



Mining God's Word

How to Study the Bible



STUDENT'S WORKBOOK

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SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course *Mining God's Word* is an introduction to the methodology of inductive study of the Bible. Inductive study consists of careful observation of the text leading to sound interpretation and appropriate application. Students will learn study strategies and principles of interpretation and application throughout the course and apply them to the book of Philippians. Although the book of Philippians will serve as the primary “training grounds,” the course aims at imparting study skills that are applicable to the entire Bible. The course also aims at fostering sensitivity to literary genre and at cultivating inductive Bible study as a lifelong habit.

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able

- ▷ To magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.
- ▷ To articulate the three principles of sound interpretation presented in this course relating to historical interpretation, contextual interpretation, and literary interpretation. By learning these three principles and practicing their application, the student should be able to more accurately interpret the Scriptures.
- ▷ To employ ten strategies of inductive study in further biblical study. These strategies include creating sentence flows, recording observations, discerning the main point, listing questions, checking cross-references, paraphrasing the logic, doing word studies, comparing translations, doing thematic studies, and using secondary resources.

- ▷ To understand how to make personal application of the Bible by following ten principles of appropriate application.
- ▷ To make immediate plans for continuing personal, inductive Bible study. This last objective will be accomplished by the completion of the course's final project.

🔗 REQUIRED BOOKS (TEXTBOOKS)

- ▷ An English version of the Bible, preferably the *English Standard Version* (ESV). We particularly recommend:
 - ▷ Crossway Bibles. *ESV: Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Bibles, 2007.
 - ▷ Zondervan. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- ▷ Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 2007).

Note: The textbook *Living by the Book* should be viewed as supplemental reading for the course. This course is not designed around the content or methodology of this book. Nevertheless, the book will reinforce the curriculum at key points and offers a helpful and complementary perspective on inductive Bible study.

This course will provide copies of biblical texts and require students to mark up these texts extensively. Therefore, it is also strongly recommended that each student obtain a set of colored pens or pencils as course materials. Various colors of highlighters could also be used.

🔗 REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to progress through Lessons 2-12 by completing the lesson pages in a sequential order. Therefore, for each lesson's homework a student should review the Introduction, Lesson Objectives, and what was covered during the class session under the heading, "Study Guide." Then the student should proceed to complete the assignments listed under the heading, "Homework," including the required readings. Each lesson's workload has been divided into five daily assignments for the convenience of the student. Students will complete a brief project at the end of the course.

Students will pass this course if they attend at least 10 class sessions, complete all the assignments, and complete an adequate final project. Please contact the instructor with any problems or concerns.

🔗 FINAL PROJECT

The course's final project is introduced in Lesson 12 with detailed instructions. It is not necessary for the student to review the expectations for the final project until that time.

 SCHEDULE

Lesson	Date	Lesson Title
1		God's Word Is a Treasure Mine
2		There Is a Meaning in This Text
3		Stare at the Fish
4		Query the Text
5		Scripture Interpreting Scripture
6		Grasping the Flow
7		"Every Word of God Proves True"
8		The Blessing of Different Translations
9		Prophecies, Parables, Proverbs—Oh My!
10		"Of Making Many Books There Is No End"
11		Applying the Word
12		Study the Word!



It is likely that you have read the book of Philippians before, perhaps *many* times. But how much have you retained of what you read? The following exercise attempts to discern just that.

Write a brief summary of the book of Philippians below without the use of a Bible or notes of any kind, including in your summary all the relevant information that you can remember. Include information about the author, the recipients, the occasion and purpose for the letter, major themes, structure, memorable verses, etc.

God's Word Is a Treasure Mine

1

§ INTRODUCTION

As the inspired Word of God, the Bible is in a category all by itself. It commands a reverence that no other book ever will. The Bible is, however, also a piece of human literature, and as such, should be examined and discussed with precision, rigor, and patience. The belief that the Bible is inerrant and infallible should not discourage such efforts, but rather intensify them and provide direction and purpose. Therefore, in this course we will apply all of our heart, and *all of our mind*, to learn the skills and techniques for accurate and fruitful study of the Word. Although the Bible offers many treasures on a surface reading, for those who are willing to dig down deeper, untold treasures await to dazzle the soul. As John Piper has said, “Raking is easy, but you get only leaves; digging is hard, but you might find diamonds.”¹ May the Lord increase your understanding and your love for this treasure beyond words!

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- appreciate the importance of active reading and rigorous study of the Bible
- ascertain their own initial comprehension of Philippians
- understand the value of patient and careful observation

¹ John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1995), 387.



STUDY GUIDE

This course operates on the assumption that a simple *reading* of the Bible is different from *studying* the Bible. Furthermore, we assume that studying the Bible is a much more effective way to retain the Bible's content and apply its truth. Therefore, we are in full agreement with the following assertion:

“The goal a reader seeks—be it entertainment, information or understanding—determines the way he reads. The effectiveness with which he reads is determined by the amount of effort and skill he puts into his reading. In general, the rule is: the more effort the better, at least in the case of books that are initially beyond our powers as readers and are therefore capable of raising us from a condition of understanding less to one of understanding more.”²

And R. C. Sproul says this in his book about studying the Bible:

“It is important to note that the theme of this book is not how to read the Bible but how to study the Bible. There is a great deal of difference between reading and studying. Reading is something we can do in a leisurely way, something that can be done strictly for entertainment in a causal, cavalier manner. But study suggests labor, serious and diligent work.”³

The approach to inductive Bible study that this course will adopt is a book-by-book approach. Many courses or textbooks that introduce Bible study methods equip a student to study an individual passage of a book, though these approaches generally emphasize the importance of examining a passage's context.

