioning, Jesus caused Peter to think even more carefully about the depth of his commitment to Christ.

A question arises, Was Peter upset that Jesus asked three times or was he upset because Jesus changed His word for "love" to the same one that Peter used? It appears that the distress was that Jesus changed the word, thus obviating Peter's limited commitment.

There is yet another issue here. Why would Jesus have to ask the question three times? The Old Testament makes it clear that truth was established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. This was often accomplished in this manner.

### f. Psalm 103:11-18

David, in this Psalm, drew a comparison between God's greatness in creation and His compassion. Notice the way he drew this comparison. Repeatedly in this passage, you see an "as...so..." situation.

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. Psalm 103:11*

*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12*

*Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. Psalm 103:13*

David was faced with a dilemma - How does one describe the infinite for finite minds? Ancient Jewish writers solved that dilemma by intensive description, as David employed here. They described that which they could not see in terms of things they could see and understand.

### g. I Corinthians 13

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS

We should be reminded that Paul was writing to a group of Christians who because of their former lives understood “love” in terms of “eros,” (ἔρως) the physical, sexual expression of affection. They had **little** understanding of the idea of “phileo” (φιλέω) which is affection with definite limits and a serious need for response. They had **no** understanding of “agape” (ἀγαπή), which is love without limits and demands no response in order to continue to be expressed. In I Corinthians 13, which we think of as the “love chapter,” Paul attempts to describe this “agape” love. He identified what love is and what it is not. Love is mentioned 8 times in these 13 verses. It is referred to, but not mentioned an additional 12 more times in the chapter. It looks something like this.

LOVE IS (POSITIVE)	LOVE IS NOT (NEGATIVE)
13:1 - Love gives meaning to language	13:4 - Love does not envy
13:2 - Love gives meaning to prophecy	13:4 - Love is not proud
13:3 - Love gives purpose to generosity	13:5 - Love is not rude
13:4 - Love is patient	13:5 - Love is not self-seeking
13:4 - Love is kind	13:5 - Love is not easily angered
13:5 - Love keeps no record of wrongs	13:6 - Love does not delight in evil
13:6 - Love rejoices in the truth	13:8 - Love never fails
13:7 - Love always protects	
13:7 - Love always trusts	
13:7 - Love always hopes	
13:7 - Love always perseveres	
13:13 - Love remains (abides)	
13:13 - Love is greater than faith or hope	

In this chapter Paul accomplishes more than give a description of love. By constantly repeating the word, he focused their attention upon it and emphasized the idea to them. He was really trying to help them understand what it is and to urge them to practice it in their lives. This is repetition in its most beautiful form.

### **h. Ecclesiastes 12:9-14**

There are a number of books in the Old and New Testaments that are completely focused on a logical sequence. Most of these are located in the Pauline epistles, but there are some in the General epistles and some in the Old Testament as well. Ecclesiastes is an example of that. Let us first look at the overall structure of the book of Ecclesiastes. The author does not tell us that he is on a logical search, but that is what he does. He begins with a statement which he ascribes to “the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.” This is usually thought to be Solomon. The statement with which the author begins the book is this:

*"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."  
Ecclesiastes 1:2*

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

You will notice that he begins a long list of experiments and reports in 1:3. This series continues all the way to 12:8. Beginning in 12:9, the author gives a logical conclusion to the findings from his social and spiritual experiments. In verses 13, the author reported his final conclusion to the study. He said, “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Having given his conclusion, the author proceeds to explain what he meant. He based his conclusion on this fact:

*For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14*

These last two quotations form the author’s outlook on life based on all the experiments he conducted in his own life and experience.

Our most obvious example of logical sequence in the Scriptures is the book of Romans. In overview, Paul divided his study into two parts:

- Romans 1-11 - The theological basis of his thinking
- Romans 12-16 - The practical application of this theological basis.

If you page through the book of Romans, you will find that nearly every paragraph in the book begins with what we previously referred to as a “logical connective,” such as “therefore,” “so then,” “for” and others. All of this tells us that this book, in its entirety, is one long logical sequence.



## THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

A connective is a word that is used to tie a word to another word, phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or division.

These words are very important in any serious study of the Scriptures. If we are careful, we can use these words to give us a lot of initial information. There are several different kinds of connectives. They can be identified by the function for which they are used.

### Temporal Connectives

A temporal connective is one which will indicate time. There are several of these. We will identify them and give an example of each.

- a. **"After"** - This connective will help us identify a sequence - One thing happens after another has been accomplished.

*And **after** the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. Rev. 11:11*

In this instance, the connective "after" tells us that three and one half days passed before the breath of life entered again into the two prophets.

- b. **"As"** - This connective identifies a situation where two things are happening simultaneously.

*And it happened **as** we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. Acts 16:16*

There are two things happening at the same time in this verse:

1. Paul and Timothy were going to the place where the Christians were praying.
2. They met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination while going to the place of prayer.

By observing this connective, one can discover more quickly the situation which exists in a given text. It is clear that two things are in progress at the same time.

- c. **"Before"** - This connective tells us that one situation precedes another.

In John, chapter 8, the Jews accused Jesus of having a demon. In the conversation, the Jews challenged Jesus, and said,

*You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" John 8:57*

Jesus responded to their challenge by showing them just how erroneous that statement was. He said,

*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **before** Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58*

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Jesus' use of the word "before" indicates that prior to the time of Abraham's birth, Jesus, the Messiah, was in existence. This had to be a shocking thing for the Jews to hear, but it was a way of saying that Jesus is eternal.

d. **"Then"** - This connective indicates that one event has taken place and was followed by another. There is an example of this in I Corinthians 15.

*Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles: I Corinthians 15:7*

Paul used the word "then" twice in this verse. The effect of this choice was that we learn that Jesus revealed Himself to James after He had revealed Himself to 500 people. We also discovered that Jesus revealed Himself to "all the apostles" only after He had revealed Himself to James. It is a way of informing us of the process of Jesus' self-revelation.

e. **"When"** - The effect of this connective is to inform us of the precise time at which a certain event took place.

*The Jews then who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. John 11:31*

There is precision in this statement. It was not until the Jews who were with Mary saw that she got up quickly and went out that they followed her. It was not prior to that act nor long after it. It was exactly when they saw her get up quickly.

### Logical Connectives

A "logical connective" is a word that indicates the direction of the logic of the sentence. There are several categories of these connectives.

#### Connectives which suggest a reason -

In most instances these connectives offer a reason for a statement or condition which has been previously described or identified.

a. **"Because"** - This connective is almost always used to highlight a coming explanation or reason for something previously described. It is the word "oti" (ὅτι) in the Greek. Depending on the context, it is usually translated "because" or "that."

*"For (because) the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it." Matthew 7:14*

The word "because" is a better translation in this verse than the word "for." This verse is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In the context Jesus had told the people to, "Enter by the narrow gate..." Matthew 7:13. In the following verse, Jesus explained why He had instructed them to enter by the narrow gate. He prefaced this explanation with the word "because." The moment you see the word "because" you know that a reason is forthcoming.

b. **"For"** - The word "for" is almost always used to identify the fact that an explanation is forthcoming. In the Greek, the word is "gar" (γάρ). Paul frequently used the word in this manner.

*"For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established:" Romans 1:11*

## THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

In this verse, Paul explained the reason he was praying that he might be released from prison in order to go to see these people.

- c. "Since" - This logical connective identifies a step in a logical presentation.

*For **since** by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. I Corinthians 15:21*

The word "since" is "epeide" (ἐπεὶ οὐδὲν) in the Greek and was used to describe a previous situation or event which precedes another event equally well known. In effect, Paul said, Due to the fact that death already came because of a man; by a man the resurrection of the dead has also come. The word "since" immediately tells you that this kind of a logical description is in process and can be dealt with in that light.

- d. "So" - This logical connective suggests that a new step in the logical progression is taking place. This is often a hint that the conclusion to the logical argument is at hand.

***So** then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. Romans 9:16*

Having given evidence that there is no injustice in God, Paul moves on to draw the logical conclusion from this fact - God wills and acts without regard to human actions, just as He made a choice before Jacob and Esau were born. That being the case, Paul drew the conclusion that God's actions do not depend on how a man wills or what he does. The issue is that God is the one who has mercy on whom He will have mercy. To introduce this next logical step, Paul used the word "so."

- e. "Then" - The word "then" is "oun" (οὖν). It is sometimes translated "therefore." It is possible to understand this word to indicate time. It is also possible to understand that a logical step is anticipated.

***Then** what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Romans 3:1*

At the end of chapter two, Paul had identified a Jew, not as a physical condition, but rather a spiritual one. The apostle often taught by the use of questions. In this verse, Paul uses the word "then" to indicate that the next step in the logic is to ask the question, if being a Jew is a spiritual thing, **then** what is the benefit in being Jewish?

- f. "Therefore" - This logical connective always indicates that a conclusion to the logical argument is about to be presented.

*I urge you **therefore**, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1*

This is a very well known verse. If you follow the logical progression of the epistle, it is clear that Romans 12:1 hails the conclusion of the argument presented in 1:1 - 11:36. The balance of the epistle is that conclusion. Paul might have said it this way, "On the basis of all I have said in 1:1 through 11:36, I urge you to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice..."

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

g. "Now" - This logical connective usually identifies a strong result of previous statements.

***Now** we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God. Romans 3:19*

Paul talked about the difference between the Jew and the Greek, saying that one was not better than the other. In verses 10 - 18, Paul quoted from Psalm 14 and 53. In these passages, the Psalmist affirmed that none were righteous. Having done this, Paul began to draw his conclusion on the basis of the Scripture. In effect, he said that the Jew had a greater burden because he was under the Law, but still was not righteous.

### Logical Connectives Which Indicate Purpose

a. "**In order that**" - This logical connective indicates that a previous action or condition produces certain results which are about to be described.

*For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, **in order that** the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the law... Romans 4:16*

Dealing with the issue of whether being a Jew is the basis of being an heir, then faith would be void. Grace is given to every human being no matter whether the person is a Jew or not. Paul was saying, in effect, "Because grace is for every human being, inclusion must be on the basis of faith **in order that** the promise of being an heir of God may be certain to everyone who believes, not just to the Jew."

b. "**So that**" - This is essentially the same kind of logical connective as "in order that," but it is not as strong a statement.

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, **so that** they are without excuse. Romans 1:20*

When you see the words "so that," in this verse, it tells you that the purpose of God's showing His creative power and His divine nature was to render unbelievers to be without excuse.

c. "**That**" - This logical connective is essentially the same as "so that" or "in order that," but it is not as strong as either of these other connectives. The difference is in intensity, not meaning.

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that** you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2*

You should observe that the word "that" is used twice in this verse. The first of these, the one in bold print, identifies purpose; the second adds emphasis by pointing out the characteristics of God's will. In effect, Paul said, "the purpose/reason you should not be conformed to this world and you should be transformed by the renewing of your mind is to demonstrate what God's will is.

## THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

### Logical Connectives That Indicate Contrast

A contrast is that which identifies two or more things which are dissimilar in form, content or substance. We use contrast to point out and to highlight differences between things. In so doing, we often add emphasis to the statement.

a. **"Although"** - This logical connective points out a contrast in a special way. Notice how this is done in Esther.

*For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for (although) the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king. Esther 7:4*

Whether Esther has made a precise statement or has exaggerated for purposes of effect, we cannot be sure. When she used the word "although," however, she signaled the presence of a contrast. She has contrasted two things, two considerations:

1. The tragedy of the possible enslavement of all Jewish men and women on the one hand.
2. The unnecessary annoyance of bringing such a thing to the attention of the king.

Esther said, in effect, "the possible enslavement of all Jewish men and women is little or nothing in contrast with the greater tragedy of creating a disturbance for the king over such a little thing.

b. **"But"** - This is the strongest and most obvious connectives which indicate a serious contrast. It is always used in this way.

*But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. Romans 2:8*

Observe that the word "but" is used twice in this verse. In both instances it tells us that there is a strong contrast in process. The contrasts are as follows:

1. In verse seven, Paul spoke of those motivated by a desire to do good; those who seek for glory, honor and immortality. These he contrasts with those, in verse 8, who are selfishly ambitious and disobedient. He also contrasts the results:
  - a. In verse seven the result is eternal life.
  - b. In verse eight, the result is "wrath and indignation."
2. In the second contrast, Paul contrasts what the disobedient obey with what they do not obey
  - a. They do not obey truth.
  - b. They do obey unrighteousness.

c. **"Or"** - This logical connective indicates a contrast, but it is a simpler contrast than those identified by the word "but." Instances where the author uses the word "but" include a very strong contrast.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or, what is the benefit of circumcision?  
Romans 3:1*

It may seem to some that Paul has asked the same question in two different ways. That is not the case. In the first question Paul inquired concerning the advantage of being a Jew. In the second question, separated by the word "or," Paul asked what the benefit was of being in covenant with God. These are two quite different questions though they speak to the same issue.

d. **"much more"** - This logical connective identifies a contrast between two quantities, but one of them is more significant than the other. These are unequal values.

*But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one many died, **much more** did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. Romans 5:15*

In this verse, Paul is contrasting the free gift and the transgression. It would look like this:

1. The transgression
  - a. One man transgressed
  - b. Many died.
2. The free gift.
  - a. One man, Jesus Christ gave gift of grace.
  - b. Grace abounded for many.
3. The free gift is far greater than the transgression.

Again, the connective, "much more" identifies more than just the contrast. It indicates that one of the parts of the contrast is far superior to the other.

e. **"Nevertheless"** - This logical connective is used to identify a situation where two things are in contrast with each other. This word highlights the contrast. It is like saying, "In spite of the fact that this is true, the contrasting information is also true." It is one more way to add emphasis to a given statement.

***Nevertheless**, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. I Corinthians 10:5*

In this verse, Paul used the word "nevertheless" in the way described above. He was talking about Jewishness. In the previous verses, Paul had described how the people of Israel, in the desert, were identified with God - they ate the same spiritual food; they drank the same spiritual drink; they were baptized into Moses, but God was not well pleased with all of them. This was evidenced by the fact that when they died they were buried in the desert rather than in the land of promise. It was a warning against preoccupation with material things. Again, it was like saying, "In spite of the fact that they all were baptized into Moses, ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, God was still not well pleased with them and they were not allowed to enter the promised land.

f. **"Otherwise"** - This logical connective also identifies a contrast in most instances. There are times, however, when this word is used to identify consequences.

## THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

*Otherwise, if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? I Corinthians 14:16*

In this verse, Paul talked about gifts of the Spirit, in general, and praying in a tongue in particular. It is as though Paul were saying, "It is great to pray in the spirit (tongue), but the consequence of that is that the unbeliever who is present will not know how to affirm what you have prayed. Whenever we see the word "otherwise" we can be reasonably sure that it performs one of the two functions listed above.

g. **"Yet"** - This logical connective can be used in several ways:

1. It can be used as a time designation. "We can't do this yet."
2. It can be used as a comparative.
3. It can be used for emphasis when a contrast is in force. It should be noted, however, that it is not as forceful, in this respect, as "nevertheless."

*Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." John 20:29*

In this verse, Jesus talked with Thomas. Jesus used the word "yet" to identify a contrast and add emphasis to it. He was contrasting two things:

1. People did not see. These people believed that He was risen.
2. Others (Thomas) believed only after they have seen.

h. **"Since"** - This connective is a logical connective that identifies the conclusion of a contrast.

*Since you are precious in my sight, since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. Isaiah 43:4*

There are two contrasts in this verse. There is a contrast between Israel on the one hand and the other nations on the other. There is also a contrast between the way God treated other nations and the way God treated Israel.

This being the case, The people of Israel had nothing to fear, for God would watch over them.

### Logical Connectives Which Identify A Comparison

A comparison is that which identifies two or more things that are similar in form, content or substance. We use the comparison to identify and highlight things that are similar. In the process, we often add emphasis to the statement.

a. **"As"** - This logical connective identifies things that are similar. It can also be used, on occasion in other ways:

1. It is used to identify a comparative illustration - "straight as an arrow." The comparison is accomplished by means of a parallel.
2. It is used to indicate "in the same manner" - "do as I say."

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

3. It is used to indicate consequence - "He was so repentant as to require no punishment."

*As he says also in Hosea, 'I will call those who were not my people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.' " Romans 9:25*

The use of the word "as" tells us, immediately that Paul has made a comparison. The next thing to do is to find out what two things are being compared.

