

How to Study the Bible Like a Pro

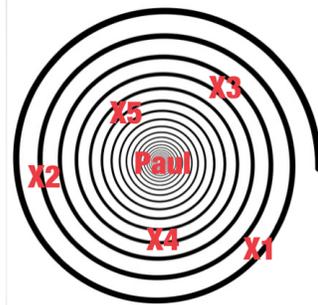
Introduction and Overview

Week 1

Introduction

- Key questions
 - Have you ever been in a small group Bible Study when someone read a passage and said, “I think this passage means X” and you thought, “I don’t think that’s what it means!”?
 - How do you determine who’s right?
 - Have you ever read a passage of scripture and thought, “I have no idea what that means!”?
 - What do you do with that thought?
 - Have you ever thought you knew what a passage meant and then several years later changed your mind?
 - Were you right at first or later on? And how would you know which option was more correct?
 - How would you interpret this passage from Deut. 22:5, “A woman must not wear men’s clothing.” How would you define men’s clothing? Are jeans “men’s clothing”? If that’s true, is it okay for a woman today to wear jeans?
- The bad news – Most believers think that being good at Bible study is either something you have to study for _____ to be good at or it’s something _____ can do easily (i.e. just pick up your Bible and whatever you think it means it means). Note: both are wrong
- The good news – you don’t have to go to _____ or Bible school to become great at interpreting your Bible. In just eight weeks, this course will give you everything you need to become incredibly good and effective at studying and accurately interpreting your Bible (you’ll then have a lifetime to perfect it). For example ...
 - Knowing a principle like, “A text can never mean what it never meant,” is easy to grasp on to (though way too often not employed). However, you’ll probably discover for years to come that you break this principle frequently – often because you were taught something in the past that you believe to be true but isn’t actually accurate.
 - Rom. 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes ...”
 - How many times have you heard a pastor or Bible study leader (or maybe even yourself) say, “That word, power, in the original Greek was the word dunamis, which is the same word from which we get the word, dynamite. In other words, Paul is saying, “The gospel is like the dynamite of God. It has explosive power to change lives...”
 - Problem – Paul couldn’t have meant “dynamite” because it wasn’t even invented until 1867
 - The good news is that once you know the principles we’re going to cover in this course you’ll find yourself falling less and less for bad interpretative choices.
- The Big Three of Interpreting Like a Pro
 1. _____ – You need a consistent process that you use every time you attempt to study the Bible
 2. _____ – You need to understand and own just a handful of principles that will allow you to interpret your Bible more correctly (the good news is that there aren’t hundreds you need to know)
 3. _____ – This is where the real work is done. Getting the process and the principles are easy, it’s the application of the first two that’s the challenge you’ll be engaged in for the rest of your life.

- A few more introductory thoughts before we begin
 1. You are already an interpreter (everyone is), the only question is whether you're a _____ one or a bad one
 2. When we use the word Interpretation (big "I") in this course, we're going to use it in a very specific way. Interpretation = what the text _____ (i.e. past tense/what the original author meant when he wrote what we have recorded in our Bibles)
 3. Application (big "A") = what the text _____ today (i.e. present tense)
 - Note: the order is important. Interpretation should always precede application (most people do it in reverse)
 - The only control we have over interpretation is authorial intent ("What did the original author mean when he said X?")
 - To apply a Biblical text to your life today you always want to look for the "Principle" in the text and then translate that principle across 2000 years.
 - *"Do not get drunk which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit."*
Eph. 5:18
 - While each Biblical text has one valid meaning, they have a multitude of applications (held in check by the original meaning).
 4. The goal in accurate interpretation isn't to be a certain knower but a _____ interpreter.
 - God honors faith more than certainty (and especially ego)
 - Certainty is an _____. Probability is a reality.
 - If certainty were possible, we would need only one official commentary on each book of the Bible (but there isn't just one, there are hundreds)
 - Never forget, when asked what the great commandment was, Jesus didn't answer, "Know it all," or "Get it right." He said it was to love God and love people.
 5. The hermeneutical spiral (Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation) is critical to understanding your role in interpretation
 - A professor from my alma mater, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), Grant Osborne, wrote the book on this subject (The Hermeneutical Spiral)
 - The general idea is that only the author of a text (Paul or Peter or David or Moses) knew for certain what they wrote and what it meant (and we're not them)
 - When we come to a text, we all come to that text with our own beliefs, experiences, perspectives, history, etc. that may or may not be related to what the author originally meant
 - So, when we first take a shot at interpreting a text, we're usually _____ out on the spiral than we think



- Therefore, our job in interpreting the Bible is to be responsible in trying to move closer and closer toward the dot, all the time realizing, in humility, that we really

don't know for sure what the text meant with 100% certainty (i.e. humility is a good thing in interpretation. In fact, it's essential to being a good interpreter).