This course, however, will introduce a methodology for studying entire biblical books. It is our conviction that this is the best way to study the Bible. Not only does this approach ensure that each passage is understood within the book's overall structure and purpose, but it also includes certain steps in the inductive study process that are normally absent from methodologies that focus on individual passages alone.

The book of Philippians will serve as a training ground throughout this course. We will concentrate on imparting principles for sound interpretation and study strategies. The course is not designed to be an exhaustive study on the

² Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 16.

³ R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1977), 17.

theology of Philippians; Neither is it a Bible study on Philippians per se. At the end of the course, you will hopefully be able to apply what you've learned to any book of the Bible. Yet a study on the book of Isaiah, for example, while using the same methodology that this course introduces, would obviously require much more time than a study on Philippians.

🔗 EXERCISE 1: WHO IS WRITING TO WHOM?

The first step in our inductive study process is to read the selected biblical book a few times through, preferably reading the entire book in a single sitting. In the first reading you should notice as much as you can about the author of the book and the book's recipients. Some biblical books do not provide as much explicit information about the author and recipients as other books do.

During the class sessions of this course, we will sometimes use the book of Philemon as a stepping stone for our study of Philippians. The goal is to apply what we do in class with Philemon to the book of Philippians for the homework. Here is the text of Philemon in full:

Philemon

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he

is indeed useful to you and to me.)¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Note: This course will employ the *English Standard Version* (ESV) of the Bible. This is the English translation of choice for Bethlehem College & Seminary and Bethlehem Baptist Church. For a rationale of why we prefer this particular translation, see the article “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at desiringGod.org.

1. Using the text provided above, underline your observations about the author and recipient of this biblical book. Summarize your observations below.

Observations on Author

Observations on Recipient

After learning about the author and recipient(s) of any biblical book, we must then focus on the relationship between the two. Are the author and recipients friends? Do they have a strained relationship? Is the biblical book intended for a wider, believing audience?

After considering the relationship between author and recipients, we consider the occasion of the book. Again, some biblical books will provide more information about the occasion than others. Discerning the occasion of the book is especially important for the epistles of the New Testament.

This course will distinguish the *occasion* of a biblical book from its *purpose* in the following way:

OCCASION: *The situation or events that prompt the author to compose the book.*

PURPOSE: *The effect or result that the author intends the book to accomplish.*

As you can see, the occasion and purpose of a book are related and often share an amount of overlap. The distinction, however, is a helpful one to maintain.

2. Still using the text of Philemon provided above, underline every verse or phrase that indicates the relationship between the author and recipient. (You may want to use a different style or color of underlining to distinguish these observations from the textual observations you made about the author and recipient.) Then think about what situation prompted the author to write this letter. Again underline verses that suggest answers. Record your observations below.

Observations on Relationship

Observations on Occasion

The previous observations you've made about the author, recipients, their relationship, and the occasion, contribute to your understanding of the purpose of the book. The overall purpose of a book is an important thing to grasp as you interpret the book verse by verse. Certainly your understanding will be refined (and perhaps corrected) as you study the book, but it is important to attempt to discern the book's purpose at the onset of study.

3. What might the author have desired to accomplish by writing and sending this letter? In other words, what is the letter's purpose? Once more, underline words or phrases that provide relevant information. Then record your ideas below.

Interpretation of Purpose

The exercise you have just completed in Philemon and the identical exercise you will do in Philippians depend on careful observation. The prolonged concentration that careful observation requires may come with difficulty.

Therefore, please turn to Appendix A to read a story that should stir up your curiosity and motivate you to exert the patience you'll need to get the most out of inductive study of the Bible.



The following table outlines the student's homework. Please complete this work before the next class session. At the beginning of the next lesson, the class will review this assignment through discussion. So please come prepared to contribute to the discussion.

We suggest that you read all five days of the assignment before you begin.

Day 1 Using the text of Philippians included in the following pages of this lesson, read through the book once observing all the details you can about the *author* and the *recipients*. You should read through the text slowly, not letting any detail escape your notice. Underline verses or phrases that provide you with information, using different colored pens or pencils for each set of observations.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 1

Day 2 Having read through the book of Philippians the previous day, review the details you observed about the author and recipients. Then record a summary of your findings (with supporting Scripture references) on the assignment sheet provided in this lesson.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 2

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 9

Day 3 Reread the text of Philippians observing all the details you can about the *relationship* between the author and recipients and the *occasion* (as defined in this lesson) of the book. Underline verses or phrases that provide you with information, using a different colored pens or pencils for each set of observations.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 3

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 16

Day 4 Review the details you observed about the author-recipient relationship and occasion. Then record a summary of your findings (with supporting Scripture references) on the assignment sheet provided in this lesson.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 4

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 17

Day 5 Reread the entire text of Philippians for a third time, with an eye to the *purpose* of the book. What might the author have desired to accomplish by writing and sending this letter? For what purpose did he write? Underline relevant data and summarize your conjectures about the book's purpose on the assignment sheet. Come to the next class session prepared to discuss all your findings.



§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Mortimer, J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).
- ▷ John Piper, “A Compelling Reason for Rigorous Training of the Mind,” an online article at desiringGod.org.