1. In verse 24 Paul talked about Gentiles in such a way that they are considered people of God.
2. In verse 25, Paul compared these Gentiles with Hosea's wife who had not been beloved, but now was his beloved.

In the same way, these Gentiles were called His people, despite the fact that they had not previously been His people.

- b. "**As...so**" - This logical connective identifies a very strong comparison. It also adds emphasis to the statement.

*So then **as** through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, **even so** through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18*

Even without emphasis, it is clear that Paul made a comparison between two things that are similar.

1. The way one transgression resulted in condemnation to everyone.
2. The way that one act of righteousness resulted in justification for everyone.

The addition of "as...so" emphasizes the comparison that exists in this sentence by means of a parallel.

- c. "**Just as ...so**" - This logical connective works in much the same manner as "as...so," but is a bit stronger in nature.

*For **just as** you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, **so** these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. Romans 11:30, 31*

- d. "**Likewise**" - This logical connective is used as an identification of a very mild comparison.

*Even so (**likewise**) consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11*

Paul was trying to describe the meaning of our life in Christ. In so doing, he made a comparison:

1. Jesus died to sin, but He lives, now, to God.
2. We are to consider ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God.

Paul might have said, "In the same manner (likewise) ..."



## THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

e. **"So also"** - This logical connective was used to identify a comparison of two things that are similar. The comparison is strong, but the emphasis this word adds is mild.

*Just as (so also) David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works. Romans 4:6*

Paul dealt with the issue of works righteousness. He made a comparison with David in order to clarify his message:

1. One who does not depend upon works, but believes in the one who justifies the ungodly is counted righteous.
2. David speaks of the blessing for the man for whom God reckons righteousness without works.

f. **"And"** - This logical connective identifies a comparison of equal things, such as "this **and** that." This connective is found repeatedly in the Biblical historical books, especially in the Gospel of Mark, where it was used at least 1269 times. Five of the first six verses of Mark chapter two begin with the word "and." In almost every instance it was a way of suggesting that one event followed another in the historical sequence.

***And** when he had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. Mark 2:1*

As new translations continue to be marketed, we will encounter different words, connectives, which will be used instead of the ones which we have identified. As these appear, we will be able to use them to help us understand what the author was trying to say. It will prove to be a time-saver just as these connectives have. When we see "but," or whatever word might replace that word, we will immediately know that we are dealing with a contrast and can proceed with our study with that in mind.



## **PRACTICE WITH THE USE OF CONNECTIVES**

- 1. Read each of the following Scripture passages carefully.**
  - a. Mark 2:8
  - b. Isaiah 1:18
  - c. I Corinthians 15:21
  - d. Hebrews 12:1
  - e. I Corinthians 15:22
  - f. Romans 14:1
- 2. In each verse there is at least one connective. Record three pieces of information for each connective:**
  - a. Identify the connecting word
  - b. Identify the kind of connective it is.
  - c. Identify the benefit we gain from discovering this connective.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

Read each of the following Scripture passages carefully. In each verse there is at least one connective. Record three pieces of information for each connective:

- a. Identify the connecting word.
- b. Identify the kind of connective it is.
- c. Identify the benefit we again from discovering this connective.

### 1. Mark 2:8

*And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?" Mark 2:8*

- a. The first connective, in Mark 2:8, is "**and**."
- b. This is a logical connective that identifies a comparison - things that are similar/equal to each other.
- c. In a list of things, the last one is preceded by the word "and." This indicates that all of the things in this list are of equal importance or value. In the historical Biblical books, the word "and" almost always indicates that you have moved from the report of one event and are beginning another equally important event. In this particular verse, the word "and" identifies the anticipation of the report of a second historical event.

The second connective, in Mark 2:8, is "**immediately**."

- a. This connective is one which identifies time.
- b. As you read the text, it is clear that the author suggests that one event immediately follows the previous one. In some instances, we know from other sources that this is not the case, but that is the way that it was reported.

### 2. Isaiah 1:18 - There are two connectives in this verse:

*"Come **now**, **and** let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." Isaiah 1:18*

The first connective, in Isaiah 1:18, is "**now**."

- a. This connective has two possible identities:
  - (1). It can identify time.
  - (2). It can be a logical connective which indicates a result or coming conclusion.

In this instance, I believe that this is a logical connective which indicates a result or coming conclusion.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- b. In the previous verses, Isaiah had instructed his readers to wash themselves and make themselves clean. In verse 17, he identified how that instruction would look in their time - Seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan.... Having done this, the prophet moved to the result, saying that though they have sinned, they can be as though they had never sinned.

The second connective, in Isaiah 1:18, is "**and**."

1. This logical connective identifies a comparison.
2. The word "and" ties the word "come" and "reason" to each other as equals. These are the two things that the prophet wants his readers to do immediately.

### 3. I Corinthians 15:21

*For since by man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. I Corinthians 15:21*

The first connective, in I Corinthians 15:21, is "**for**."

- a. This logical connective gives a reason for something previously described in the text.
- b. This logical connective gives the reason for Paul's statement in verse 20. In that verse, Paul said that Christ had been raised from the dead and stressed the fact that He was the first fruits of those who are asleep. Following the word "for," Paul explained that death came by the actions of a man, and that in the same way the resurrection from the dead also came by a man.

The second connective, in I Corinthians 15:21, is "**since**."

This is a logical connective that identifies a contrast which is strong in nature. Paul was talking with these Christians about life beyond the grave, eternal life. He told them that if Christ is not risen, then they are hopeless. He said, in effect, because it was through the sin of one person that sin entered into the world and death through sin; it was also through the righteousness of one man that righteousness entered human experience and thus resurrection and eternal life. The word "since" suggests a logical progression - since this is true, then that is also true.

### 4. Hebrews 12:1

There are three connectives in this verse.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1*

The first connective, in Hebrews 12:1, is "**therefore**."

1. "Therefore" is a logical connective that places emphasis on the result. It most often identifies the approaching conclusion of a logical argument.
2. The logical outline of the book of Hebrews looks something like this:
  - a. Since Jesus is a **superior** person

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

b. And since Jesus is a **superior** High Priest

c. **Therefore:**

d. The Christian in persecution should live a **superior** Christian life.

Hebrews 12:1 is the beginning of the conclusion, chapters 12 and 13. Among the connectives in the Bible that identify a coming conclusion, this word "therefore" is the strongest.

The second connective, in Hebrews 12:1, is "**since**."

a. This logical connective identifies an approaching contrast.

b. The contrast in this verse is as follows:

(1). We, in our persecution, are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who have withstood persecution and have gone on to their reward in heaven.

(2). We, though we are not standing strong at present, must also stand true to our faith as those before us have done.

The third connective, in Hebrews 12:1, is the word "**and**."

This logical connective identifies a coming comparison. It suggests that the two things under consideration are equals. The word "and" suggests that the "encumbrance" and the "sin" are equals in this context.

### 5. I Corinthians 15:22

*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*  
*I Corinthians 15:22*

There are three connectives in this verse:

The first connective, in I Corinthians 15:22, is "**for**."

a. This logical connective identifies the fact that a reason is forthcoming.

b. If you look at I Corinthians 15:21, 22, you will notice that verse 22 adds emphasis by giving names to the "man" referred to in verse 21. Verse 22 explains what was identified in general terms in verse 21. Verse 22 is the reason that the general statement in verse 21 could be Made.

The second connective, in I Corinthians 15:21, 22, is "**as**."

a. "as" is a logical connective that identifies a coming comparison.

b. The two things that are being compared are as follows:

1. In Adam all die.

2. In Christ all shall be made alive.

c. It is as though Paul said, "Just as certainly as Adam's sin brought death to all of us, Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection brought life to all of us."

The third connective in this verse is "**so also**."

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- a. This logical connective identifies the fact that a very strong comparison is in process.
- b. As previously indicated, the strong comparison is of the effects of the actions of two men:
  - (1). "In Adam all die."
  - (2). "In Christ shall all be made alive."

### 6. Romans 14:1

***Now** accept the one who is weak in faith, **but** not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. Romans 14:1*

There are two connectives in this verse

The first connective, in Romans 14:1, is the word "**now**."

- a. In this instance, this logical connective identifies the fact that a result or conclusion is approaching.
- b. We must remember that Romans chapter 14 is a part of the conclusion of the book. At the end of chapter 13, Paul spoke of the fact that their salvation seemed close at hand. He warned them against the dangers of the lusts of the flesh. Paul continued with this conclusion by suggesting that these Christians accept those who are weak in faith. It is because the time is so short and the dangers of fleshly lusts are so great that Paul strongly urges them to accept the weaker brother.

The second connective, in Romans 14:1, is the word "**but**."

- a. "But" is a connective that suggests the presence of a contrast.
- b. Paul contrasted two things:
  - (1). They should accept the person of weak faith.
  - (2). They should not accept him to pass judgment on his opinions.



## INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION

The application of Scripture is absolutely essential, but there is a natural problem with attempts to carry it out. People tend to apply the teachings of Scripture in view of their own understandings and preconceptions. I know of people who interpret most everything they read in Scripture from a perspective of symbolism. Now, there is symbolism in Scripture, but it is not all symbolic. Sooner or later, this preconception will lead such people astray. We must find a way to avoid this. In order to really benefit from careful Bible study, we must approach it with an open mind. We must seek to discover, what does the text teach?

Look at our process as we have described it up to this point. This is what we have done:

- Observation - what does the text **say**?
- Interpretation - What does the text **mean**?

The next step in this process is application. Application is the discovery of how the passage we have observed and interpreted impacts our lives. It is an application of the truth of the text to our specific life situation. This is important because if we stop after interpreting a passage, it has no ultimate meaning for our personal lives.

In order to accomplish our goal, three things must be done:

### 1. We must discover what happened in the text.

a. **What are the events of the text.** We will use the story of Joseph to illustrate these steps.

(1). Joseph dealt with his frightened brothers. Jacob had died and the brothers feared Joseph's revenge. Joseph attempted to encourage them,

*But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And as for you, You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Genesis 50:19-21*

(2). Joseph gave them a promise - "I will provide for you and your little ones."

(3). Joseph showed compassion - He reassured them; he spoke kindly with them.

b. **Why did these things happen?**

(1). The Brothers

(a). Joseph was Rachel's son. The other 10 brothers were the sons of Leah and the concubines. There was inevitable competition and dissension here.

(b). Joseph, the eleventh son, was the heir, the one in charge. The other sons would have to obey him. He would have total control over them and their families. This was usually the place of the oldest son.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (c). The brothers had abused and excluded Joseph.
- (d). The brothers had sold Joseph as a slave.
- (e). They feared that Joseph would take revenge upon them.
- (2). Joseph
  - (a). Joseph knew God - God would take evil intended acts and use them to be a blessing even to the ones who intended them to do harm.
  - (b). Joseph was able to forgive his brothers because he knew God. He knew God could take evil intention and use it to accomplish blessing.
  - (c). Joseph had compassion - not because his brothers deserved it, but because he loved them.
- (3). There are several motives intertwined in this part of the story:
  - (a). The brothers.
    - (1). Jealousy.
    - (2). Dissension
    - (3). Abuse
    - (4). Fear
  - (b). Joseph
    - (1). Joseph's faith
    - (2). Joseph's forgiveness
    - (3). Joseph's compassion
- c. **What impact did these results have on the outcome of the story?**
  - (1). **It created fear for the brothers** - They expected Joseph to demand an "eye-for-an-eye" as they had demanded of him.
  - (2). **It created confusion for Joseph** - He had no desire for revenge. He would have difficulty understanding their strange, frightened behavior in his presence.
  - (3). It set the stage for God to work. God wanted to show mercy to the ones who were doing evil and thwarting His efforts to bless His people as He promised.
- 2. **We must discover the specific nature of our current situation.** We will describe a hypothetical case for our study. The current situation is made up of these parts:
  - a. **What happened to the person?**
    - (1). A child was abused by both mother and father.
    - (2). This child was expected to be a model child at all times.
    - (3). The child was punished with strong force for the smallest infractions.
    - (4). The child was a model of obedience.

## INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION

- (5). Grown adults liked this child and more important praised the parents for it.
- (6). The parents always wanted this child to do more, better.
- (7). This created a model child, but the child had no self worth.
- (8). The child was angry as a people pleaser at the expense of the child's own personality.
- (9). In adulthood, this child had almost nothing to do with the parents.
- (10). The child felt guilty about ignoring the parents.
- (11). The child lived in constant anger over his/her deformed personality.
- (12). The child felt guilty before God because there was no way to "honor" the parents and be honest about feelings.
- (13). The child blamed the parents for the conditions of life and personality.
- (14). The child felt alienated from God as well as the parents.

### **b. Why did it happen to that person?**

- (1). Both parents were products of an abusive home situation.
- (2). The parents were somewhat ashamed of their poor education and personal achievement in life.
- (3). The parents made up for their poor self-esteem by claiming responsibility for the success of their model child.
- (4). The child was strong willed and rebelled against abuse and parental control.
- (5). The child engaged in some "eye-for-an-eye" type activities, at least mentally.

### **c What motives were involved?**

- (1). Parents
  - (a). Parental pride - used child to build own reputation.
  - (b). Parental anger - Transferred anger over own childhood to their child.
  - (c). Parental insecurity - frightened their child would be less than perfect. They feared that this would be a poor reflection on them.
- (2). The child
  - (a). Child's fear
  - (b). Child's guilt
  - (c). Child's anger
  - (d). Child's self-doubt

### **d. What results were observed?**

- (1). Disrupted family relationship.
- (2). Child's apparent alienation from God

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- (3). Frustration for both parents and child
  - (4). Severely damaged personality for child
3. **Determine to what extent the Biblical story matches the account of the child's family trauma.** If this child, now grown, reads the story of Joseph, to what extent does it speak to his/her situation?

We begin our search by asking just how comparable these two stories really are. In order to discover this, we must compare the two stories in four areas. They are as follows:

- The facts
- The reason for the facts
- The motives involved
- The results

We need to look at each of these separately:

### THE FACTS:

JOSEPH'S STORY	CHILD'S STORY
<b>The Brothers</b>	<b>The Parents</b>
Competition and dissension	Parental pride
Jealousy and pride present	Abused by their parents
There was abuse	Great fear
There was great fear of revenge	<b>The Child</b>
Feelings of guilt	Child knew about God
<b>Joseph</b>	Negative response
Joseph knew God	No forgiveness, just anger
Positive response to family	No compassion - just rejection
Joseph forgave his brothers	Feelings of guilt
Joseph had compassion on brothers	Protracted anger
	Alienation from God
	Blamed parents
	Great fear

## INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION

### THE REASONS FOR THESE FACTS:

JOSEPH	THE CHILD
<b>The Brothers</b>	<b>The Parents</b>
a. Inter-family jealousy	a. Abused also
b. Feeling of being cheated	b. Parents were shamed
c. Abused by brothers	c. Parents were insecure
d. Fear of revenge by Joseph	<b>The Child</b>
<b>Joseph</b>	a. She was angry.
Joseph knew God would work it out	b. Fearful
Joseph forgave brothers - he saw God was at work.	e. Taking revenge

### THE MOTIVES INVOLVED:

JOSEPH	THE CHILD
<b>The Brothers</b>	<b>The Parents</b>
a. Jealousy	a. Pride
b. Dissension	b. Anger
c. Abuse	c. Fear
d. Fear	d. Insecurity
<b>Joseph</b>	e. Alienation
a. Faith	<b>The Child</b>
b. Forgiveness	a. Fear
c. Compassion	b. Guilt
	c. Anger
	d. Self-doubt
	e. Alienation

### THE RESULTS:

JOSEPH	THE CHILD
Brothers were frightened	Disrupted family.
Brothers alienated from God and Joseph	Child alienated from God
Joseph was confused by brother's fear.	Frustration for the parents.
This set the stage for God to work	Damaged personality of the child
Joseph was strong	No room for God to work

As you study these comparisons, some thoughts stand out in your mind.

#### The facts:

1. There is dissension in both stories.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

2. There is pride in both scenarios
3. There is abuse in both.
4. There is fear in both.
5. The abused knew God.

### Contrasts of facts:

JOSEPH	THE CHILD
Joseph gave a positive response	The child gave a negative response
Joseph forgave	The child did not forgive
Joseph had compassion	The child had no compassion
Joseph had no guilt	The child had serious guilt
Joseph had no anger	the child was bitter
Joseph had no alienation	the child was alienated
Joseph had no blame	the child's story includes blame

If you look at the comparison of the facts concerning both stories, you will notice that there are five areas where "the facts" are true of both. There are seven areas where they differ. These seven areas are needed, but not present in the child story. In other words, the child, now grown, needs to work on the seven areas that differ from that of Joseph.