6. Major on majors, minor on minors. When good devout believers disagree on the meaning of something, it's usually wise to hold that thing _____.
- Course Outline
 1. Introduction and Overview
 2. Interpretation I: Learning to Be a Master Interpreter
 3. Interpretation II: Getting Clear on Genre Implications
 4. Observation: Improving Your Ability to See What's Really In The Text
 5. Research: Leveraging the Secret to Becoming a Brilliant Interpreter
 6. Interpretation III: Getting Good At Deciding What the Text Meant
 7. Application: Figuring Out What That Text Means Today
 8. How to Do a Book Study

Disclaimer: While this course is the first course in the new LifePark Institute, the views expressed in this course are entirely mine and not always the views of LifePark Church. The Body of Christ at LifePark is big enough to embrace diversity of opinion which also means that you should feel free to disagree with any conclusion or position I take—just make sure you disagree for good reasons—like any good responsible interpreter.

I. Utilize a Four-Step Framework When Studying Your Bible (ORIA)

1. _____ (“What do I see?”)
2. Research (“What could this mean?”)
3. _____ (“What did it mean?”)
4. Application (“What does this mean for me?”)
5. This framework is like an accordion. You can expand and contract it at will depending on how deep you want to go
6. Example: Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

II. Make Sure You're Operating From the Right Assumptions

1. The Bible is the authoritative and _____ Word of God

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Tim. 3:16-17

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

2. Each and every follower of Jesus has the right and the _____ to interpret the Bible for himself or herself (i.e. you don't need a priest or pastor to do the interpretive work for you. Think,

“The Reformation”).

3. The Bible can be interpreted and understood by _____ people using an accurate _____ (i.e. you don't need to know Greek and Hebrew to understand your Bible ... Phew!)
4. The Bible is a cohesive _____ (not a random collection of differing thoughts from different authors) so it doesn't contradict itself. Rather Scripture helps interpret Scripture.
5. The Bible is an _____ document, not a systematic theology
6. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential to interpreting your Bible correctly

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. John 16:12-13

III. Always Use a Good Translation Whenever You Engage in Bible Study

1. The good news is that the twin sciences of Textual _____ and Bible Translation have become so good that you don't need to know Greek and Hebrew (or a little Aramaic) to do good, solid, responsible interpretive work
2. Most Bible translations (for the New Testament) now work from either the UBS (United Bible Society) or the Nestle-Aland Greek texts. The good news for you is that the two Greek texts are identical even though the general theological perspectives are different (in other words, even though we don't have the original manuscripts, you can trust the “_____” Greek text that your English Bible translators are using as being incredibly accurate
3. Now, when it comes to Bible Translation, there are three primary philosophies of translation
 - a. Literal - translate Greek word to English word as close as possible (word for word)
 - b. Dynamic _____ - translate by conveying the sense of the word in its context (i.e. thought to thought vs. word to word)
 - c. Paraphrase - a unique and fresh way, usually for one translator, to convey the meaning of the original text

Note: for the purposes of studying your Bible, you should always use either a literal or a dynamic equivalency translation – not a paraphrase.

4. Here's an example of the differences of the three philosophies in practice - 1 Cor. 7:8-9
 - a. Literal - KJV
 - i. *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: **for it is better to marry than to burn.***
 - b. Dynamic Equivalency - NIV
 - i. *Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, **for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.***
 - c. Paraphrase - The Message
 - i. *I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. **The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.***

5. Here are how some of the major translations break down based on their philosophy of translation

Literal Translation	Dynamic Equivalency Trans.	Paraphrase Translations
New American Standard (NASB) King James Version (KJV) New King James Version (NKJV) English Standard Version (ESV) Revised Standard Version (RSV) New Revised Standard (NRSV)	New International Version (NIV) Today's New International Version (TNIV) New American Bible (NAB) New Century Version (NCV)	The Message The Living Bible Phillips Translation

6. One last note on translations: Every generation _____ a new translation because language changes over time. The Greek and Hebrew texts do not change, but the translation from those original texts needs to change because the meanings of words change.
- For example, in the early 20th century to say that someone was gay meant that they were happy. In the 21st century it clearly refers to an individual's sexual preference

Making It Real

- On a scale of 1-10 (high) how deeply do you believe you have the ability to become a good interpreter of your Bible?
- For you personally, why do you want to become a better interpreter of the Bible?
- What are a couple things you believed to be true in the past that you no longer believe to be true today?
- When you start reading or studying your Bible do you usually try to interpret it first in light of the original audience or apply it to your life today?
- Go back and review the assumptions list. Are there any there that you disagree with or struggle with believing? If so, why?
- Do you have a good Bible to use for studying (i.e. not a paraphrase) and one that's easy for you to read? If not, make sure you purchase one this week. Note: My favorite online platform is www.BibleGateway.com and my favorite app is Holy Bible by LifeChurch.tv. Both have multiple versions available)
- Pick a chapter out of your Bible this week and start using the ORIA method. We'll go into detail later about how to become better at each skill but you can begin this week starting to make better observations, doing some research, interpreting what you think the original author meant to his original audience and then pulling out the principle to apply to your life. If you just start working the system, you will become better immediately. Oh, and don't forget to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you BEFORE you start reading and studying.

Book: _____ Chapter: _____

8. What was most helpful for you from tonight's session?

9. How will you be different as a Bible interpreter because of what you learned this evening (or were reminded of)?

10. With whom will you share what you learned from this session in the next 48-72 hours?

Who: _____ When: _____

If you found this session helpful, make sure you invite others to join us in this course (by email or social media/Facebook, personal invite, etc.). It's never too late to start and the more the merrier. The link is pretty simple to remember and pass along.

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