PHILIPPIANS (ESV)

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not

frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. ²¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. ¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. ²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that

you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. ³¹ Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—
⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. ⁴¹ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. ² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



Summary of Observations on Author

Summary of Observations on Recipients



**Summary of Observations
on the Relationship Between Author and Recipients**

Summary of Observations on the Occasion for Philippians

Summary of Conjectures on the Purpose of Philippians

There Is a Meaning in This Text

2

§ INTRODUCTION

Because *your Bible* has been conveniently translated, formatted, with each individual piece of biblical literature compiled and placed together, it becomes easy for modern readers to forget that they are, in essence, reading someone else's mail—or rather, letters, gospels, prophecies, and histories that were written to a specific audience thousands of years ago and in a different language. We forget some-times that real people and churches existed behind the New Testament epistles; we forget that the letters that were exchanged had no verse numbers, paragraph breaks, section headings, or study notes; we forget that life thousands of years ago was in some ways very different. So perhaps the first principle of accurate interpretation is to ensure that our interpretations are historically grounded. The more that we can learn about the historical and cultural setting of the Bible, the more likely we are to avoid reading our own contemporary situation into the text.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of historical interpretation
- gain a basic familiarity with the timeline or geography of the New Testament
- practice identifying the structure of a biblical book



If someone wanted to become an expert on Shakespeare, they would probably study the history of sixteenth-century England. Although anyone can understand a certain amount of a Shakespearean play simply by reading it, there is no doubt that a grasp of the history, culture, and religion of the period would enrich one's understanding *and enjoyment* of the play. The same is true as we approach the Bible and want to become experts in its interpretation and application. By learning about the first-century world, the drama of the life and ministry of Jesus and his apostles gains depth and color that are otherwise lacking.

This leads us to the first of three principles for the sound interpretation of Scripture. Rather than being an isolated step within the inductive process, you should always keep this principle “in the back of your mind” as you read Scripture.

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.

As this principle suggests, one of the key concepts of this course is *authorial intent*. What we mean by this is that a text's meaning is determined by what the author of that text intended to communicate. Although seemingly basic, it is imperative that we start our study of the Bible by affirming this point, especially since there are many contemporary challenges to this concept.

Notice John Piper's testimony to this shift in our culture:

“What has changed dramatically in the last fifty years is the concept of meaning and truth in our culture. Once it was the responsibility of historical scholars and judges and preachers to find the fixed meaning of a text (an essay, the Constitution, the Bible) and justify it with grammatical and historical arguments, and then explain it. Meaning in texts was not created by scholars and judges and preachers. It was found, because the authors put it there. Authors had intentions. And it was a matter of integrity to find what a writer intended—that was the meaning of the essay, the Constitution, the Bible. Everybody knew that if a person wrote ‘no’ and someone

else creatively interpreted it to mean ‘yes,’ something fraudulent had happened. But we have fallen a long way from that integrity. In historical scholarship and in constitutional law and in biblical interpretation, it is common today to say that meaning is whatever you see, not what the author said or intended.”⁴

Bethlehem College & Seminary cherishes an affirmation of faith that specifically addresses this issue. Here are the relevant paragraphs:

1.2 We believe that God’s intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

1.3 We believe God’s intentions are revealed through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the authors’ intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware, as, for example, in the case of some Old Testament prophecies. Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations. Nevertheless it is not legitimate to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired.

1.4 Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible (which is its fullest meaning) is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure Biblical texts. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible, and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God’s Word.⁵

4 John Piper, “Discerning the Will of God Concerning Homosexuality and Marriage,” an online sermon desiringGod.org. Please note that this curriculum will not provide the full web addresses for resources found on the Desiring God website. Resources can be located by searching desiringGod.org for the titles listed.

5 This excerpt and the supporting Scriptural references are available at desiringGod.org under the title, “What We Believe About Scripture.” Bethlehem’s Affirmation of Faith can be viewed at bcsmn.edu

Therefore, as we observe what is in the text and strive to interpret its meaning, we are always aiming to discover what the original author(s) meant. Only after we understand the original meaning will we try to apply that meaning or discern the contemporary significance of the text.

As the principle of historical interpretation stated above suggests, a grasp of the historical background of the text is sometimes a crucial factor in understanding the author's meaning.

For instance, we may comprehend Paul's basic message in the book of Philemon. But how much do *you* know about slavery in the Roman Empire? How might knowledge about first-century slavery enhance your understanding of Philemon? Certainly, it is not necessary for everyone in the church to become an expert on ancient history. But it would be incredibly helpful if everyone who set their heart on studying the Bible resolved to learn more about ancient history, as they were able. Gaining familiarity with the dates and places of the New Testament is only the first step into a rich and fruitful area of study.

EXERCISE 1: PUTTING PHILIPPIANS ON THE TIMELINE AND ON THE MAP

Please turn to Appendix C of this curriculum. Your instructor will guide you through one or both of these background exercises.

EXERCISE 2: AN OUTLINE OF PHILEMON

In the previous lesson, we made observations about the author, recipients, and occasion of Philemon. The next step in the inductive process is to ascertain the book's structure.

1. Mark the major divisions in the letter of Philemon (perhaps with a slash or dividing line). This can be done by repeatedly asking yourself, "What is the author doing now?" When the answer to that question changes, then you have progressed to a new section. Once you have noted the several major divisions in the text, try to label each section in one sentence or phrase. Write it to the sides of the text.