### The reason for the facts:

The facts about Joseph are colored by the fact that he had a view of God as being in control. The facts about the child are just the reverse because there is no view of God as being in control.

Notice that you have nearly the same comparisons and contrasts as we did under "the facts." This lends a measure of assurance that we have accurate information here.

### The motives involved:

Again, as you study the motives of Joseph and those of the child, you find essentially the same comparisons and contrasts as found previously.

### The results:

Once more, as you study the results in both stories, you discover the same types of comparisons and contrasts you found in the other three areas of comparison. Joseph was on all occasions doing the right. The child was not.

### Conclusion:

There are two levels of application to which we should give attention. They are known as general and specific.

We will describe both of these in the stories we have been studying.

### General application

There are several spiritual concerns in the story of Joseph. It is appropriate to identify at least these concerns:

## INTRODUCTION TO APPLICATION

Anger	Fear	Insecurity
Alienation	Guilt	self-doubt
Anxiety	Pride	Abuse
God's mercy	Confidence in God's power to make blessing out of human desire to destroy	Triumph of righteousness over evil

General application is an application of a Biblical truth, which is general in nature, to a situation involving a person or persons. If any of the aforementioned concerns apply to a person or group of persons, it is appropriate to apply that teaching of the story of the Joseph to the needs of the person or persons.

Let me point out an inappropriate example. In the book of Nehemiah, there are several references to the wall. Now, we all know that people build walls between themselves. It is also true, however, that when Nehemiah spoke of "the wall," he was talking about the fortification of a city and not about alienation between persons or groups.

Now, look at a positive example. It is possible to accurately apply the message about Joseph to a Christian congregation or the Christian community that struggles with the apparent triumph of evil in a non-Christian culture. One can compare the conditions which Joseph endured with current conditions and show just how comparable they really are.

### Specific application

This is an application of a specific Biblical truth to a specific need. It may be of a person or a group, but it deals with a carefully defined spiritual need.

Let me use an inappropriate example first. In a church setting, the chairman of the education department said, "I am anxious to see how this new experimental class will work out." At this point someone else in the meeting said, "The Scriptures teach that we should be anxious about nothing." Everyone was aghast.

By "anxious," the education director meant that he was eager to discover something. This was excitement. His detractor, however, used the word to mean "torn apart by fear and distress." She misapplied Paul's message in Philippians 4:6 because she did not carefully identify what Paul meant by "anxious."

On a more positive note, one can use the story of Joseph to preach a sermon or teach a lesson on the mercy of God. This mercy, however, is not some broad, general expression of unbelievable generosity. It is quite specific. Mercy expresses itself in these terms:

- Mercy acknowledges the fact that the brothers did a terrible thing.
- Mercy loves the brothers anyway.
- God's mercy takes intended evil and turns it around to bless even the evildoer.
- Mercy acknowledges evil intent, but sees God using even evil intent to bless the offender and others.

This was what motivated Francis of Assisi to chase a man who had stolen his coat and when he caught the man, he gave him his shirt as well.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Obviously, this is a vastly different view of mercy than what we commonly think of or hear taught in the church. We now need to apply this specific expression of mercy to a specific situation.

In the story of the abused child, the story of Joseph can be used to describe the way in which a believer can express the mercy of God in his/her painful situation. The now grown child can follow each of the expressions of mercy found in the Joseph story.

- The child can be very specific about the fact that the parents did some terrible things in their training of this person.
- The grown child can learn to love the parents as though they had not done anything wrong.
- The grown child can come to see the hand of God using, not introducing, the intended harm as a means of transforming the intended wrong into a blessing.
- The child can acknowledge the wrong done by parents, but at the same time see how God desires to use even the abuse to bless the parents and honor His name.

This kind of application gives people something concrete to work on when they have studied the message of the Scriptures and wonder just how this applies to their lives today.



## PRACTICE WITH APPLICATION

1. A preacher preached a series of sermons on the Beatitudes. The first sermon dealt with Matthew 5:3 which reads as follows:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3*

The content of his sermon dealt with the plight of the impoverished in their community. In that situation, how would you apply this verse?

2. In the series on the Sermon on the Mount, this pastor preached a sermon on Matthew 5:43-48. The content of his sermon dealt with the command to be as perfect as our heavenly Father is. The preacher talked about becoming flawlessly perfect, under all conditions, in order to realize the expectation of Jesus for the lives of Christians. In that situation, how would you apply these verses?



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH APPLICATION

1. A preacher preached a series of sermons on the Beatitudes. The first sermon dealt with Matthew 5:3 which reads as follows:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3*

The content of his sermon dealt with the plight of the impoverished in their community. In that situation, how would you apply this verse?

As was indicated in the chapter on Application, there are three things that must be determined in order for us to make Application of any given text:

- a. What happened; what was said in the text?
- b. What is the nature of the situation to which the teaching is to be applied?
- c. Determine the extent to which the local situation matches the situation in Scripture.

We need to deal with each of these questions separately.

a. **What happened; what was said in the text?** The only background information that is given concerning this "sermon" is that Jesus saw this mass of people and went up on the mountain side and taught them. No further information is given concerning it.

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus made two very specific statements. He said,

- (1). **"Blessed are the poor in spirit."** First, Jesus did not say, "blessed are the poor." Therefore, to interpret this and apply it as speaking to a situation of economic impoverishment is a misinterpretation of the verse.

We must then determine what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

- (a). The word "blessed" is "makarios" (μακάριος) and means "happy," "fortunate," "very blest," "well off." Whatever else Jesus said, He described a situation that was filled with joy and happiness.
- (b). The word "poor" is "ptochos" (πτωχός) and means "pauper," "one who cringes," "distressed." This "distress" can be in a number of different forms. We usually associate this with an economic kind of distress. That is only partially true.
- (c). Jesus identified the kind of distress or poverty, as an "in spirit" kind of impoverishment. To be "impoverished in spirit" can happen to anyone, even the extremely rich. It has nothing necessarily to do with a lack of wealth. The word "spirit" is "pneuma" (πνεῦμα) and means "breath," "spirit," "mental disposition," "mind." Jesus said that persons who were mentally devastated should be counted happy. This was not because it is good to be depressed, but because though they feel left out, the kingdom of God is made up of people who because of their faith feel abandoned in society, lodged outside the mainstream of life.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

This is what a senior high person feels when they take a stand for God amid the lax morals of their peers.

There is no information given concerning why Jesus taught them as He did. It simply records that He saw the large group and sat down to teach them.

The sermon covers chapters five through seven. At the end of chapter seven, Matthew records this information:

*When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, Matthew 7:28*

This was amazing to everyone who heard Jesus teach.

b. We must now determine what is the situation in which this pastor is doing this teaching. For purposes of our study, let me make up a local scenario. This pastor preaches to a group of people who live in middle to upper class America. Most people are high income blue collar or professional people. None of them are poor. All of them, however, are faced with having more than they need, but still having a strong sense of meaninglessness in their lives.

There is a difference between feeling left out because nothing that you do has meaning or value, on the one hand, and feeling left out because what you stand for is diametrically opposed to the thinking of the people around you in the culture. Jesus was talking about those who have that lonely, left-out feeling because they have higher values than their neighbors. He said, they are really happy or blessed because though they do not fit with the "in-crowd" now, heaven is made up of their kind of people. That is far more valuable and more important. This, by the way, can apply to people at every point on the economic scale.

c. Look carefully at the two. The condition that we described in this scenario matches the Biblical situation exactly. When you describe, in careful terms, what Jesus had said, the people would identify with that with no difficulty whatsoever. They know what that feels like. It is good news to them to know that there is something of value beyond the emptiness of standing alone here and now. This will preach.

**2. In the series on the Sermon on the Mount, this pastor preached a sermon on Matthew 5:43-48. The content of his sermon dealt with the command to be as perfect as our heavenly Father is. The preacher talked about becoming flawlessly perfect, under all conditions, in order to realize the expectation of Jesus for the lives of Christians. In that situation, how would you apply these verses?**

**a. Again, we must ask ourselves, "what does the text say?"**

In order to discover what the text says, we must do an overview of the paragraph under consideration. Read Matthew 5:43-48 carefully. Now give that paragraph a title. The topic sentence of the paragraph, in this case, that is the first sentence, deals with loving your enemies. If you look carefully at the rest of the paragraph, you will note that all of it deals with loving your enemies. Now there is other information present, but even this information deals with loving enemies. I, therefore, have given this paragraph the title, "Love your enemies."

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH APPLICATION

Now we must ask ourselves, what this paragraph says about loving enemies. There are several parts to the answer:

1. Loving enemies does not fit the culture. They believe - "Love your friends/neighbors, but hate your enemies.
  2. We are to pray for those who persecute us.
  3. The reason for this is simple:
    - (a). God causes the sun to shine on evil and good. He causes the rain (very important) to fall on righteous and unrighteous. We must love and pray for enemies in order to be like God.
    - (b). If you love those who love you, you behave like the tax collectors.
    - (c). If you share greetings only with brothers, you are doing no more than the pagans; the Gentiles. It doesn't take religious maturity to do what others do to you.
    - (d). Jesus gave a final instruction - "Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." Now, the word "perfect" is "telios" (τέλειος) and means "complete," "full to the top," "to reach full age." It was a word from the marketplace where grain was sold. A measure of grain was "perfect," when it was filled to the top and running over on every side. Jesus was saying that our spiritual life was filled to the top, not necessarily flawless, when we loved enemies no matter how they treated us.
- b. Again, we must ask ourselves, what is the situation in the surroundings to which the teaching of this passage is to be applied.**
- For purposes of discussion, imagine that this sermon is being preached in a community where Christians have become the object of "politically correct" attack and personal abuse.
  - The Christians, who feel that they must picket at abortion clinics, receive more severe sentences than persons guilty of much more severe crimes, even murder.
  - Positions held by some Christians have been forbidden while positions held by other groups are allowed to be taught in the schools.
  - In some instances, anti-Christian groups are pushing for the taxation of church property and income as a way to get rid of the church.
  - Some groups have promised to pursue their attacks until the Christian community has died out.
- c. Determine the extent to which the local situation matches the situation in the Scriptures.**

In order to accomplish this task, we must make a comparison and/or contrast:

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	DESIGNED SCENARIO
There are enemies	There are enemies
There is injustice	There is injustice
There is persecution	There is persecution

Observe that the conditions in both scenarios are precisely the same. This suggests that the teachings of Jesus totally apply to this local situation.

Look at the implications of this decision:

1. If the Christians of that community follow the teachings of Jesus, they will learn to love those who oppose them. They will love those who impose inappropriate sentences upon Christians who take a stand in order to be faithful to Christ, as they understand that.
2. Faithful Christians will learn to live with unjust standards. It does not mean that they will think of injustice as acceptable. Indeed, they would attempt to bring a change in that situation. They will not use this injustice as a basis for revenge or retaliation.
3. Faithful believers will accept persecution and injustice without retaliation, but will take a strong loving stand against it.
4. Every response to injustice and persecution must be motivated by love in order to obey Jesus' commands and follow His example.
5. Until the faithful learn to take a firm stand in love, they will not be able to accomplish two directives of Jesus:
  - a. They are to be "perfect," not flawless, but "filled to the top," to be all that God intends them to be, now.
  - b. They are to pattern their lives of humble purity after that of the Father.

Then and only then are they being obedient to the commands of Jesus and following the example He set for us.

## INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION

In a sense, Correlation is the last step in Inductive Bible Study. In another sense, it goes on, perhaps subconsciously, all through the study.

Correlation is the careful study of one's understanding of a verse or passage to see if one's understanding shows a serious interrelationship with the teachings of the rest of Scripture.

Though students seldom take the time to correlate their study, it is one of the most important steps in the study of Scripture. If people studying Scripture took the time to correlate their findings with the rest of Scripture, it is certain that many of the heresies that are accepted today would be avoided.

There are two kinds of correlation which can be done as we study the Scriptures:

1. **Direct comparison** - You compare your findings on a given topic in one text with the teachings of the rest of Scripture on the same topic. One might compare what he/she found about "Sabbath" in Genesis with the teachings of Deuteronomy 5 and the 169 other references to this topic in the Old and New Testaments. If you have never done it, this is a very rewarding search.

2. **Indirect comparison** - This is less obvious, but equally valid and important. It is the comparison of the teaching of passages when a relationship between them obviously exists. An example of this may be seen in John 3:14-21, Romans 12:1, 2 and Hebrews 12:1-8. The Hebrews passage describes, in careful detail, what happens in the lives of those who have thus been transformed. In different terms, Romans 12 does the same thing.

The question naturally arises, how do we know if there is correlation between the passages. This is an exercise in logic. If the content of one passage logically follows the content of the other, then there is correlation.

For the sake of discussion, say you are studying Psalm 103:3. David said,

*"... who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases."*

Now, say you read Matthew 17:14-16. This is the story of the man who brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples and they could not deliver him. If the story ended at this point, then there would be no correlation between the two passages.

However, the study does not end at verse 16. In verse 18, Jesus rebuked the demon and the boy was delivered and made whole. At this point there is correlation between Psalm 103:3 and Matthew 17:14-18.

### The Process of Correlation

As you study a given passage, you should always be alert to whether or not your understanding of the passages is consistent with the teachings in the rest of Scriptures. There are general steps in this process:

1. Pursue the study of your text. This will provide you with some awareness of your topic.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

2. If you know the Greek and/or Hebrew, consult these texts for a more careful understanding of what the passage really says.
3. If you cannot read the Greek and/or Hebrew, look up the Strong numbers for the words of your text in the Interlinear Bible.
4. Look up these numbers in the Dictionary in the back of Strong's Concordance.
5. Also consult the Greek or Hebrew Parsing Guide to determine the way one would express these verbs in English.
6. Consult Strong's Concordance to see where else in the Scriptures this topic is described. If you have a computer with sophisticated Biblical software, you can accomplish the same task by the use of these tools.  
(If this is strange to you, you may want to read our book on the use of the Greek and Hebrew Testaments when you do not know the languages.)
7. Evaluate the information you have discovered in this search to determine whether or not there is a correlation between what you believe this text is saying and what the rest of Scripture teaches about the same topic.

### An illustration of the Process

1. The apostle said,

*Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (patience)."*  
*James 1:3*

It is common for people to take a word, from their English Bible translation, and find the definition for it in their best English dictionary. That works well if you are trying to find out what someone meant by a given word in the evening newscast. It can be down right misleading if we try that with the Bible.

Remember, our text is someone's translation of the author's use of a Greek word written nearly 2,000 years ago; even longer in the Hebrew. A lot of things can happen to the meaning of a word in that much time.

Take, for instance, the word "patience." In most English dictionaries, the primary meaning of this word has to do with enduring pain without complaint. The emphasis of that definition is, "without complaint." In other words, it is only patient if there is no complaining.

If, however, you look in a Greek dictionary, you get a different picture. The Greek word is a military term and means to stand your battle position under orders. It says nothing about complaining.

Let's pursue that for a minute. There are some people who have such low self-esteem that they would endure almost any pain because they feel unworthy. We must then decide, is this patience, or is it insecurity?

The Biblical authors intentionally drew a parallel that everyone reading their work would understand. In effect, each author was saying, "In the same way that a great warrior would stand his position under his commander, so the patient believer would stand for good and for God in the midst of whatever trials may come his way."

For this illustration, we will assume that we do not know the Greek language. Therefore, we will look up the words as previously instructed.



## INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION

1. The Interlinear Bible indicates that the Strong's number for the word "patience" is 5281.
2. In the dictionary in the back of Strong's Concordance, 5281 is hupomonae" (ὕπομονή). This is a compound word which comes from :
  - a. ὑπό - means under
  - b. μένω - means to stay, to stand, to abide, to endure, to remain.
  - c. I looked in Vine's and discovered that this was a military term. It means to stand under orders even when under overwhelming attack.
3. The word "testing" or "proving" is "dokimion" and means "to test," "to give experience," "to prove." There is a difference between "testing" and "tempting." It has to do with the intent:
  - a. "Testing" - is an effort "to prove," "to establish" our faith. The motive is to strengthen or to demonstrated the reality of one's faith.
  - b. "Tempting" is an effort to destroy one's faith by causing the person to fall.
  - c. "Tempting" is never done by God, always by Satan.
  - d. "Testing" is always done by God, never by Satan.
4. The word "produces" is "katargadzomai" "κατεργάζομαι" and means "to work completely," "to accomplish a task," "to finish."
5. The Parsing Guide tells us that this verb is "Third person, singular, Present Middle Indicative. The chart indicates that one would express this in English by saying, "The testing of our faith produces itself the ability to stand under fire." The emphasis added by the word "itself" indicates the source of this improved ability. It does not come from changing the mind or from increased determination. It comes from the experience of withstanding testing. There is no other way. It is an experience over which God presides, not the enemy.
6. Having determined what I believe to be the meaning of this verse, I must now search to see what the rest of Scripture says about "patience." This involves consulting Strong's Concordance to see where else this word is used. Turning to that section, I discovered that there are three different Greek words that are all translated "patience" in English. I must limit my search, here, to the passages which use the same word as used in James 1:3. They are as follows:

LU 8:15	RO 15:5	II TH 1:4	HE 12:1	RE 2:3
LU 21:19	II COR. 6:4	I TI 6:11	JA 5:11	RE 2:19
RO 8:25	I TH 1:3	HE 10:36	RE 2:2	RE 14:12
RO 15:4				

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**Luke 8:15** - This is the explanation of the parable of the Sower. The word "patience" (steadfastness) describes the seed which in the proper time produces fruit. Patience, here, means "unhurried," "persistent," "that which intentionally holds fast as long as necessary."

**Luke 21:19** - Jesus described the coming of Messiah. He said, "In your patience you shall win your souls." In this verse, Jesus spoke of that quality which endures all hardships.

**Romans 5:3** - Paul said that persecution develops patience - the ability to stand firm under intense fire.

**Romans 5:4** - Paul continued, saying, that this ability to stand firm under fire produces "approvedness," (proof) which means "trustworthy," "experience." Hardship is what demonstrates that the one under fire is trustworthy.

**Romans 8:25** - In this passage, Paul described the endurance of pain and persecution experienced by the believers of his day. He said, "When we can't see the things we hope for, we wait for them patiently." Instead of enduring persecution, he spoke of enduring the slow passage of time by holding the self under control until one's desires have been realized.

**Romans 15:4** - The context of this verse deals with stronger Christians supporting weaker ones. The Scriptures were written for our learning so that through patience we might have hope. In this verse, "patience" is described as the strength to endure/to stand under fire. This is the basis of hope.

**Romans 15:5** - Patience - a characteristic of God - is the ability to stand under fire and not give in to the forces that attack us.

**II Corinthians 6:4** - Paul was describing the atmosphere of his ministry. In the hardships of his ministry -- difficult travel, persecution, etc., - Paul endured the afflictions in patience, standing under fire.

**II Corinthians 12:12** - Paul was defending his apostleship. He reminded them that he performed signs of a true apostle among them with all patient endurance. This is standing under pressure.

**Colossians 1:11** - Describing the spiritual growth of the Colossian church, Paul identified one quality as patience - standing under fire.

**I Thessalonians 1:3** - Again, describing their positive spiritual standing, Paul spoke of their "steadfastness of hope." These people, who endured great tribulation, still remained steadfast in hope; able to not only retain their faith, but to also cleave to their expectation of eternal life.

## INTRODUCTION TO CORRELATION

**II Thessalonians 1:4** - Writing again to this severely persecuted body of believers, Paul described the tenacity of their faith and their ability to stand under unbelievable persecution.

**I Timothy 6:11** - Paul urged Timothy to pursue and keep on pursuing perseverance (patience). This is the ability to stand successfully against persecution.

**II Timothy 3:10** - Paul commended Timothy's following his example of teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, etc. This is standing under fire, but Paul presented it as different from perseverance.

**Titus 2:2** - Paul instructed Titus that "older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, love and perseverance." This perseverance is an example of the ability to stand under fire.

**Hebrews 10:36** - "You have need of endurance." All through this epistle there is reference to the need to stand under fire. Here it is described in an athletic image.

**James 5:11** - Twice in this verse, James used the word "patience," (υπομονή). In both instances, especially with Job, it describes a strong stand in the midst of suffering and persecution.

**II Peter 1:6** - In this chapter, Peter described a process of spiritual growth. Part of that process is standing firm against persecution.

**Revelation 1:9** - John described himself as a partaker in the tribulation and perseverance which these people experienced. This was demonstrated in his exile and eventual martyrdom.

**Revelation 2:2** - The Lord spoke to the church at Ephesus and commended their ability to stand against persecution.

**Revelation 2:3** - The Lord continued, saying, "and you have perseverance and have endured (patience) for my name's sake and have not grown weary." This is standing under fire longer than the persecution that comes to us.

**Revelation 2:19** - The Lord spoke to the Thyatira church and acknowledged their perseverance (patience) and growth, but also condemned their sinful deeds. This patience is also standing against persecution.

**Revelation 3:10** - The Lord spoke to the Philadelphia church, saying, "Because you have kept the word of my perseverance (patience)..." These believers stood firm against persecution as Jesus did.

**Revelation 13:10** - The "perseverance of the saints" John was speaking of the power of the beast and the ability of the saints to stand against his persecution even if it meant captivity and or death.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**Revelation 14:12** - In this chapter, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with the 144,000 while the beast and his followers are suffering. Patience is described as the saints persistently keeping the commandments of God despite opposition.

Now we must examine these verses that we have summarized.

1. There are five or six authors who have used this word in their writings. They are as follows:  
**Luke Paul, the author of Hebrews, James, Peter and John.**
2. Each of these writers used the word (ὕπομονή) to describe "patience," the ability to stand under fire. This is a very important piece of information. Very often one author will use a word one way and a different author will use the same word in a totally different way. When they all use the word the same way, you have good consensus that this is what the word should describe.
3. In all but one of the 27 references, this word used in exactly the same manner. They chose this word to describe the ability to stand faithful under fire, even when the outcome looked dim.

Now let us go back to the verse we were studying at the beginning, James 1:3. He said,

*"Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." James 1:3*

We now have every good reason to think of the meaning of this word as "standing under the pressure of persecution." It is not being the happy sufferer. I suspect that much of Christendom, in our time, believe that patience is enduring pain or hardship without complaining. Wrapped up in this misunderstanding is, at least for some, if not most, the reason that people are afraid and unwilling to ask God to enable them to be patient. Initially, at least, it certainly was for me.

James was saying that patience is produced as one undergoes opposition and hardship without giving in to the temptation to abandon his commitment to God.

## **PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION**

In the two paragraphs, Matthew 12:1-8 and Matthew 12:9-14, Jesus entered into careful discussion with the Pharisees about the Sabbath.

- 1. Read these two paragraphs carefully.**
- 2. What did Jesus believe about the Sabbath?**
- 3. What did the Pharisees believe about the Sabbath?**
- 4. Correlate these positions with the teaching of the rest of Scripture concerning the Sabbath.**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION

In the two paragraphs, Matthew 12:1-8 and Matthew 12:9-14, Jesus entered into careful discussion with the Pharisees about the Sabbath. Our task is to correlate our understanding of His message on this occasion with the teaching of the rest of Scripture concerning the Sabbath.

### 1. Read these two paragraphs carefully.

#### a. Matthew 12:1-8.

1. Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. v. 1
2. The disciples began to pick heads of grain and eat them. This assumes that they rubbed the heads of grain between their hands to get rid of the hulls. The text does not say so, but one would assume that Jesus was aware of their actions. It also assumes that Jesus did not condemn their actions, else it is doubtful that they would have done it. v. 1
3. The Pharisees challenged Jesus - His disciples did what was unlawful on the Sabbath. By their understanding of the law, they were partially correct. v. 2
4. Jesus answered the Pharisees by reminding them of what David did when his men were famished - I Samuel 21:6. v. 3, 4
5. Jesus was, in fact, defending His disciples actions. He was also expressing a principle concerning Sabbath. v. 3, 4
6. Jesus used the illustration of the priests violating the Sabbath and were considered innocent. v. 5
7. Jesus claimed to be greater than Sabbath. This suggests His control of the Sabbath, His use of the Sabbath to accomplish His goals. v.6
8. Jesus confronted the Pharisees, firmly, in an embarrassing way about not knowing the meaning of Hosea 6:6. There is a principle here. Mercy is more important than ritual sacrifice. v.7
9. Jesus is master of the Sabbath - the Sabbath is subject to His control. v. 8

#### b. Matthew 12: 9 - 14

1. Jesus went to the synagogue. v. 9
2. Confrontation - the man with the withered hand. The Pharisees asked - "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" v.10
3. Their purpose was not to discover truth, but to accuse Jesus. v. 10

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

4. Jesus' response was an appeal to logic. If your sheep falls into a cistern on the Sabbath, you would get him out, and the Law would allow for this. Why should an animal be given greater concern than a human being? The assumption of Jesus' question is that the animal should not be given greater concern than a human being. If you would help a helpless animal on the Sabbath, you should be able to do the same for a person. v.11
  5. Principle - People are more important than an animal. v. 11
  6. Principle - It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath - this was a new principle for the Pharisees. v. 11
  7. Jesus healed the man's hand in front of everyone and on the Sabbath. v. 13
  8. Pharisees response - they took counsel on how to destroy Jesus. v. 14
2. **Describe Jesus' teaching, concerning the Sabbath, as found in these paragraphs.**
- a. Jesus allowed the disciples to pick grain and eat it on the Sabbath. The Pharisees could not do this. They considered this a violation of the Sabbath. Jesus disagreed.
  - b. There can be extenuating circumstances which Jesus would place above Sabbath observance. v. 3, 4
  - c. Jesus appealed to Scripture
    1. The priests violate the Sabbath weekly and are innocent. v. 5
    2. Principle - Mercy is better than sacrifice. v. 7
  - d. Principle - Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is subject to Jesus.

In these principles, Jesus made some strong, radical statements, at least in so far as the Pharisees were concerned. In Jesus' teaching, the law of Sabbath was not written in stone. It could be dealt with on the basis of need. This was not a view about law, but about Sabbath. Jesus claimed that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fill it to the top; to give it real meaning as it was intended to have.

In Jesus' teaching about Sabbath, human need was more important than ritual observance. Jesus found irrefutable support for this in Scripture, I Samuel 21 and Hosea 6:6.

Jesus claimed that he was Lord of the Sabbath. This meant that the Sabbath was under His control. He could use the Sabbath in the way it met the needs of His kingdom best. In this, He became the law-giver.

Jewish religious leaders decreed that you could **preserve** life on the Sabbath, but that you could not **improve** life. By healing the man, on the Sabbath, Jesus took exception to this understanding of the law and held that one could both save life and improve life on the Sabbath.

Jesus was simply saying that He held to the Spirit of the Law rather than to the letter. The Spirit of the Law is more demanding than the letter of the Law on all occasions, even when it appears to weaken the law. .



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION

### 3. Describe the Pharisee's teachings concerning the Sabbath as found in these paragraphs.

- a. It was **not** considered unlawful to **pick** the heads of grain. It **was** considered unlawful to **rub the heads of grain between one's hands** to prepare them for eating. This was considered work. Thus, the Pharisees spoke of the disciples doing the unlawful thing on the Sabbath. v. 2
- b. It was lawful to **preserve** life on the Sabbath, according to the Pharisees. It was unlawful, in their thinking, to **improve** life on the Sabbath. The healing of the man's withered hand would be considered an improvement of life and thus unlawful.

### 4. Correlate these teachings with the rest of Scripture concerning the Sabbath.

An account of this event is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Synoptic Gospels. It would be important to study these passages to see what differences there might be in terms of the teaching about Sabbath.

**Matthew 12:1-8** deals only with the episode where the disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath. It does not deal with the healing of the man with the withered hand.

**Mark 2:23-3:6** - This is Mark's report of the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath. It is immediately followed by Jesus' healing of the man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus was dealing with the problems the teachers had created by the laws they added to the law. It became a bondage, not the gift God intended it to be.

**Mark 2:27** - Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." In this, Jesus indicated that the purpose of Sabbath was to be a gift to man, not a bondage placed upon him. This is a principle in Jesus' teaching about Sabbath. This statement adds to, but does not conflict with the report of Jesus' teaching about Sabbath in Matthew chapter 12.

#### **Luke 6:1-11**

- a. Luke presents the two events - grain field and the healing of the man with the withered hand -as happening on consecutive Sabbaths.
- b. In Luke 6:9, the rhetorical question Jesus asked is more extensive than it was in Matthew 12. In this passage, Jesus asked:

*"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save life, or to destroy it?" Luke 6:9*

There are four parts to this rhetorical question.

- a. It was lawful to do some good on the Sabbath.
- b. It was not lawful to do any harm on the Sabbath.
- c. It was lawful to save life on the Sabbath.
- d. It was not lawful to destroy life on the Sabbath.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

It is obvious that no single answer could accurately deal with all of these assertions. This is the reason that in the record of this event, in Mark 3:4, it states that the Pharisees gave no answer.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees' and teachers' addition to the Law. Jesus was not suggesting that people should do harm or that they destroy life. He was suggesting that a person has the right to do good as well as to save life. This was radically different from what the Pharisees supported.

In summary, all three reports of this event agree in principle concerning the teachings of Jesus about Sabbath.

The word used for "Sabbath," in Matthew 12:1-14, is "sabbaton" (σάββατον). This is number 4521 in the Greek Dictionary in Strong's Concordance. It is the Greek equivalent of (שַׁבָּת) "Shabbath", number 7676 in the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary in Strong's Concordance.

"Sabbaton" - a day of weekly repose from secular avocations. Shabbath, on the other hand, means intermission. It is a special day or holiday.

With one exception, all 59 New Testament references to Sabbath use precisely the same word. That one exception is different only because it refers to Sabbath-eve, the day before the Sabbath.

Having examined the way the synoptic Gospels described these events, we must turn our attention to the way the word "Sabbath" is used in the New Testament. Each New Testament use of the word has been checked, but we will only remark concerning the ones that have special interest in our study here.

**Matthew 12:8** - "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." The import of this statement has been previously described.

**Matthew 24:20** - "Flight not on the Sabbath" - The Pharisees believed that one could only travel a certain short distance on the Sabbath. Jesus used this understanding to help describe how terrible the times would be.

**Mark 1:21** - Jesus worshipped on the Sabbath. Thus, we know this is an acceptable use of this holy day.

**Mark 2:27** - "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Sabbath was intended as a gift for people, not a bondage into which they should be thrust.

**Mark 16:1** - The women waited until Sabbath was over to prepare the body of Jesus for burial. This was considered work and they could not do this on Sabbath. This reflects the Pharisee's understanding of the Sabbath.

**Luke 13:15** - Jewish law allowed people to feed and water their animals on the Sabbath because it was essential. Food preparation for people had to be taken care of before Sabbath began.

**John 7:23** - The Jews would circumcise a baby on the Sabbath in order to keep the requirement of eighth day circumcision.

**Acts 13:14** - The early church worshipped on the Sabbath, but it is not clear if this was the seventh day or the first day. We assume it was the first day of the week.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION

**Colossians 2:16** - Early Christians held positions about the Sabbath that were severely opposed by the Jews and even by some Christians. In this instance, Paul said, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day."

As you review the references to Sabbath in the New Testament, there was no time, in the teaching of Jesus or in the record of the early church when the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 12 was contradicted.

It is interesting that following the Book of Acts the word "Sabbath" appears only once and that in Colossians 2:16. This tends to suggest that early Christians accepted the teachings of Jesus on this subject with great understanding and very little struggle. In other areas, where this was not true, Paul found it necessary to do extensive teaching.

Now having investigated the New Testament use of the word, we need to turn our attention to the discovery of how Jesus came to His understanding of Sabbath.

Every one of the 61 references to "Sabbath" in the Old Testament came from the same root word, as previously described.

**Exodus 20:8** - "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The word "Remember" is "zakar" (זָכַר) and means "to mark so as to be recognized," "to recount," "to mention by way of remembering." Whatever we do to remember the Sabbath must be a way of keeping that day "Holy." The word "Holy" means "to set apart for God." This is an important understanding.

