

Bethel Baptist Church
Dr. Edward O. Williamson, Pastor-teacher
Bible Study and Discussion Group Handout
February 21, 2024



Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15

Meditation: “Make Space For What Matters” – Day 7 “Spiritual Habits A Word of Caution”

Prayer:

Encounters with God: Transforming Your Bible Study

By Henry, Melvin, and Norman Blackaby

Chapter 8 -- Questions For Textual Interpretation

*Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift your voice for understanding,
If you see her as silver,
And search for her as for hidden treasures.
Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,
And find the knowledge of God.
Proverbs 2:3-5*

Intro. – “Take A Look Around”

- **Nothing in the Bible should be taken in isolation.**
- Everything written in the Bible has a context.
- God chose to speak through human language. Human language has meaning and is very important to understand.
- When approaching a **text**, we need to ask some necessary questions to discover its true meaning...The following questions will help us in our Bible study.

Questions to aide in Bible Study – Getting the Meaning of the Text:

- **Question #1 – What do the words mean?**
 - When asking this question, always seek the common meaning of the language first:
 1. **Denotation** – the dictionary meaning.
 2. **Connotation** – the implied, emotional meaning apart from its formal meaning
 3. Technical meaning
 4. Popular meaning
 - Words can have a range of meanings:
 1. Biblical meaning and usage
 2. Multiple meanings (even in the same book)
 3. One English word can translate several different Greek words.
 - Six steps to aide in discovering the meaning of a word in the Bible:
 1. Look tat the immediate **context** to find the meaning.
 2. Look at other versions of the Bible to see **variant translations** of the word.
 3. Look at other occurrences of the word within the book itself with the help of a Bible **concordance**.
 4. Find occurrences of the word in other writings by the same author with use of a concordance.
 5. Discover the usage of the word by other authors, also using a concordance.
 6. If you are studying a rare biblical word, you may want to use a **lexicon** to pursue nonbiblical usage in other literature.

- **Question #2 – What is the literary context?**
 - What is the meaning of “Lexical-Syntactical Principle?”
 - Words only have meaning as they form sentences and develop the writer’s message.
 - It is important to broaden our view from a specific verse to surrounding verses and the larger train of thought.
 - Many bibles have inserted headings that identify sections of material and allow you to quickly see how the writer is

grouping various thoughts. (note: these heading are not in the original text, but are helpful)

- Remember that the Bible is written in human language and can be expressed in different literary styles. It is always best to quickly identify the style of writing because that may impact the way you interpret the text.

- **Question #3 – What is the historical context?**
 - **Every text you study happened in a particular place and a particular moment in time.**
 - Those facts are relevant to understanding the meaning by the writer.
 - Understanding the historical context fills the text with meaning making it very relevant to daily life.
 - Context is important to fully appreciate a text.
 - To discover the historical context, read the introduction at the beginning of a book (found in most good study Bibles). A good study Bible will give you information about the author, the place, the time, and the important issues of the day. You may also want to consult other reference books or commentaries for further insight into the text.

- **Question #4 – What does the rest of the Bible say about this passage?**
 - The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself...If the Lord wants us to grasp a really significant truth, He will make sure it is discussed throughout the Scriptures.
 - Basic principle: Allow the clear passages to interpret the unclear passages. The Bible is its best commentator. Significant statements are understood in the light of the entire Bible.
 - Cross referencing tools:
 - Center column text references
 - Gospel parallel book/section in some Bibles
 - Notations regarding variant readings
 - Keys for doctrinal passages – 1) Make sure you bring your reading in line with the major teaching on the subject in other parts of the Bible; 2) Never take an isolated verse and build a whole doctrine around it; and 3) Allow clear passages to bring light to those that are confusing.

- **Question #5 – What is the singular purpose of the author?**
 - Assume the author had a purpose in mind when writing the passage.
 - To discover what the author was trying to convey, you must start with understanding the author.
 - Who wrote the book?
 - Why did he write the book?
 - What situation was he addressing in the book?
 - Read and trace the author’s theme of the book you are reading.
 - Is the author giving a description or prescription? Is the author intending to give a historical record of events or is the author giving instructions for believers to follow?
 - Determining “Christian Precedent...”

- **Question #6 – What are the limits of this text?**
 - When interpreting a text, there is always a temptation to say more than is there.
 - It is all right to acknowledge that there are limits to revelation and be content to admit ignorance of information that is beyond the text.
 - If the Bible is silent on a subject, that is also for a reason. There are some things God did not tell us.
 - Remember, the Bible was written to help us have a relationship with God...It gives us all the information we need for our spiritual wellbeing and challenges us to put our faith in God.
 - Stay clear of saying more than the Bible tells us and be content in the revelation we have been given.

Questions/Comments:

Notes:

Concluding Remarks

Closing Prayer