Philemon

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident

of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



Day 1 Read Acts 16:6–17:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 with a view to understanding Paul’s experience in Philippi. Then read Acts 28:16-31, which is a description of his imprisonment. This should give you a sketch of the historical context in which Philippians was written. More study on the historical background to Philippians will not be undertaken in this course.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 33

Day 2 Read through the entire book of Philippians again, this time thinking about the structure. Begin to think about how you would divide the text into its major sections.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 19

Day 3 Using the text of Philippians included in Lesson 1, mark the major divisions in the letter. This can be done by repeatedly asking yourself as you read, “What is the author doing now?” When the answer to that question changes, then you have progressed to a new section.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 24

Day 4 Review the major divisions you’ve made. Revise, if necessary, and then divide each major division into significant subsections. Once you have noted the several major and minor divisions in the text, try to label each section with a single sentence or phrase.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 25

Day 5 Conclude this assignment by drawing up your own outline or chart of Philippians that represents the structure of the letter. Come to the next session prepared to discuss (and possibly present) your outline of Philippians.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is Paul a logical, organized communicator? What implications might this have for his readers?
2. Does the order in which Paul handles issues say anything about his priorities?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Take Courage,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, “Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.



Your Outline or Chart of Philippians

Stare at the Fish

3

📌 INTRODUCTION

If you've been fulfilling the requirements of this course, you have read through Philippians at least four times and may be tempted to think that you have seen most, if not all, of what is there. But almost certainly, you've seen relatively little. From the ridge of a mountain, you might see the general contours of a valley below. But it is only as you walk down into the valley that you discover all the detail that you missed from the mountain. And it is only as you get down on your hands and knees that you begin to see the complexity and sheer beauty of the valley terrain.

We have been on the mountain ridge overlooking the book of Philippians and we will return there before the class is done. But now we are going to make our way down into the details of the text. So look! Look at the verses, the phrases, the words. Read more slowly. Stop and think. There is a wealth of discovery awaiting you if you are only willing to take the time to look.

📌 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- properly distinguish between observations and interpretations
- practice making numerous observations on a single verse
- appreciate the value of staring patiently at a text



This course will repeatedly emphasize the importance of “seeing” things in the Bible for yourself. Personal observations and insights into the Word of God are what inductive study is built upon. But how can we see more in the Bible than we already do? Is there any way to train ourselves to be better observers?

This course will offer ten strategies for studying the text of Scripture. The aim of these strategies is to help us become better observers and interpreters. Three strategies will be introduced in this lesson, and then one new strategy will be introduced in each successive lesson. If the three principles of sound interpretation can be thought of as the guard rails for inductive study, these ten study strategies are the motor that propels us along the road. The strategies will be the bulk of what we *do* in inductive study; they will be the bulk of our activity.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.

Many people have found it helpful to present the text of Scripture in different visual layouts. This course will briefly introduce the practice of presenting the biblical text in “sentence flow.”

A sentence flow is a simple way to portray visually the grammatical structure of a text. As such, it does require some knowledge of the English language.

Before explaining how to construct a sentence flow, here is an example of how Philippians 1:3-5 might be put into a sentence flow:

³ *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,*

⁴ *always*

in every prayer of mine for you all

making my prayer

with joy,

⁵ *because of your partnership*

in the gospel

from the first day until now.

The basic idea of a sentence flow is to line up prepositional phrases, adverbs, participles, dependent clauses, etc. under or above the word they most closely modify. Here, then, is how the above sentence would look if we labeled each part of the sentence as a part of speech:

³ [*This is the main clause, the most basic idea in the sentence*]
⁴ [*adverb*]
 [*a prepositional phrase*]
 [*a participial phrase*]
 [*a small but significant prepositional phrase*]

⁵ [*a gap in the flow followed by a dependent, “grounding” clause*]
 [*a prepositional phrase*]
 [*a temporal phrase*]

No doubt you may quibble here and there with how we’ve outlined this text. For the purposes of this course, however, our focus is not on the precise grammatical relationships within the sentence but rather on what we can “see” in the text when it is presented in this new way.⁶

What might one notice if Philippians 1:3-5 is examined as a sentence flow? First, the word “always” might pop out—Paul *always* prays with joy. Why does he pray with joy? The sentence flow suggests that Paul prays with joy because of the Philippians’ partnership with him. What kind of partnership is it? This partnership is described as a partnership “in the gospel.”

Each of these observations could have been made by simply reading the text of Philippians 1:3-5 slowly and carefully. But the strategy of creating a sentence flow may allow you to notice these things more easily. At the least, it should prompt you to ask how the different clauses of a sentence are related.

If this strategy is totally foreign to you and your understanding of English grammar is a bit rusty, then you might want to start by simply writing out the text of Scripture by hand. Even this simple practice will force you to think more carefully about the words and phrases and sentences of the Bible.

⁶ Please do not misunderstand: the more grammatically accurate practice of *sentence diagramming* is a helpful way to study the Bible. Since this requires much more instruction to learn, however, this introductory course will stick with the much simpler method of creating a sentence flow. If you are interested in learning to diagram, BibleArc.com is an excellent resource.

🔗 EXERCISE 1: CREATE A SENTENCE FLOW

We will now throw you into “the deep end of the pool” by asking you to attempt a sentence flow of your own, though we recognize that we’ve provided little instruction on how to do one. Creating a sentence flow is somewhat of a subjective exercise, but will hopefully prove fruitful as you create a few flows.