**Genesis 2:3** - "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." The word "rested" is "shabbath" which is the Hebrew for Sabbath. God was not tired. It does not suggest that God took care of His tiredness, but that He finished and stopped His creative work. God sanctified the seventh day. This means that He set this day apart, in a unique way, to Himself. Whatever else this must include, it should focus on the fact that God set it apart for Himself. It was a celebration of the most important thing God had done to this point.

**Exodus 16:23** - "Then He said to them, 'This is what the Lord meant: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to the Lord...' Whatever our observance of Sabbath includes, it should be directed 'to the Lord.' The purpose of the day is not to round out our schedule.

**Exodus 16:29** - "See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

The important thing about this verse is that it affirms that the Sabbath is a gift from God to people. This is a basic principle concerning our understanding of Sabbath. This understanding was to be celebrated by "remembering" the Sabbath; by highlighting God's eternal miracle in creation.

**Exodus 20:11** -

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy." Exodus 20:11*

The word "rest" does not mean to prop one's feet. It is a root word that means "to settle down," "to stop," "to leave it alone." Whatever else is involved in Sabbath understanding, we must remember that it was a celebration of the completion of creation, not the tiredness of the Creator.

In this verse, the author also mentioned that God "blessed the Sabbath." The word "blessed" is a root word, "barak" (בָּרַךְ) and means "to kneel." It was used to describe situations of praise, honor, and adoration. In this instance, the author was describing a situation where God placed special emphasis on this day. God made this a special day for His people and set the day apart from other days to focus their attention upon God.

The author also said that God made the day "holy." The word "holy," "kadesh" means "to make it clean," "to consecrate," "to devote to God." God set this day apart to Himself, but gave it to mankind as a gift.

### Exodus 31:14

*Therefore you are to observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Exodus 31:14*

The word "observe" is a root word that means "to hedge about," "to protect," "to reserve." This word means more than just doing what ought to be done on the Sabbath. It is to protect the day so that it does not become something it was not intended to be - another day of work.

The serious punishment for any person who does not "observe" the Sabbath suggests just how important the protection of this day really was in the sight of God.

### Exodus 31:16

*So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Exodus 31:16*

The word "observe" is "shamar" (שָׁמַר). It is a root word and literally means "to build a hedge about," "to guard," "to protect." God made it clear that it was the responsibility of Israel to guard and protect this very special day.

There is also an instruction for the children of Israel to "celebrate" the Sabbath. The word "celebrate" is "asah" (עָשָׂה) and means "to make," "to do," "to fashion," "to prepare a feast." God was saying to them, "This will be a new experience, but design for yourselves a special day on which you stop your work and in the same vein honor your God."

This verse makes it clear that this was not a temporary injunction God gave to His people, Israel. This was an instruction that they were always to keep. This is still the case and will never cease to be God's instruction to His people. A "perpetual covenant" can never be changed or revoked.

### Leviticus 16:31

*"It is to be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute." Leviticus 16:31*

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION

The Hebrew word for "Sabbath" and for "solemn rest" is exactly the same - "Shabbath." In the Hebrew it would read "shabbath shabbath." One might translate it, "It is to be a stoppage to enable you to reflect/to humble your souls and will always be this celebration."

The reflecting called for in this verse will point out the vast difference between our weakness and God's greatness and cause us to humble ourselves before Him. This is one of the most important ingredients in the celebration of Sabbath.

### **Leviticus 23:32**

*It is to be a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath. Leviticus 23:32*

Again, "Sabbath of complete rest" is "Shabbath Shabbath" in the Hebrew. The author again repeats the need to humble oneself on the Sabbath. This is as important as ceasing work.

There is an interesting play on words in this verse. We translate it, "keep your Sabbath." In the Hebrew it is "Shabbath Shabbath." It is a way of saying that we celebrate the Sabbath, the completion of creation by ceasing our daily work as God ceased from His. The humbling of souls was as important as stopping one's work.

### **Deuteronomy 5:12**

*Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Deuteronomy 5:12*

Again, the word "observe" means "to build a hedge around" the Sabbath in order to make it holy, to set it apart for God. This is a divine command. It is not a suggestion which we may negotiate.

To the extent that it is not a holy day, set apart for God, to that extent we do not observe the Sabbath.

### **Isaiah 58:13, 14**

*"If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord, honorable, and shall honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure, and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Isaiah 58:13, 14*

This instruction calls for a change of thinking. It is natural for us to focus on our own desires. The prophet spoke for God and called for a total change in the object of our focus. Instead of thinking of our own desires and plans, on this day; we would bring ourselves to focus the center of our attention on how great it is to have a day to make God the center of our attention.

### **Jeremiah 17:22**

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*And you shall not bring a load out of your houses on the Sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers. Jeremiah 17:22*

The teaching of the prophet was that the Sabbath was not a day of work. He further instructed the people that they should "keep" the Sabbath. The word "keep" is "kash" (שָׁמַר) which means "to pronounce clean," "to sanctify," "to consecrate." The prophet said that work, as such could make the Sabbath unclean. This means that no matter what efforts might present themselves, nothing should be pursued that would interfere with the consecrating, the hallowing of the day to God.

### **Amos 8:5, 6**

*"When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales, so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, and that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" Amos 8:5, 6*

The prophet was dealing with motive. There were people who dealt with the Sabbath out of necessity. They could hardly wait until the necessary waiting time was over so that they could go back to their dishonest business practices. The prophet was saying that they had stopped their selling for the required amount of time, but that they had not observed the Sabbath.

We need to summarize Jesus' teaching concerning Sabbath observance:

1. Jesus accepted the idea and practice that God required His people to celebrate the Sabbath by refraining from daily work.
2. Jesus accepted the idea that some work could be done on the Sabbath without making the Sabbath unholy. He pointed out at least three examples:
  - a. Priests necessarily served on the Sabbath without guilt.
  - b. A person could remove their animal that had fallen into a cistern (causing great pain and possible drowning) on the Sabbath and it would not be considered a polluting of the Sabbath.
  - c. A person could feed and water their animals on the Sabbath and this was not considered Sabbath violating work.
3. Jesus believed that one could not only preserve life on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees accepted; He also believed you could improve the life of a person on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees did not accept.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH CORRELATION

In effect, Jesus accepted the teachings of the Old Testament about Sabbath, but rejected the things that the Jewish teachers had added to the law. This is what is called "hedging." The Jewish teachers wanted to be very sure that their people did not violate the law. They could do this by making the requirements of the law greater than the Scriptures had made them. In this instance the Old Testament Scriptures insisted that they "remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." The teachers added that they could not improve life, which the Old Testament did not require. The teachers also required that they only walk a certain distance on the Sabbath, which the Old Testament did not require. Their logic was simple, if you do not violate the added requirements, you would never violate the law itself. Jesus totally rejected the bondage this created.

If you correlate the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 12, as you understand it, with the teaching of the Old and New Testament, you will observe that He did not violate that teaching in any way. In this way you can be sure that you have interpreted properly.

Jesus also had another principle that He applied to His understanding of the Law. He did not come to destroy the law, but to fill it to the top. This is carefully described in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapters five through seven, where He said, "You have heard it said,... but I say to you..." In every case His filling the Law to the top was more demanding than the law itself, but without the bondage of the Pharisees.

Jesus would do as much for a person on the Sabbath as they would do for their animals. He would understand Sabbath as something done out of desire, not out of necessity. He would ask, "How can I more completely celebrate the Sabbath and rejoice in the Father's perfect creative work." He would not be looking for loopholes in the law. One way Jesus would celebrate the Sabbath would be meeting human need, healing the sick and teaching people the Gospel. The central focus of all of this would be a rejoicing in the greatness of God in His creation and redemption.





## TOPICAL STUDY

In the chapter on Correlation, attention was focused on the need to determine whether the teaching in the rest of Scripture supports our understanding of a particular text. This is extremely important.

In that process, one will discover that the entire message on a given Biblical subject, is seldom if ever given in a single passage. It is, therefore, helpful to ascertain what the Scripture has to say, in broad scope, on any given subject. This is referred to as a **topical study**.

There are some helpful things to keep in mind in such a search. One's favorite understanding of a text is an ever-present danger in the understanding of the text. If we take the time to do a topical study of the specific word, we would usually be spared this temptation toward error.

1. **The search needs to be thorough.** It is possible to miss one of the major ingredients in a study by ignoring the word's use in a given verse. Say for instance, that you were doing a study of the word "adultery" in the New Testament. If you did not include the words of Matthew 5:27, 28, you would miss this important piece of information:

*You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery;" but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:27, 28*

People usually think of adultery as a physical act. Jesus went beyond that understanding to include even the thought or desire. Imagine trying to discover the New Testament teaching on this subject without the benefit of this information. One could only produce misleading information without the benefit of this important teaching of Jesus.

2. **We must be sure that we are dealing with the Greek and/or Hebrew definition of a word rather than the English dictionary description.** An English dictionary often has a totally different understanding of a word than would a Greek or Hebrew dictionary. We must first find out what the Greek or Hebrew word really meant and then attempt to transpose that meaning into forms that are meaningful for the modern American reader.

In the English dictionary, the word "patience" carries the connotation "of waiting," "to endure without complaint." If we take this understanding seriously, there can be some serious dangers to our understanding of Scripture. There are some who would "endure without complaint" because they are afraid to speak up. This would not be patience at all. Again, there are some who would "endure without complaint" because they want to demonstrate their macho personality. That would be anything but patience.

The Greek dictionary, however, would deal with the word "patience" in a totally different manner. The Greek word for "patience" is a military term. It describes the ability to stand under orders as a matter of loyalty, discipline and military strategy. More people will live longer if everyone stands firm in the midst of impossible conditions. If one is not clear concerning the definition of the word in question, only confusion can follow.

In most translations, the word "Lord" is treated as though it always represents the same Hebrew word. That is not the case. There are at least two different words translated "Lord" in the Old Testament. They are very different as are their meanings.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**3. There are words, in the Bible, that are used thousands of times. We must look for usages which might give a different turn to the meaning of the word.** The word "Lord" appears over 6,000 times in the Bible. It could be helpful to examine every occurrence of the word. It would probably not be useful to examine all 6,000 appearances of this word before determining its basic meaning. Just the listing of these verses can be overwhelming. In such a case, one needs to examine a cross-section of occurrences of the word and see if there is general consensus on the meaning of the word as used in the Bible. If there is, it would be safe to conclude that one has discovered the basic meaning of the word. If, however, you discover several variances in the meaning and the way the word is used, then you would need to look more carefully at this large volume of appearances of the word in question.

**4. We must identify what the Old Testament says, if possible, and then discover the way the New Testament deals with the same idea.** There are times when the Old Testament dealing with a word or idea is somewhat different. There are other times, however, when people think that the treatment of an idea is different in the two Testaments when it is not. The treatment of "Sabbath" is a case in point. Some people think that the New Testament treatment of "Sabbath" is much more relaxed and less binding than that presented in the Old Testament. The truth is that Jesus presented a very strong view of the Old Testament idea of "Sabbath" as it was intended to be. The thing that Jesus rejected was the Pharisees additions to the Old Testament Law. Too often, people make unfounded assumptions about what either Testament teaches and thus get into difficulty. This is especially true in the study of "judgment" or "punishment" as viewed in both the Old and New Testaments.

**5. In the New Testament, particularly, one needs to look carefully to see if the writings of different authors present different understandings on a given topic.** G. Kittel, an expert in the description and definition of New Testament words, in his **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, 10 volumes, very often differentiates between the way a word is used by the Apostle Paul and the way the same word is used by the Apostles John or Peter. Seeing the diversity of the way in which a given word is used can be very helpful in identifying the way a given word should be understood. You may remember that we dealt with this issue in the chapter that gives answers to questions concerning Correlation.

**6. We must make sure that we are studying the correct Greek word.** Because the Greek language is so precise, they have many words that are all translated by the same English word. For instance, there are 39 different Greek words that are all translated "come" in the English versions. There are many illustrations of this nature in the New Testament.

If you take Strong's Concordance and look under the word "come," you could easily become confused by the things you encounter. You need to be sure that as you study the word "come" you are always studying the same Greek word, rather than a confusion of different Greek words all being considered as the same word. The Strong Numbers will be your protection in this pursuit.

## TOPICAL STUDY

A topical study is a very important tool in our study of the Scriptures. Like any other tool, it was intended to accomplish only certain things. If it is used for everything, it will render poor results for most of them. It is most helpful in the correlation of our understanding of what the Scriptures teach on any given idea. It cannot take the place of a careful study of a given text dealing with a specific truth or of the study of an entire Biblical book.

**7. There are some instances where a word is used only once in the Bible. There is an interesting example in the book of Hebrews.**

*And He is the radiance of His glory and the **exact representation** of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. Hebrews 1:3a*

The Greek word for "exact representation" is interesting. It is "karacter" (χαράκτήρ). This word comes from the carver's trade. They would carve a design into a ring or cylinder. They would pour soft wax on a document and press the ring or cylinder design into the soft wax. There would be an "exact representation" of the ring design left in the wax. The author of Hebrews was saying that what the design in the wax was to the design on the cylinder, Jesus was to the Father. This is a beautiful image.

If you look in Strong's Concordance, however, you will discover that this is the only place in the New Testament where this word is found. There is no way to check to see how the word is used elsewhere in the New Testament. If you know Greek, you can check to see how some of the great writers of ancient Greece used such a word. Kittel is very helpful at this point. If you do not know the language, books like W. E. Vine's, **Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** would be most helpful.

**8. The context of a word has a lot to do with the way the word is used in any given text.**

As we mentioned earlier, the word "trunk" can mean at least four different things, depending upon the context. This will happen occasionally in Greek, but not very often. A word of caution, however, is appropriate. When you find out how a given word is used throughout the New Testament, look at that word in the light of the context in which you are studying it. It just might make a substantial difference in what you understand the author was saying.

An illustration of a topical study would be most helpful. The apostle James made an interesting statement:

*Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:3, 4*

The word "endurance," in the King James Version, is "patience." If you look up the word "patience" in Strong's Concordance, you will find an entry like this:

Mt. 18:26	Lord, have P. with me	3114
29	Have P. with me	3114
Lu. 8:15	bring forth fruit with P.	5281
21:19	In your P. possess ye your souls	5281

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Ro. 5:3	Tribulation worketh P.	5281
5:4	And P. experience	5281
8:25	Then do we with P. wait	5281
15:4	P. and comfort of the Scriptures	5281
15:5	Now the God of P.	5281
2 Co 6:4	Ministers of God, in much P.	5281
12:12	wrought among you in all P.	5281
Col. 1:11	Unto all P. and long-suffering	5281
1 Th. 1:3	And P. of hope in our Lord	5281
2 Th. 1:4	For your P. and faith	5281
1 Ti. 6:11	faith, love, P., meekness	5281
2 Ti. 3:10	Long-suffering, charity, P.	5281
Titus 2:2	sound in faith, in charity, in P.	5281
He. 6:12	faith and P. inherit the promises	3115
10:36	you have need of P.	5281
12:1	Let us run with P. the race	5281
Ja 1:3	trying of your faith worketh P.	5281
4	let P. have her perfect work	5281
5:7	and hath long P. for it	3114
10	of suffering, affliction, and of P.	3115
11	you have heard of the P. of Job	5281
2 Pe 1:6	temperance P. and to P. Godliness	5281
Re 1:9	the kingdom and P. of Jesus Christ	5281
2:2	works, and thy labor, and thy P.	5281
3	hast P. and for my name's sake	5281
19	faith, and thy P. , and thy works	5281
3:10	thou hast kept the word of my P.	5281
13:10	the P. and the faith of the saints	5281
14:12	Here is the P. of the saints	5281

If you study this list, there is some important information there, even before you begin the search.

1. The word "patience" never appears in the Old Testament. There is no explanation for this fact. The idea, however, is found in the Poetical books`
2. There are two different words which appear in the New Testament. (In the chart above, it appears that there are three different words. This is because 3114 and 3115 come from the same root.) They are as follows:
  - a. 5281 - "hupomone" - (ὑπομονή) means "to stay under," "to undergo," "to have fortitude," "to persevere." - **28 occurrences.**
  - b. 3114 - "makrothumeo" (μακροθυμέω) means "to be long spirited," "to be long-suffering," "patiently endure." - **3 occurrences.**

## TOPICAL STUDY

- c. 3115 - "makrothumia" (μακροθυμία). This word comes from the same root word as 3114 - "makrothumew." It means "forbearance," "fortitude," "long-suffering." - 2 occurrences.