1. Create an initial sentence flow of Philippians 1:6. Does your sentence flow draw your attention to anything that you may not have noticed otherwise?

Philippians 1:6

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

This sentence flow might bring into focus the following observations: 1) what Paul is sure of is spelled out in what follows the word “this”; 2) the good work that God has begun is an internal work—one that is “in” the Philippians; 3) this work will be only completed on the last day; 4) the “last day” is described as “the day of Jesus Christ.”

🔗 EXERCISE 2: DISTINGUISHING OBSERVATION FROM INTERPRETATION

The constant injunction of this course will be, “Look! Look! Look!” In order to get beneath a surface-level reading of the Bible, you have to be willing to look at the text—and look again. And stare. But one of the easiest ways to minimize what you observe in the text is to unknowingly blur the distinction between

observations and interpretations. This course will distinguish observations from interpretations in the following way:

OBSERVATIONS: things in the passage that cannot be disputed; things that are simply there. An example of an observation on Philippians 1:1 is that the letter is addressed from two people.

INTERPRETATIONS: attempts to discern meaning from the observations we make. Interpretations can be, and often are, disputed. An example of an interpretation of Philippians 1:1 is that Paul is the primary author because his name comes first.

2. For the ten statements following Philippians 1:1-5, mark the statement with an “O” if you think it is an observation and an “I” if you think it is an interpretation.

Philippians 1:1-5

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

- _____ 1. Paul and Timothy are called servants of Christ Jesus.
- _____ 2. The title “Christ Jesus” in verse 1 appears in reverse order in verse 2.
- _____ 3. Paul and Timothy are humbling themselves by calling themselves “servants.”
- _____ 4. This letter is written by two co-authors.
- _____ 5. The term “overseers” comes before “deacons.”
- _____ 6. Verse 3 begins with the first person singular.
- _____ 7. No distinction is made between saints, overseers, or deacons in verses 2-5.
- _____ 8. Paul has been in partnership with the Philippian believers for a long time.
- _____ 9. The Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in verse 2.
- _____ 10. The phrase “first day” refers to Lydia’s conversion.

🔗 EXERCISE 3: MAKING OBSERVATIONS

Interpreting the Bible is certainly a part of inductive study. Observation, however, must precede interpretation. We will now introduce a second strategy for studying the text:

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.

It would be difficult to overstate the value of *recording* observations you make in the text. Not only does this preserve your observations for later use, but also this habit will actually allow you to see more in the Bible. John Piper gives the following personal testimony to this point:

“In fact I would say, always keep a pad and pen nearby when you read the Bible. I have often counseled people who tell me that they don’t see anything when they read the Bible, ‘Go home and this time, write the text, instead of just reading it. If anything stands out as helpful, make a mark and write down your ideas about it. Keep writing till you are done with that insight. Then keep reading and writing the text till you see something else to write about, or until you are out of time.’

The main value in this is that writing forces us to slow down and see what we are reading. Some of us have very bad habits of passive reading that certain types of formal education have bred into us, by forcing us to read quickly when we ought to be reading slowly—thinking as we go. Writing is a way of slowing us down and opening our eyes to see what we do not otherwise see. This struck me so forcefully one day that I paused and wrote:

*I know not how the light is shed,
Nor understand this lens.
I only know that there are eyes
In pencils and in pens.”⁷*

7 Taken from *When I Don’t Desire God* by John Piper, © 2004 by Desiring God Foundation, pp. #123-124. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

3. For a few minutes, record as many observations (not interpretations) as you can make on Philippians 1:6-8.

Philippians 1:6-8

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

4. After discussing the observations you recorded above, make observations that connect something in verses 6-8 to something in verses 1-5. Record below.

Philippians 1:1-5

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

The final strategy to be introduced in this lesson won't be practiced except in the homework assignment. It will be, however, a strategy we practice in each homework assignment as we work through the text of Philippians section by section.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.

As you study a narrower portion of Scripture, you should repeatedly ask yourself, “Now, what is the main point that the author is trying to communicate in this section?” This strategy will help you not only to interpret more faithfully, but as we will see later, answering this question is necessary to an appropriate application of the text.



Day 1 Create your own sentence flow of Philippians 1:9-11.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 5

Day 2 For this lesson, your homework will concentrate on Philippians 1:1-11. Read this passage repeatedly, attempting to make as many observations (not interpretations) as possible. In particular, focus on Philippians 1:9-11. Strive to write down at least ten observations working from these verses alone. Your observations should not simply restate the text. In other words, “the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ” is not an insightful observation.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 6

Day 3 Read Philippians 1:1-11 and record at least ten observations that relate something in verses 9-11 to something in verses 1-8. Record another ten observations that connect something in verses 9-11 to something in verses 12-30.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 18

Day 4 Record another ten observations linking something in verses 9-11 with something in the following three chapters. Therefore, you should have 40 observations (at least!) by the time you are done with this assignment.

Day 5 Write out what you take the main point of Philippians 1:1-11 to be.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. What does Paul rejoice over in these verses? Do you rejoice over similar things?
2. Is Paul's prayer for the Philippians similar to or different from your prayers?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, "Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor," an online biography at desiringGod.org.



Sentence Flow of Philippians 1:9-11

Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 1:1-8



Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 1:12-30

Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 2:1-4:23

Main Point of Philippians 1:1-11

Query the Text

§ INTRODUCTION

Half of being a good student of the Bible is being inquisitive. Those who study the Bible most diligently and effectively are those who are curious or “disturbed” readers. Here are some of John Piper’s reflections on the importance of asking questions:

There are several strong forces which oppose our relentless and systematic interrogating of biblical texts. One is that it consumes a great deal of time and energy on one small portion of Scripture. We have been schooled (quite erroneously) that there is a direct correlation between reading a lot and gaining insight. But in fact there is no positive correlation at all between quantity of pages read and quality of insight gained. Just the reverse. Except for a few geniuses, insight diminishes as we try to read more and more. Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20 and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading 30 pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.⁸

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of contextual interpretation
- appreciate the value of asking an incisive question
- practice answering questions from the context

8 John Piper, “Brothers, Let Us Query the Text,” an online article at desiringGod.org.



How might you feel if someone interviewed you for one hour and then only put one isolated statement that you made into their newspaper article? You would probably be upset, especially if that isolated quote did not represent your entire viewpoint well. It is only fair to expect that a reporter should accurately represent what you did say if they are going to represent your viewpoint to others.

How many times has someone quoted an isolated verse from the Gospels or Paul or the Old Testament, claiming to represent the viewpoint of God? If their statement was “ripped out of context,” then we could be rightfully upset, so reading and interpreting the Bible must be done with the broader context in mind. Our efforts in fairly representing the whole are motivated by our respect for God’s Word. If we do not practice contextual interpretation, we show our lack of love and concern for the author of the Bible: God himself. We would do well to remember the little phrase, “context is king.”

The second principle for sound interpretation is like the first in that it is not something that we only apply selectively. Rather, this principle should govern all of our interpretation; we should always be looking to the broader context in order to understand an author’s meaning. This principle operates on the assumption that the authors of Scripture were coherent thinkers and that the Holy Spirit was at work within them.

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author’s meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.

It is often argued that in studying the Bible, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. This is simply a manifestation of sound, contextual interpretation. The broader context often makes sense of an individual passage or verse. Here is a related rule from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 1, Section 9:

IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.⁹

This rule, stated above, must be used carefully, however. We do not want to blunt the individual force of certain passages by twisting them to say exactly what other passages say. If we were to conceive of the Bible as a chorus, it does not sing in strict unison. Rather, the different books and voices of the Bible sing in harmony—complementary voices within an overall theological unity.

🔗 EXERCISE 1: DID YOU LOOK AT THE CONTEXT?

To reinforce the necessity of contextual interpretation, we will briefly examine three fictitious statements that echo popular sentiments.

1. For each statement, examine the broader context of the cited verse, using your own English Bible. Then write a response to the statement, arguing that the speaker has not understood the context of the cited verse.

Statement #1: “The Bible clearly teaches that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore, we should never say that God would send anyone to hell. To do that would be a contradiction of his character.”

⁹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* can be accessed online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/, under Chapter I of the Holy Scripture. Last accessed May 13, 2016.

Statement #2: “Why are you confronting me about my sin? Don’t you know that the Bible says, ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ (Matthew 7:1)? In telling me that you don’t approve of what I’m doing, you’re judging me.”

Statement #3: “When I step out onto that football field today, I know that I’m going to win. ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13). God will give me the success.”

 **EXERCISE 2: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “SHARE YOUR FAITH”?**

This lesson will introduce a fourth study strategy that relates to contextual interpretation. When you examine a passage’s surrounding context, what are you looking for? That depends on what you are trying to understand. And the way to determine what you are trying to understand is by asking a question that you want answered.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.

Bombard your text with questions. Before you attempt to answer your questions, begin by listing as many helpful and relevant questions as you can. You should even ask questions that you think you already know the answer to.

For example, when you read the phrase “sharing your faith,” what meaning immediately pops into your mind? We would guess that for nearly everyone the phrase “sharing your faith” is roughly equivalent to “verbalizing your personal testimony and/or the gospel to an unbeliever.” Of course, context will determine the meaning of the phrase.

2. In the book of Philemon, the phrase “the sharing of your faith” appears in verse 6 (underlined below). What is the precise meaning of this phrase in the book of Philemon? Answer this question contextually. Circle or underline any other phrases in the book that might provide clues to the meaning of this phrase and write any notes or ideas at the bottom of the page. Be prepared to argue your understanding to the class.

Philemon

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would

receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. ²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

 EXERCISE 3: ASK, ASK, ASK, AS YOU LOOK, LOOK, LOOK!

In the final exercise of this lesson we will actually practice the study strategy introduced above.

3. Using the text of Philemon reproduced above, generate a list of questions about this book that you would like answered. Think of as many helpful and relevant questions as you can.



Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 1:12-26. Read this passage repeatedly. Generate five questions and record them on the provided sheet. Attempt to answer these questions from the context, but focus on asking good questions. If you are reading slowly and thoughtfully, this daily assignment should take you about 30 minutes! *Making observations and asking penetrating questions is a fundamental skill to fruitful interpretation*, so be diligent and thorough!

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 31

Day 2 Generate another five stimulating questions on Philippians 1:12-26 and try to answer them from the context, if possible. Remember that looking at the broader context should always be the first step in answering your questions.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 8

Day 3 Generate another five questions. If you can't discover the answers, don't worry; just come up with the most penetrating questions that you can.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 11

Day 4 Review the fifteen questions that you've generated. Determine which five are the most incisive. Be prepared to share these five questions with the class.