As you can see, there are really only two basic words for "patience," in the New Testament, but one of them - 5281 - far outnumbers the other in occurrences.

3. Jesus was the first person to use this word in the New Testament.
4. Paul used 5281, "hupomone" more than anyone else, but he apparently never used the word "makrothumeo" (3114, 3115) in his epistles.
5. The apostle John never used the word "patience" in his Gospel record or epistles. He used it extensively in Revelation.

The verse with which we started this study used number 5281. We, therefore, must survey the use of this word in the New Testament to see just how it was used there. For purposes of this study, we will not consider 3114 or 3115.

**Luke 8:15** - This is the story of the "good seed." Jesus used it to mean strength and endurance.

**Luke 21:19** - Jesus spoke to his followers about coming persecution. He used the term to describe standing strong and disciplined under intense opposition.

**Romans 5:3** - Paul spoke of the process of spiritual growth. Tribulation brings about perseverance. The word was used to describe a disciplined stand against hardship.

**Romans 5:4** - This disciplined stand produces character.

**Romans 8:25** - "If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." It appears he again used the military image of standing under authority while being attacked.

**Romans 15:4** - "...Through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Again, this appears to mean "standing under orders."

**Romans 15:5** - "...God who gives perseverance and encouragement..." This is a disciplined calculated obedience, not just "toughing-it-out."

**II Corinthians 6:4** - "Commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance..." This is a disciplined ministry just as a soldier would stand under orders.

**II Corinthians 12:12** - "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance." One of the characteristics Paul cited of his apostleship was the ability to stand firm and true to Christ under intense pressure.

**Colossians 1:11** - "...the attaining of all steadfastness and patience..." Paul used both ideas here. Steadfastness suggests "endurance. Patience, on the other hand, suggests the strength of character to stand under orders.

**I Thessalonians 1:3** - "bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope..." Paul described their Christian walk. It included the strength to stand firm under orders. It is an expression of character, not stubbornness.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**II Thessalonians 1:4** - "...Your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions." The opposition was high, but their character stood firm in obedience to Christ.

**I Timothy 6:11** - "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance..." This is an obvious presentation of the idea of standing under the authority of Christ.

**II Timothy 3:10** - "For this reason I endure all things." The word "endure" is not the best possible choice here. In this instance, "endure" is a definite choice to stand under authority for the sake of the chosen. This is much more than dogged endurance.

**Titus 2:2** - "Older men... sound in faith, in love in perseverance." This is that strong, quiet, deep strength which faces opposition to be faithful to command and an example for youth.

**Hebrews 10:36** - "for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised." God repeatedly in Old and New Testament seeks our obedience, but never stubbornness.

**Hebrews 12:1** - "Let us run with endurance the race." The whole tenor of chapter 12 is that strength of character which enables us to stand despite the persecution because of Christ, not because of stubborn tenacity.

**James 5:11** - (twice) "the patience of Job." As far as he knew and understood, Job stood for God under orders despite the apparent tragedies of his life.

**II Peter 1:6** - "In your knowledge, self control, and in your self control, perseverance and in your perseverance..." The content of the verse is permeated with the controlled activity character brings.

**Revelation 1:9** - "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus." John identified his perseverance with that of Jesus. A sampling of Jesus' perseverance can be found in his prayer, "Not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22:42

**Revelation 2:2** - "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance..." Jesus commended the Ephesians on their faithfulness. This was part of that standing firm under orders.

**Revelation 2:3** - "And you have perseverance and have endured for my name's sake..." The word translated "endured" is a different word and means "to bear up," "to lift." It is not the word patience at all. The word "perseverance" was used to describe the quality of character which stands and does not run.

**Revelation 2:19** - "I know your deeds and your love and faith and service and perseverance..." This was a growing ability to stand under orders.

**Revelation 3:10** - "Because you have kept the word of my perseverance." The sentence demands that this be seen as obedience to commands.

**Revelation 13:10** - "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints." People who would stand faithful to God knowing it could cost them their lives.

**Revelation 14:12** - "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." Their standing firm under orders is a combination of their faith in Jesus and their obedience to God's commands.

## TOPICAL STUDY

Having observed each occurrence of the word "patience," we must now look to see what we have learned about the use of the word.

1. Patience almost always is used in connection with opposition or persecution.
2. Patience involves a level of strength against persecution. It does not capitulate, even when success appears to be impossible.
3. Opposition is inevitable to the faithful. Every effort to thwart or avoid opposition impedes the process God wills for us.
4. Waiting is a major ingredient in patience. This suggests that trust is as important as standing firm in struggles.
5. Patience involves priorities - faithfulness to God is far more important than avoiding pain or staying alive.
6. Patience is not a product of our tenacity. It is rather a gift from God. Romans 15:5
7. Patience is a characteristic of seasoned servanthood.
8. A key ingredient in patience is obedience - standing against evil when it would be easier to avoid the pain.
9. Patience is inseparable from faith.
10. Patience is identified with Christian qualities of character like - righteousness, godliness, faith and love, as described in I Timothy 6:11.
11. Patience is part of our maturity as are soundness in faith and love. Titus 2:2
12. Patience is vital to receiving the promise of God.
13. Patience implies the quality of faith - it is a confident trust that God is in control and bringing ultimate victory when appearances would not give this impression. Hebrews 12:1
14. Patience involves a commitment to servanthood. A servant is literally expendable. It is being prepared to being expendable in order to enhance God's will in any situation. James 5:11
15. Patience is part of a process of growth - Knowledge leads to self-control. Self control leads to patience, II Peter 1:6.
16. Patience is inescapably a part of being in Christ. To avoid patience is to avoid God's will. Rev. 1:9
17. Patience is a byproduct, not a goal. It is the byproduct of disciplined obedience in suffering and the service of servanthood. Rev. 2:2
18. Patience must be as obvious in our lives as work, love, faith and service. Rev. 2:19
19. Patience is inevitably tied to obedience because of the nature of the word.

Now, we started with James 1:3 and 4.

*Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:3, 4*

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Two reasons cause me to understand this as standing firm under authority.

1. Every one of the 28 occurrences call for this understanding of the word.
2. The content of James 1:3, 4, demand it as well. There is no place I can find in Scripture, that suggests that stubborn endurance makes one perfect and complete, lacking nothing. In fact, it is just the opposite.

Thus, I would understand these verses in this light:

“The testing of your faith (opposition, persecution) produces the ability to stand under the command of God and let this character producing stand under orders have its perfect results. That you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

In other words, my Christian walk is not all God wants it to be; it is incomplete until under attack I learn to stand my ground as God commands.



## **PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY**

It will be most helpful if you can do this exercise with the help of The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words and/or Strong's Concordance or any other exhaustive concordance that uses Strong's numbers.

- 1. Study the way the word "inn" is used in the New Testament.**
  - a. Describe the way the word is used in each occurrence in the New Testament.
  - b. What implications can you draw from each use of the word.
  - c. What did you learn about the passages as you completed this search?
- 2. Look up the word "love" in Strong's Concordance or some other exhaustive concordance that uses Strong's numbers.**
  - a. Identify each word for "love" that is found in the New Testament. Give the meaning of each of these Greek words. The dictionary in the back of Strong's Concordance will be helpful in this search.
  - b. Strong's Concordance lists more than a hundred verses for "love." Examine a good sampling of verses for each word in order to grasp the full meaning of the word.
- 3. Apply your discoveries to Jesus' questions to Peter in John 21:15 - 17.**



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY

It will be most helpful if you can do this exercise with the help of a Strong's Concordance or other exhaustive concordance that uses Strong's numbers.

### 1. Study the way the word "inn" is used in the New Testament.

#### a. Describe the way the word is used in each occurrence in the New Testament.

There are two Greek words which are translated "inn" in the New Testament.

**Kataluma** - καταλύμα - This is a guest lodge. It is a place on the roof of the Palestinian home where guests were housed because it was much cooler there than in the rest of the house. This room on the roof had its own stairway on the outside the house.

#### Luke 2:7 -

*And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*  
Luke 2:7

We tend to think of this as a first century hotel. It is not. This verse talked about the guest room on top of the home of Joseph's parents. Luke did not explain why there was no room in the upper room for Mary and Joseph. He simply stated that there was no room.

#### Mark 14:14 -

*And wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The teacher says, 'Where is My **guest room** in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"* Mark 14:14

Again, this is the word "kataluma." It is the guest room on top of the house. Jesus gave instructions to the disciples about the preparation for the Passover. He told them to ask for the guest room on top of the house. In that upper room, Jesus celebrated His last Passover feast before the crucifixion.

**"Pandocheion"** (πανδοχεῖον) The word literally means "all receptive." It was a place where caravans stopped for the night. It was a public lodging place. It was more like a brothel than a hotel. Indeed, in some manuscripts, Rahab was spoken of not as a harlot, but as an innkeeper.

#### Luke 10:34

*And came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* Luke 10:34

This is the story of the Good Samaritan. When he rescued the man, he took him to an inn. It was a stop on the caravan route and located near Jericho. In most instances, Christians avoided this kind of lodging place.

#### b. What implications can you draw from each use of these words.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

1. **Luke 2:7** - Christians tend to think of the "inn," in this verse, as a first century motel. In Christmas plays, the innkeeper is portrayed as a gruff, heartless individual. If this word identified a first-century truck stop, then it would mean there were so many strangers in town there was no place for Joseph and Mary to stay.

That, however, is not the word that was used. This word definitely identifies a room on top of a Jewish home. It is a place where visiting family members and friends would stay. It is the place Jesus told His disciples to ask for when preparing for the celebration of Passover. It is the place where Peter was meditating when he had the dream about the animals being let down in a sheet. In this case, it probably means that Joseph and his very pregnant, but not yet married wife were not welcomed in the home of his very strict parents or relatives. Sexual intercourse and child-bearing, before marriage, were strictly forbidden in that culture. One could be stoned to death for this sin. You will remember that in John 8:3, 4, religious leaders brought a woman taken in the act of adultery to see if Jesus would condemn her to be stoned. If Joseph's parents, or family members, had welcomed him and Mary, they would have been shunned by their neighbors and the people of the very strict Bethlehem community and excluded from temple worship.

2. **Luke 10:34** - This verse definitely deals with a first century truck stop. It is the kind of place where camel caravans would stop for the night. Travelers would stop there because it was safer than spending the night on the road. It is not surprising that Jesus would talk of the Samaritan taking the beaten traveler to such a place. It was the only place where even meager care could be found.

### **c. What did you learn about the passages as you completed this search?**

The "Kataluma" was not reserved for the rich. The kataluma where Jesus and the disciples celebrated the Passover was probably much more lavish than that which would be found on the average Jewish home. Almost every Jewish home, however, had one.

As I studied the words of Luke 2:7, the whole story of the birth of Jesus took on a whole different meaning for me. The rejection of Jesus did not begin with His ministry. It had been a part of His life from before birth. I also gained a deeper appreciation for the degree of suffering which was endured by both Mary and Joseph from the time before their marriage.

2. **Look up the word "love" in Strong's Concordance or some other Exhaustive Concordance that uses Strong numbers.**

- a. **Identify each word for "love" that is found in the New Testament. Give the meaning of each of these Greek words.**

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY

**"Agape"** - (ἀγάπη) Strong number 25 - It is affection," "benevolence." W. E. Vine indicates that this word expresses ideas unknown in the language prior to the coming of Christ. It is a moral form of love expressed toward all humanity, not just a single person. This form of love has no boundaries and does not require a response of any kind much less a positive response. This is the word in the New Testament used almost exclusively to describe the love of God. This is an unselfish love which seeks to serve others and takes no thought of self.

**"Phileo"** (φιλέω) Strong number 5368 - It means "to be a friend," "to be fond of," "to have affection for." Strong states that "agape" is a matter of the heart while "phileo" is a matter of the head. "Phileo" has definite limits which it will not violate. It is not an unconditional love. It requires certain responses or else it will be withdrawn. It is a self-serving form of affection.

**"Thelo"** (θέλω) Strong number 2309 - This word, in the King James Version, is translated as "love" in Mark 12:38. The word means "to desire," "to choose," "to prefer," "to delight in." It refers to strong desire, but is not as strong as "phileo" or "agape."

**b. Strong's Concordance lists more than a hundred verses for "love." Examine a good sampling of verses for each Greek word in order to grasp the full meaning of the word.**

### **"Agape"**

#### **Matthew 5:44**

*But I say to you, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..." Matthew 5:44*

Jesus was telling the crowd that they should be willing to endure any cost to serve those who hate them. Love your enemies no matter how they treat you. Let your love of your enemies be measured by their need rather than their actions. This is love without limits.

#### **Matthew 22:37**

*And he said to them, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37*

This was in response to the Pharisee's question, "What is the great commandment in the law." This describes the limitless character of this form of love.

#### **Luke 16:13**

*No servant can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Luke 16:13*

This is a contrast. This love is the direct opposite of "hate," which means "to detest to the point of persecuting." Therefore the "love" must be the opposite - to love intensely, to protect sacrificially.

#### **John 3:16**

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16*

This is divine love that sacrificed totally on behalf of an unworthy beloved. That is the basic nature of "agape."

### **John 14:23**

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with Him." John 14:23*

This love expresses itself in obedience. Jesus also said, "My Father will love him..." Jesus used the same word, but in this instance, it cannot express itself in obedience because it was expressed by God the Father. It rather describes a sacrificial example of love without boundaries which we are called upon to emulate.

### **John 15:13**

*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13*

This is the ultimate sacrifice - to lay down one's life on behalf of the undeserving..

### **Romans 8:39**

*nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39*

This focuses on the omnipotence of the love of God. It is able to resist every attempt to drive a wedge between the person and the love of God.

Though Strong's Concordance omits it completely, I Corinthians chapter 13 is our best and most detailed description of "agape" love.

### **Galatians 5:22**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. Galatians 5:22*

This love is not the product of trying harder. It is the product of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

### **Ephesians 4:15**

*But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ. Ephesians 4:15*

Agape love is tough enough to tell someone, in a loving way and only for their benefit, what they need to hear, but would not want to hear. Compassion is one of the key ingredients in this form of love.

### **I Thessalonians 4:9**

*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. I Thessalonians 4:9*

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY

### I Peter 1:22

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. I Peter 1:22*

Paul's suggestion is that love is divinely taught, not humanly developed.

Love comes from a pure heart. This is not as obvious in the New American Standard as it is in the Greek, but it is the emphasis there.

### I John 4:7, 8

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. I John 4:7, 8*

There are several important points in these verses. Love finds its source in God. One of the requirements in order to be able to love is to be born of God. This love is uniquely a Christian characteristic. Love is the evidence that we know God. God is love. This describes not what love is as much as it identifies its source.

### I John 4:17

*By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. I John 4:17*

Love is a progressive quality of the Christian life. One of the benefits of the agape love is that it gives us confidence as we come to face the judgment. Love enables us to increasingly become as Jesus is in this world.

### I John 4:18

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. I John 4:18*

These are the consequences of love. John said, "there is no fear in love." He did not mean that one who loves has no sense of danger or that he lives recklessly. Rather, he was saying that one who loves conducts a righteous life not because he fears punishment, but because he loves God and shows that love in his love for people.

**"φιλέω" -There are 16 verses in the New Testament that use this root word.**

### Matthew 6:5

*And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. Matthew 6:5*

Jesus was saying that the affection of these men focused on things that attract attention to themselves. As you can see, Jesus presented this as a negative evaluation.

### I Timothy 6:10

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. 1 Timothy 6:10*

Interestingly enough, Paul talked about an affection for money, not an addiction to it, could lead a person astray. Most interpretations of this verse deal with an addiction; a consuming desire that has no boundaries or control. That is not what Paul was talking about.

### **Titus 2:4**

*That they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children. Titus 2:4*

It sounds as though Paul has used the word here - "phileo" in both instances - in the way that he would otherwise use the word "agape." It appears that "agape" is still the stronger of the two words. This would suggest that Paul, here, was saying that these young women should love husbands and children sacrificially, but requiring a definite response.

### **Titus 3:4**

*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared... Titus 3:4*

This is the one place where God's love is spoken of using the word "phileo." Again, the two words for love are not synonyms. God wants a love response from His people. He wants them to repent and to serve Him.

### **Hebrews 13:1**

*Let love of the brethren continue. Hebrews 13:1*

In the midst of their persecution, the author instructed them to care deeply for each other as though they were family. This is not a selfless love which demands no response, but it is a sacrificial love which has limits and seeks response. The author used the word in such a way as to suggest that it is an ongoing experience among Christians.