Day 5 Discern the main point of Philippians 1:12-26 and write it down.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is asking questions of the Bible disrespectful to God, or is it honoring to God? Explain.
2. What effect did Paul intend these verses to have on his readers? Do they have this effect on you?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Brothers, Let Us Query the Text,” an online article at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, “How to Query God,” an online article at desiringGod.org.



Questions on Philippians 1:12-26

Main Point of Philippians 1:12-26

Scripture Interpreting Scripture

5

§ INTRODUCTION

Two of the key presuppositions of this course are that “the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, and without error in the original manuscripts” and that “God’s intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right.”¹⁰ As Christians, we build our lives on what God says in the Bible—the whole Bible and nothing else.

John Piper, reflecting on Jude 1:3 (“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”) writes:

For us one of the most important phrases in verse 3 is “once for all.” Here we are 2,000 years after the faith was first delivered to the church, and we are surrounded with hundreds of people and sects and cults who claim to have a new word of revelation that now completes God’s word to mankind. Mohammed offered his Koran. Joseph Smith his Book of Mormon. Sun Moon his Divine Principle. And you meet people every day who consider every contemporary intellectual trend as a suitable replacement for the Bible.

But please notice very carefully. Jude taught that the faith has been once for all delivered to the saints. God’s revelation concerning the doctrinal content of our faith is finished. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Anyone who comes along and claims to have a new word from God to add to the faith once for all delivered to the saints is against Scripture.

¹⁰ These excerpts are from Bethlehem College & Seminary’s Affirmation of Faith, sections 1.1 and 1.2.

The reason we have a Bible is that the church of the third and fourth century recognized that God had spoken once for all in these writings. The canon was closed, and every other claim to truth is now measured by the standard of the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

This lesson will draw out some of the implications of accepting the whole Bible as Christian Scripture. Indeed, we will see that these key presuppositions inform our inductive methodology.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand the necessity of contextual interpretation
- ▷ practice interpreting the New Testament with the context of the Old Testament
- ▷ learn the importance of checking cross-references

11 John Piper, "Contend for the Faith," an online sermon at desiringGod.org.



In the last lesson, we learned about contextual interpretation and the importance of studying the surrounding context. The question may have arisen, however, of how broad the surrounding context really is. If we are studying a verse in Philippians, what is the relevant context? Is it the verses that come immediately before and after? Is it the paragraph or chapter within which the verse occurs? Maybe it's the entire book of Philippians? These are difficult questions to answer. Perhaps an illustration will help.

Think of the relevant context being like an onion. At the core of the onion is your particular verse or passage. The layer that is the most important is the layer that immediately surrounds and “touches” your verse or passage. But beyond that context is another layer—maybe the paragraph or chapter. Beyond that is the layer of the entire biblical book, then all the writings of a particular biblical author (e.g., Paul), then perhaps the Old or New Testaments. Eventually, the thickest and outermost layer is the whole Bible itself.

In contextual interpretation we are constantly deciding how many layers of the onion we should peel off before we stop and study. Obviously one cannot study the entire Bible every time one desires to know the meaning of an individual verse. On the other hand, however, as we read any one verse in the Bible we must remember its place in the whole.

Remembering all the layers of context while interpreting is what we will call *canonical interpretation*. Canonical interpretation is the broadest form of contextual interpretation. Here is J. I. Packer’s effort to describe canonical interpretation. Read carefully, as you will be asked to summarize below.

“Since all sixty-six books come ultimately from the mind of our self-revealing God, they should be read not just as separate items (though obviously one must start by doing that), but also as parts of a whole. They must be appreciated not only in their particular individuality of genre and style, but also as a coherent, internally connected organism of teaching. This, after all (and here I throw down the gauntlet to some of my academic peers), is what examination shows them to be. It is fashionable these days for Scripture scholars to look for substantive differences of conviction between biblical writers, but this is in my view an inquiry as shallow and stultifying as it is unfruitful. Much more significant is the truly amazing unity of viewpoint, doctrine, and vision that this heterogeneous library of occasional

writings, put together by more than forty writers over more than a millennium, displays. The old way of stating the principle that the internal coherence of Scripture should be a heuristic maxim for interpreters was to require that the analogy of Scripture be observed. This is the requirement which the twentieth Anglican Article enforces when it says that the church may not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” The modern way of expressing the point is to require that interpretation be canonical, each passage being interpreted kerygmatically and normatively as part of the whole body of God’s revealed instruction. Accepting this requirement, I infer from it the way in which theology should seek to be systematic: not by trying to go behind or beyond what the texts affirm (the common caricature of systematic theology), but by making clear the links between items in the whole compendium of biblical thought.”¹²

And a little later in the same article Packer writes:

“My constant purpose was and is to [report] on every subject I handle a genuinely canonical interpretation of Scripture—a view that in its coherence embraces and expresses the thrust of all the biblical passages and units of thought that bear on my theme—a total, integrated view built out of biblical material in such a way that, if the writers of the various books knew what I had made of what they taught, they would nod their heads and say that I had got them right.”

1. Packer’s description is an excellent (though somewhat technical) summary of canonical interpretation. Reread through these excerpts and then try to summarize his thoughts below. According to Packer, what is canonical interpretation and how might it affect our inductive study of the Bible?

12 J. I. Packer, “In Quest of Canonical Interpretation,” as cited in Robert K. Johnson, *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*, 1985. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com.

🔗 EXERCISE 1: SEEING THE OLD IN THE NEW

An immediate and fruitful application of canonical interpretation is to scour the New Testament for allusions to and citations of the Old Testament. This area of study has flowered in recent years as scholars have realized how important the Old Testament is in shaping the thinking of the New Testament authors.