### **1 Peter 1:22**

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22*

Though it is not clear in the English translations, both "phileo" and "agape" are used in this verse. Peter was asking the Christians both to be fond of each other as family (phileo) and to love each other selflessly as Christ loved the church, (agape).

### **Revelation 3:19**

*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. Revelation 3:19*

Speaking on behalf of God, John said that the people He loved, as family, He reproved and corrected. This suggests that love must be tough; it must seek what is best for the beloved, not what is most convenient.



## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH TOPICAL STUDY

### 3. Apply your discoveries to Jesus' questions to Peter in John 21:15 - 17.

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**agape**) Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (**phileo**) you." He said to him, "Tend My lambs. He said to him again, a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**agape**) Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love (**phileo**) you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**phileo**) me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love (**phileo**) me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (**phileo**) you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." John 21:15 - 17*

Careful study of these verses brings several things to mind:

1. The meaning of the two words for love are very different.
2. For most people, they understand that all seven occurrences of the word "love" in the English text are the same word.
3. Peter did not answer Jesus' first two questions as they were asked.
4. Jesus' careful use of "agape," when Peter changed it, suggests that Jesus was being very specific.
5. Peter's careful use of "phileo," in all three answers, suggests that Peter was very specific in his choice of words. This was not using a word that meant the same thing as the word Jesus used in the first two questions.
6. Jesus asked, "Do you love me the way I love you - no limits, no restrictions, unselfishly, no necessary response?"
7. Peter responded, "Lord, I am fond of you; I love you as a family member; I am willing to sacrifice for you; there are definite boundaries and limits to this love; my love expects a specific response.
8. When Jesus changed His question He was asking something quite different from before. He was asking, "Are you fond of me; do you love Me as a family member - some responsibility, but with definite limitations. Jesus had moved from His expectations to those of Peter.
9. Peter was distressed with Jesus. The text only explains this by saying, "...because he said to him the third time, 'do you love me?'" This suggests more than one possibility:
  - a. The fact that Jesus asked Peter three times could have suggested that Jesus was allowing Peter to prove to himself that he did not have an ultimate commitment to his Lord. This is because Jewish law insisted that the testimony of two or three witnesses established truth.
  - b. Peter could have been upset because Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him. In this scenario, it would have been as though Jesus did not believe him.

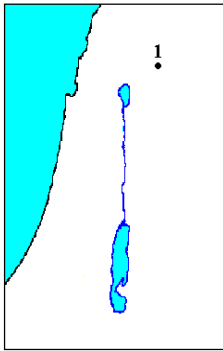
## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

- c. Peter could have been upset because Jesus changed His question and in so doing indicated to Peter that He knew that Peter could not make the deeper commitment.

Though the text is inconclusive, it appears that the latter was the source of Peter's irritation. This fits Peter's earlier experience. When Peter was questioned about knowing Jesus, he denied it, three times. He certainly would have been reminded of that wrenching experience.

This exercise highlights the need to be able to determine what the Greek text really says. As indicated earlier, a volume is being prepared to teach a person who does not know Greek or Hebrew how to use the Greek and Hebrew texts. This will not make you a Greek or Hebrew scholar, but it will enable you to determine the basic message of the original language text.

## THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY IN BIBLE STUDY



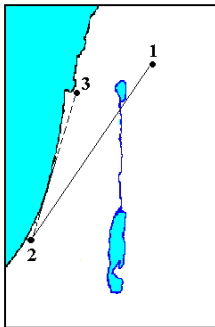
Someone has very wisely said that "the land of Israel is the fifth Gospel." That may seem like a high claim, but it represents unusual insight. In many instances, this geographical information is essential to an understanding of what was happening in the text.

Most of us are not familiar with the geography of the Near East. It is, therefore, crucial that we keep maps of the area at hand as we study. These maps will often enable us to discern what the author was talking about. It is particularly true in historical and prophetic books, but it is also true with the other kinds of literature.

In some instances, an awareness of the geography can assist in one's understanding of the pertinent issues in the text.

The prophecy of Amos is also an excellent example. This prophecy was given to Israel. I had read it many times, but with very meager understanding. I noticed that Amos identified several areas of Palestine. I, then, read it again with a Bible Atlas in hand.

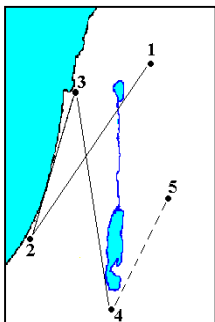
It was not clear, from 1:1 whether the book was written to Israel or Judah. I had to withhold my decision about this



until I had further information. After my initial reading, I remembered that several places had been mentioned. I also remembered that there some repeated refrains linked with each place - "thus saith the Lord," and "For three transgressions of ... and for four...". I felt that these places had to be important to an understanding of the book, but I needed to test that out.

I noticed that in 1:3, Amos mentioned **Damascus** and used both of these refrains. I noted that on the map (1).

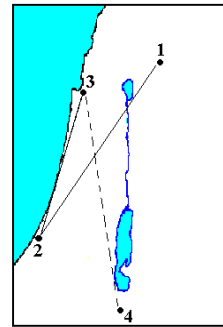
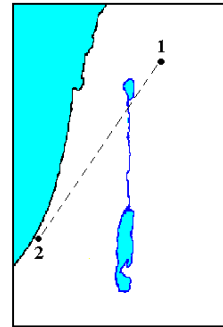
I then noticed that in 1:6 Amos mentioned **Gaza** with the same two refrains. I noted this location on the map as well (2). I then drew a line from Damascus to Gaza just to trace the movement of the writing.



I then observed that in 1:9, the author mentioned **Tyre** along with the two refrains. I drew a line on my map from Gaza to Tyre (3).

Having identified Tyre, I continued reading and in 1:11 I discovered that the next recipient of Amos' wrath was **Edom**. I located Edom on the map and drew a line from Tyre to Edom (4).

Next I discovered, in 1:13, that the next place Amos judged was **Ammon**. I drew a line on my map from Edom to Ammon (5).



## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

I continued reading and discovered, in 2:1, that the next place to receive the judgment of Amos was **Moab**. I drew a line on my map from Ammon to Moab (6).

The next stop on Amos' tour of scathing judgment was **Judah**, in 2:4. I drew a line on my map from Moab to Judah. I think I am beginning to see a pattern (7).

The next stop on this tour of Palestine was **Israel**, in 2:6. In each instance the judgment was pronounced with the two refrains - "Thus saith the Lord," and "for three transgressions and for four." I drew a line on my map from Judah to Israel (8).

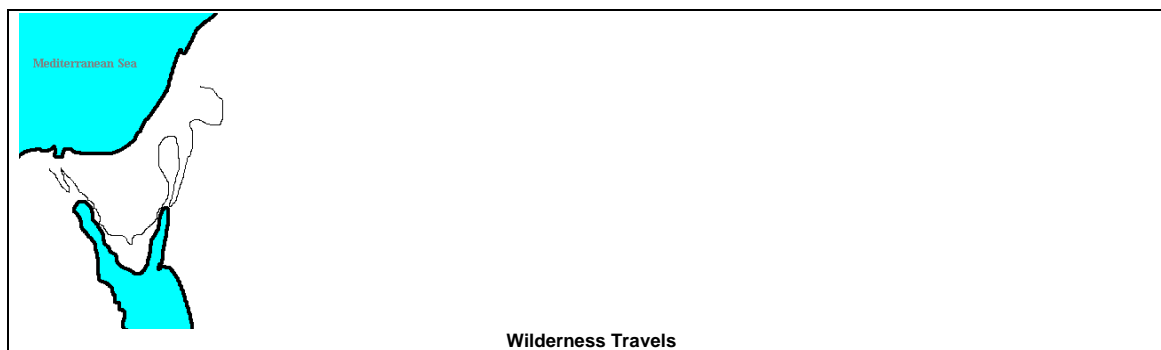
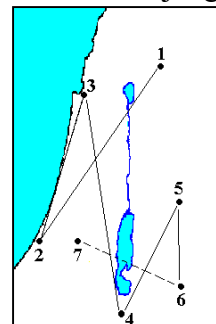
I read on from 2:6, but no other city or place was judged during the remaining chapters of the prophecy.

I studied the map for a while. I realized that the lines on my map indicated that the author had crisscrossed the land of Palestine in his denunciation of the sins of the people in that area. All the rest of the book, from 2:6 through 9:15, was aimed at Israel. Clearly the author was attacking Israel, not the other countries and cities which he had mentioned throughout chapters one and two.

In the geography of this prophetic writing, Amos has given us a glimpse of the thinking behind his writing. He has given us the essential outline of the book itself. I had never been able to sense this so clearly before. By simply looking to see where each place he condemned was located helped me to see the outline of the book. There is no doubt, we are a very visual people.

It is not surprising that geography is most useful in the study of a Biblical book which is historical in nature.

It can be very confusing, for instance, if you try to remember all the places where the



Israelites went on their travels from Egypt to the promised land. It is much easier to keep in mind if you use a map such as you will find in the back of most study Bibles.

Any study of the life of Jesus is incomplete unless careful consideration is given to the geographical information provided by the naming of the places He visited.

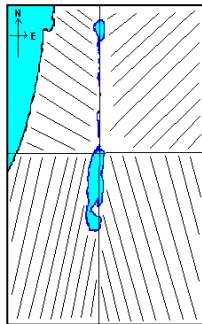
If you are trying to deal with the synoptic problem, it can be helpful to make a map of Jesus' journeys as reported in Matthew, one for the report in the Gospel of Mark and a third for the journey as described in Luke. This will illustrate the problems very well. Fortunately, many of the study Bibles that we use have detailed maps which will give us this information. It is easier, and less work, if the Bible has such a map, but it is something that we can prepare for ourselves. It adds a lot of information if we study such a map. We should be comfortable marking our Bible or place a small map in the margin for our edifi-

## THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY IN BIBLE STUDY

cation. This saves turning to another book or to the back of your Bible. Such a map can be approximately 1/2 inch by 1 inch.

Again, a study of the journeys of Paul renders much less information than it might if you have a map with which to follow what the apostle was doing.

There is more, however, to the use of geography in a Biblical book than finding the location of specific cities and coun-tries on a map. Palestine experi-ences a great variety in the amount of rainfall that the different areas know this. If you divide all of west quarter receives sufficient very well. They have some of the entire world.



The southeast quarter is one of the the northeast and the southwest are quarter. Is it just an interesting co-wars and battles fought in the northwest quarter than in all the others put together?

driest places in the world. Both nearly as dry as the southeast incidence that there were more

When we look for a place to build a city or build a home, we seldom worry much about the water supply. This is because our water is brought to us by pipe from whatever water source services our needs. That is changing in many places as the water supply dwindles. One of the factors that determined where cities were to be built in ancient Palestine was the availability of water. The water source for Jerusalem was a spring at the bottom of one of the hills on which the city was built. During the reign of Hezekiah, he realized that the city was going to be placed under siege. He had to reroute this water supply inside the wall of the great city. Any study of an historical Biblical book must take into consideration the availability of water both from rainfall and from springs and wells.

The people are different in different areas of Palestine. The people in the northwest part of Palestine are fun-loving people. On the other hand, the people in the southeast have no perception of a fun-loving lifestyle. The people in the northwest are gregarious. They live in larger cities and prefer this. In the southeast, however, the people are not gregarious. They are lonely and tend to live by themselves. There would seldom be more than a family or two in an area.

The people in the northwest tend to live to the age of 45 or 50 while their counterparts in the southwest tend to live to the age of 35 or 40. The people in the northwest would have several children while the people in the hot southwest tend to have one child per family if they are fortunate.

Climate is another factor that must be considered as we attempt to understand what the Biblical authors were trying to convey. In the northwest part of Palestine, the climate is much like the Midwest in the United States. In the southeast, however, it is very hot and dry. Because of this, the people in the northwest can work all through the day while the people in the southeast can work in the morning and evening, but in the middle of the day little or nothing is done because it is too hot.

In the northwestern area there is a lot of rain. This affects the kind of crops that are grown and the level of harvest that they can expect. In the south, however, almost nothing grows unless it is by a spring. This has a lot to do with the way they lived and the things that they did for a living. It also has a lot to do with the type of diet that they are able to provide for themselves.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Geography has a lot to do with the military situation in any given area. From the time of Abraham until after the time of Jesus, the defensability of an area depended on whether it was a plain or a hilly area. The cities of the plains were constantly being captured and destroyed. This is because even though they had walls, they were always vulnerable to attack in a way that cities located on a hill were not. It is not surprising that the city of Jerusalem was located on top of several hills. The higher the hill, the easier the city was to defend.

Again, if a city was located in an area where there was no readily available stone quarry, they were at a tremendous disadvantage. The walls of a city had to be made out of huge ashlar or be vulnerable to abusive attacks from almost every army that passed through the region. This being the case, it is easy to understand why Megiddo (Armageddon as we know it) was easy to defend because it was on a hill. On the other hand, the village of Qumram, located on a flood plain along the Dead Sea was totally wiped out as the army just passed through the area. Everyone from the village was killed or fled for their lives.

What is the terrain like? This was a very important question when it came to deciding where to locate a village or city. Is it a place that would lend itself well as a place for battle? If that were so, then the people could count on the fact that their homes would become the battle ground for the large armies from all over that part of the world. If the area was filled with rocks, caves and sharp ravines, then it might be hard to live there, but they would almost never be a battle ground between enemy armies.

Another concern of geography is the identification of the kinds of things that will grow in a given area. The northwestern area is one of the best places in the world to grow grain. At the same time, the people in the southeast would not be able to grow grain at all. This area was mostly barren and was useful only to rear small flocks of sheep and goats. That being the case, these facts have a direct bearing on the kind of diet the people in the area would be able to provide for themselves. This in turn would have a serious affect on the level of health that people in a given area could be expected to maintain.

We are told that there are three things one should consider when deciding to build - location, location and location. The same was true in Biblical times. Life in any given city would be seriously affected by the location in which it was built. If, for instance, a city was built on a trade route, it would be vastly different from a city seriously isolated from trade routes. There is a good example to be found in the epistles. Both Corinth and Ephesus were two of the top trading centers of the world. This made the population quite diverse. This led to a serious diversity of cultures, religious thought and commitment as well as moral thought and behavior. The affects of this fact can be found in the epistles that Paul wrote to these people. On the other hand, Galatia was not nearly as cosmopolitan. As would be expected, the epistle shows this condition as well.

Would you believe it, there is geographical significance in the Psalms? For instance, in Psalm 23, David talked about "the valley of the shadow of death." This was not just a poetic reference. There is such a place and it has lived up to its name. In reading the Psalms, you will sometimes find geographical references. It is to our advantage to check on these references and discover as much as we can about them. It will very often have an important effect upon an understanding of the text.

## **PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY**

- 1. Browse through the gospel of Mark. Make a map of Palestine and trace the footsteps of Jesus through the book. You will need an atlas or consult the maps in the back of your Bible to accomplish this task.**
  - a. What did you learn about the structure of the book?
  - b. What does this information tell you about the author's desires for this book?
  - c. Review your browsing of the gospel of Mark in view of the other information which is affected by geography, as described in the previous chapter.
- 2. Read Acts 15:40 - 18:22.**
  - a. Observe the travels of Paul in this passage.
  - b. Make a map which traces these travels.
  - c. Study the map carefully. What does it tell you about this journey?

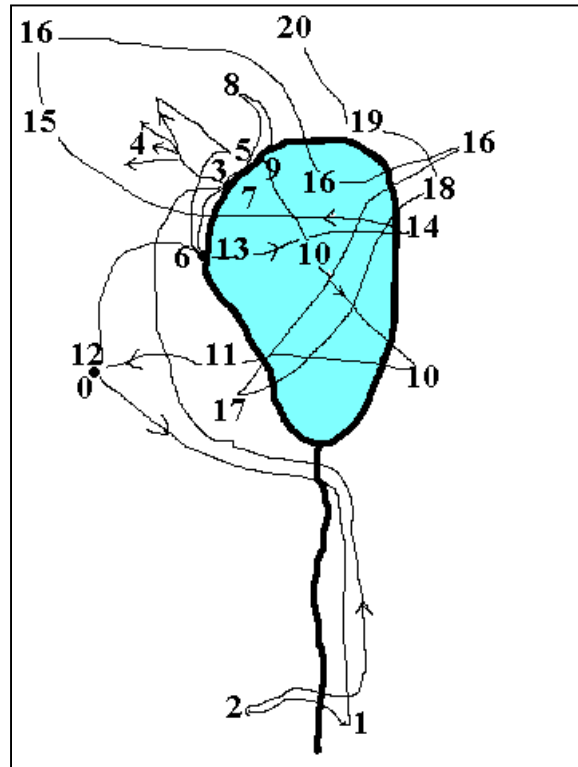




## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY

1. Browse through the gospel of Mark. Make a map of Palestine and trace the footsteps of Jesus through the book. An alternative may be that you would want to mark up your atlas with this information.

If you write down the places where Jesus went, you will notice that there are two distinct divisions to His travels - one in the North and the other in the South.

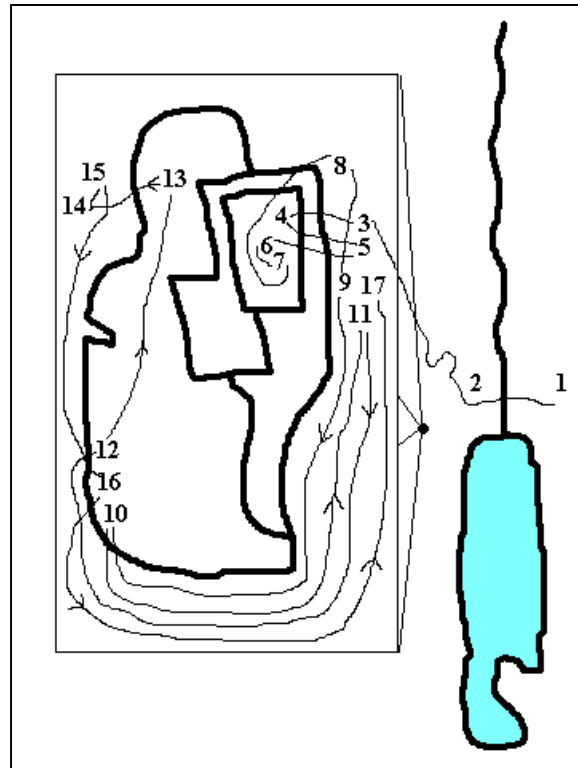


1. 1:9 - Jesus came from Nazareth to the wilderness
2. 1:13 - Jesus went into the wilderness
3. 1:16,21 - Jesus was by the Sea of Galilee (Capernaum)
4. 1:28 - Preached in villages of District of Galilee
5. 1:29 - Capernaum
6. 1:35 - Lonely place (probably where the Beatitudes were given.
7. 2:1 - Return to Capernaum
8. 3:13 - Jesus went into the mountains
9. 3:20 - He came home - probably Capernaum
10. 4:37 - On Sea of Galilee
10. 5:1 - Garassa
11. 5:21 - Crossed Sea of Galilee - probably to Magdala
12. 6:1 - His home town - Nazareth
13. 6:32, 36 - Lonely place to pray - probably Tabgah
14. 6:53 - Crossed Sea to Gennesaret

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

15. 7:23 - He went to Tyre
16. 7:31 - He went to Sidon, Sea of Galilee, and to Decapolis.
17. 8:10 - Crossed Sea to Dalmanutha
18. 8:13 - He went to the east side of the Sea again.
19. 8:22 He went to Bethsaida
20. He went to Caesarea Philippi

In chapters 10-16, Jesus went South to Jerusalem where the entirety of these chapters take place.



1. 10:1 - He went to the region of Judea, beyond Joredan
2. 10:46 - He went to Jericho
3. 11:1 - He came to Bethany and Bethphage.
4. 11:11 - Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.
5. 11:11 - He returned to Bethany
6. 11:15 - He returned to Jerusalem
7. 11:27 - He again returned to Jerusalem
8. 13:3 - He went to the mount of Olives
9. 14:3 - Jesus in Bethany - Simon the Leper's house.
10. 14:15 - Passover in Jerusalem upper room
11. 14:32 - Jesus went to Gethsemane
12. 14:54 - Jesus arrested - taken to home of High Priest.
13. 15:2 - He was taken to Pilate's palace.
14. 15:22 - He went to Golgatha
15. 15:46 - Jesus was entombed

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY

16. 16:14 - Upper room with the disciples.

17. 16:19 - He was received into heaven.

**a. What did you learn about the structure of the book?**

1. There are two major divisions of the book of Mark.

(a). The first division, chapters one through nine, centers in the area of Galilee

(1). This division covers three and one half years.

(2). This division focuses on Jesus' work - healing and teaching.

(b). The second division, chapters ten through sixteen, centers in and around Jerusalem

(1). This division covers a little more than one week.

(2). This division focuses on Jesus' crucifixion, death and resurrection - the work of redemption.

(c). The author found all of the material important, but his major focus was the second division.

2. When we look for what the author had in mind in writing this Gospel record, the major focus, the climax is in the second division.

There are at least 42 different geographical identifications in the Gospel of Mark.

They are as follows:

1:4 - John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness.

1:9 - Jesus came from Nazareth to be baptized in the Jordan.

1:13 - Jesus was in the wilderness - temptation

1:16 - By the Sea of Galilee - called Peter and Andrew.

1:21 - Capernaum - He taught in the synagogue.

1:39 - He went through Galilee preaching.

2:1 - He returned to Capernaum - healed man let down through the roof.

2:13 - By seashore - called Levi.

3:7 - He returned to sea shore - there was a crowd from Judea.

4:1 - Returned to sea - Sermon on the Mount

5:1 - With Geresenes - healed demoniac

5:21 - Returned to west side of Sea of Galilee - Jairus' Daughter.

6:1 - Nazareth - preached in synagogue

6:6 - taught in nearby villages

6:35 - South of Capernaum - feed 5,000.

6:45 - Sent disciples across Sea to Bethsaida - still storm

7:24 - Went to area of Tyre

7:31 - Tyre through Sidon to Sea of Galilee - Decapolis - East Side

8:10 - Dalmanutha - could this be the village of Magdala?

8:22 - At Bethsaida - healed blind man.

8:27 - Caesarea Philippi - transfiguration

9:33 - Capernaum.

10:1 - He went to Judea beyond Jordan.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

10:32 - On road to Jerusalem.  
10:46 - Jericho - healed the blind beggar.  
11:1 - Bethphage and Bethany.  
11:1 - Entered Jerusalem - triumphal entry.  
11:11 - Returned to Jerusalem at night.  
11:15 - Jerusalem - at the temple.  
11:19 - Jesus returned to Bethany.  
11:27 - Returned to Jerusalem.  
12:35 - Jesus taught in the temple.  
14:3 - Bethany, home of Simon the leper.  
14:17 - Celebrated Passover - SW part of Jerusalem  
14:32 - Gethsemane and Mount of Olives.  
14:54 - High Priests home - west-north-west part of Jerusalem  
14:54 - Midnight trial in Jerusalem.  
15:1 - Jesus before Pilate  
15:22 - Golgatha  
15:46 - Garden tomb  
16:14 - Appeared to the eleven in Jerusalem.  
16:19 - Ascension from Bethany area.

**b. What does this information tell you about the author's desires for this book?**

1. If you study the map, you will note that there are two basic areas of concentration. The early references, numbers 1 - 22, are almost all in the area of Galilee. The later numbers, 23-42, are all in and around Jerusalem.
2. There are two major focuses, but the second is the one where the author placed his major emphasis. Though there are nearly the same number of references in both, the first part covers three and one half years while the second covers about a week.
3. The major point of interest in chapters 1-9 is in the Capernaum area.
4. The major point of interest in chapters 10-16 is Jerusalem.

**c. Review your browsing of the Gospel of Mark in view of the other information which is affected by geography, as described in the previous chapter.**

1. For the most part, Jesus preached and healed people in the cities and populated villages rather than in the far eastern part of the Decapolis or the southeastern areas where the Bedouins lived. A notable exception to this was His venture into the area of the Geresenes.
2. Jesus used illustrations from both the farming northwest as well as the herding southeast parts of Palestine.

## ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY

3. Almost all the areas where Jesus preached were on or near the centers for the caravan routes. This was important because one of the major concerns for Jesus' ministry was that the word spread as quickly as possible. News of His miracles did spread by the caravans and by individuals as they traveled from one place to another.
4. The bulk of Jesus' travels and ministry were at centers where there was a huge lake or an excellent water supply. This usually meant that a large population would gather there. In almost every instance that was the case.

### 2. Read Acts 15:40 - 18:22.

#### a. Observe the travels of Paul in this passage.

1. Acts 15:35 They started from Antioch
2. 15:41 - They traveled through Syria and Cilicia.
3. 16:1 - They went through Derbe and Lystra
4. 16:6 - They passed through Phrygia and Galatia.
5. 16:7 - They came to Mysia
6. 16:8 - They came to Troaz - here he had a dream about the Macedonian.
7. 16:11 - They sailed to Samothrace and then to Neapolis.
8. 16:12 - They went to Philippi.
9. 16:14 - They went to Thyatira - baptized Lydia's family.
10. 16:27 - The Philippian jailed was converted.
11. 17:1 - They went through Amphipolis and Apollonica to Thessalonica.
12. 17:10 - They went to Berea.
13. 17:15 - Paul was taken to Athens.
14. 18:1 - They went to Corinth.
15. 18:18 - They sailed for Syria.
16. 18:19 - They came to Ephesus.
17. 18:22 - They landed at Caesarea.
18. 18:22 - They went to Antioch.

#### b. Make a map which traces these travels.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE



### c. Study the map carefully. What does it tell you about this journey?

1. This was an extremely long trip. You do not realize just how long it was until you study a map. We must remember that they traveled about half of the trip on foot.
2. Almost every place listed on this map was a trade center and/or religious center and/or cultural center. This again would not be clear without studying the geography of the area.
3. The geographical mix of these areas means that these were the most culturally diverse places in that part of the world. Paul was intentional in his planning. He wanted to share the Gospel with as many cultural groups as possible. He did just that.
4. The cities that Paul visited were almost all deeply involved in idol worship. It is not accidental that in several of these places, Paul was mistreated and in some cases left for dead. It has to do with the religious background of the people and the emotional background that they shared. They were known as people who solved their problems in a physical manner rather than working things out between people who disagreed.
5. The cities represented on this map constitute the largest population centers in that part of the world. It appears that Paul had in mind to evangelize these large cities and leave the evangelizing of the surrounding areas to the congregation established in these centers.

## **ANSWERS TO PRACTICE WITH THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHY**

6. As you look at the map, Paul chose to evangelize the Greek speaking world. Most of the large areas that spoke Greek as their native tongue were touched on this trip.
7. In many, but not all, of these places there was a substantial Jewish population to whom Paul made every effort to minister.





## THE CONCLUSION

As we said earlier, Inductive Bible Study will not make us such experts that we can give the final word on any passage in Scripture. We affirmed at the outset, that it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to interpret God's message for our understanding. Only He can reveal these things.

Rather than being instructed by the Scriptures, many people use the Scriptures to promote their particular theological position or "hobby-horse." That is not the purpose of God's word. Inductive Bible Study allows the Scriptures to establish their own theme and present the teachings God intended them to convey. This is extremely important.

One of the things that becomes increasingly clear is this: No matter how long we study the Scriptures, our understanding must be held tentatively. We must be open to deeper discoveries and broader understandings. Every time we study a passage, it seems we discover some new avenue of truth that we never saw there before.

As indicated earlier, the discovery of the meaning of the text is extremely important. The process of interpretation is the means by which we accomplish this. It causes tension for many people because they know neither the Greek or the Hebrew text. Further, because of their responsibilities or station in life, they are not going to be able to learn these languages. My son and I have teamed up to write a book which will enable you to use the Greek New Testament and/or the Hebrew Old Testament without knowing the language. The title of the book is *DIGGING DEEPER — Learning to Use the Greek and Hebrew Testaments When You Don't Know the Languages*. You could ask your Christian book store to secure this book for you or contact Logos Ministries directly.

In recent years, some people have taken the attitude that Bible study is dull and boring. One must admit that in some cases it seems to be true. We must also affirm that it does not need to be true. We should also acknowledge that some studies, which seem to be boring and meaningless, can prove to be most enlightening. The passages sometimes called the "begats" are an important case in point. As you have gone through the exercises in this book, you should have encountered a number of very exciting discoveries that you had not noticed or encountered previously. This has proven to be true repeatedly over the years.

As you listen to people talking about God, it sometimes sounds as though He is trying to hide from us. They sound as though God allows us to glimpse His greatness and holy character with extreme reluctance. Just the opposite is true. God is eager for us to discover something of His greatness. If we are willing to search the Scriptures, not only will we discover His presence, He will assist us in that discovery by His Holy Spirit. Inductive Bible Study is one tool that will help us penetrate the words of the text to the heart of the message God longs for us to discover.

The Scriptures are a revelation from God. He has revealed an intense glimpse of His infinite nature in terms our finite minds can grasp. We must also realize that what appears to be God's reluctance to reveal Himself may well be our finite inability to grasp just how infinitely great our God really is. We want to discover every nuance of His nature that He has exposed to our understanding.

God has a definite plan for our lives. He has a specific design for the way we live and the values we should use to guide our thinking and choices. Something in the heart of every child of God craves to grasp precisely what God has in mind for us.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Because we are His servants, God calls each of us to a life of ministry and service. We must share God's love with those who do not know His forgiveness, but when they have come to faith in Christ, our work has just begun. We must teach them the Scriptures so that they too will come to know God intimately. The better we understand the Scriptures, the more precisely we can share with them.

The more we learn about God and His will, the more we will love Him and the more we will love to study His word.

As you contemplate the Scriptures, it is our prayer that you will increasingly perceive something of the depths of His nature so that you can share these marvelous discoveries with those who have never learned to sense His intimate presence.

## **OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN BY DR. COOPER**

### **Inductive Bible Studies**

**GLIMPSES OF GOD - I** - An inductive study of Genesis, chapters 1 - 25. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of the text.

**GLIMPSES OF GOD - II** - An inductive study of Genesis, chapters 26 - 50. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of the last half of the book.

**THERE WAS NO KING IN ISRAEL** - An inductive study of the book of Judges. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of this Old Testament book. Particular attention is paid to the message about God in this book.

**STANDING ALONE, BUT NEVER LONELY** - An inductive study of the books of Ruth and Esther. Careful attention is given to the cultural and spiritual aspects of these books that are often overlooked. The questions to lead you through your own study of the book are printed in the book.

**THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION - A** - An inductive Study of I Samuel chapters 1 - 15.

**THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION - B** - An inductive Study of I Samuel chapters 16 - 31.

**JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT** - An inductive Bible study of the Gospel of Mark. It is a careful attempt to lead the reader through an inductive Study of this Gospel record. This is available in two forms: bound book and loose-leaf notebook.

**A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE** - An inductive study of the Gospel of Luke.

**BEING IN CHRIST** - An inductive study of the Ephesian epistle.

**REJOICE IN THE LORD** - An inductive study of the Philippian epistle.

**WHEN FAITH CONFRONTS CULTURE** - An inductive study of Colossians and Philemon.

### **Books**

**BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS** - This 180 page book points out how God has revealed Himself through His names in the Scriptures. In each instance, this work seeks to identify the involvement of the context in the use of each name.

## DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

**DID YOU KNOW THIS?!** - This 200 page book looks carefully at 56 Biblical passages to show the impact that Jewish culture and Biblical languages have upon the meaning of Scriptural passages.

**FASHIONED BY CULTURE** - This 200 page book is a study of the impact of culture upon Scripture. It is a sequel to 'Did You Know This?!'

**DIGGING DEEPER** - This 80 page book shows you how to study the Greek New Testament without knowing the Greek language. (Three ring binder for-mat.)

**DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIP-TURE** - This 250 page book is a step-by-step guide on how to do inductive Bible Study.

**IMITATORS OF GOD** - This 300 page book is a topical study of 17 different qualities of spiritual growth.

**PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE** - This 200 page book is a topical study of 13 different qualities of spiritual growth.

Logos Ministries is a non-profit religious corporation in the state of Colorado. It exists to encourage the use of Inductive Bible Study and provide copies of Dr. Cooper's writings to students in the countries of the former Soviet Union, third world countries and prisons.

Visit Logos Ministries on the World Wide Web at: <http://billcooperlogos.org>