Although it may be a matter of common sense, it is important to remember that Jesus and his disciples knew the *Old Testament* as “Scripture.” The New Testament, at least in the form we have it today, was unknown to any of the earliest Christians. It was the Old Testament that was memorized, preached, and cherished in the first century. Therefore, if we want to understand the New Testament, we must understand how Jesus and his disciples read and interpreted the Old Testament.

2. This exercise will concentrate on Jesus’ use of Deuteronomy during his temptation. Read both the New Testament context and the Old Testament context, and record your thoughts below on how the context of Deuteronomy 8:1-10 informs our interpretation of Matthew 4:1-4.

Matthew 4:1-4

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴ But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

¹ The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your

clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Please note that we must also look for uses of the Old Testament in the Old Testament. Some of the later Old Testament books drew heavily and explicitly from books that were written earlier.

Here, then, is a simple discipline for practicing canonical interpretation: every time a part of Scripture quotes or alludes to another part of Scripture, look up the original context and read the broader context!

🔗 EXERCISE 2: DON'T NEGLECT THOSE CROSS-REFERENCES!

Investigating Old Testament citations and allusions is made easy by most modern versions of the English Bible. Most Bibles have an extensive system of cross-references that will direct you to other relevant passages of Scripture, whether those passages are quoted or alluded to, whether they address a similar theme, or whether they use some of the same words or phrasing. Cross-references are a treasure trove for the student who is studying the Bible inductively!

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.

We will now practice checking the cross-references provided for a passage in Philemon. If you have an English Bible with you that includes cross-references, use that Bible to examine the cross-references listed for this passage. If not, then use the cross-references listed below.

Philemon 1:4-7

⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Cross-References:

Philemon 1:4 : Rom 1:8, 9

Philemon 1:5 : Col 1:4

Philemon 1:5 : Eph 1:15

Philemon 1:6 : Phil 1:9; Col 1:9

Philemon 1:7 : 2 Cor 7:4, 13; Col 4:11

Philemon 1:7 : Philemon 1:20; 2 Tim 1:16; Rom 15:32; 2 Cor 7:13¹³

¹³ These cross-references were taken from the ESV Bible as reproduced at the website <http://www.biblegateway.com>. If students do not have access to a Bible with cross-references, this website will allow you to view them.

3. As you check these cross-references, take notes on observations you make about each one and its relation to Philemon 1:4-7.

Cross-Reference	NOTES
Romans 1:8, 9	
Colossians 1:4	
Ephesians 1:15	
Philippians 1:9	
Colossians 1:9	
2 Corinthians 7:4	
2 Corinthians 7:13	
Colossians 4:11	
Philemon 1:20	
2 Timothy 1:16	
Romans 15:32	
2 Corinthians 7:13	



Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 1:27–2:11. Read this passage repeatedly. Begin to check all the cross-references provided for this text, especially noting any Old Testament citations or allusions.

Memorization is the key to meditation! Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 1 to memorize that is personally significant.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 14

Day 2 Continue your search through the cross-references. Take notes on anything significant that you find.

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 1 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Day 3 Continue your study of the cross-references. If you identify any relevant Old Testament passages (there is at least one), study the entire Old Testament chapter in which the allusion or quotation is found. Make special note of where the quoted verse appears in the chapter and what function it has in its Old Testament context. Record your observations on the provided sheet.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 20

Day 4 Continuing from the previous day, focus on discerning how the Old Testament verse is being used in its New Testament context. What illumination does the Old Testament context shed on Philippians? Record your thoughts.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

Day 5 Continue to think about how the Old Testament shapes this section of Philippians, and finish your study of the cross-references. Record what you take to be the main point of this section.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS



Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Are you conducting yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ?
2. What command does the tremendous example of Christ support? What does this mean for us?
3. Your own reflections:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▶ John Piper, “The Peculiar Mark of Majesty, Parts 1 and 2,” online sermons at desiringGod.org.
- ▶ John Piper, “Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.
- ▶ John Piper, “Why Memorize Scripture?” an online article at desiringGod.org.



Notes on the Cross-References to Philippians 1:27–2:11

Main Point of Philippians 1:27-2:11

Grasping the Flow

6

🔗 INTRODUCTION

You may have heard the common adage, “When you see a *therefore*, you should ask what it is *there for*.” This is certainly helpful, but there are also many other words that should cause us to slow down and query the text.

These connecting words are like the links between train cars. In a train, each train car must be in the proper order and attached both to each other and an engine. Only then can the train barrel down the tracks with any kind of force. Likewise, in reading the Bible, if you skim over the conjunctions that hold the argument together, whole sections of Scripture will be like idle train cars sitting in the train yard. Your reading of the Word will lack the power and coherence that God intended.

Here is John Piper’s testimony to this approach to reading Scripture:

The point of seeing propositions in relationship is not merely to elucidate the meaning of each proposition, but also to help us grasp the flow of an author’s argument. It was a life-changing revelation to me when I discovered that Paul, for example, did not merely make a collection of divine pronouncements, but that he argued. This meant, for me, a whole new approach to Bible reading.¹⁴

🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of logical interpretation
- identify key words that signify logic
- make an amplified paraphrase of a verse’s logic

¹⁴ John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis: Discovering the Original Meaning of Scriptural Texts* (a booklet published by Desiring God, 1999), 18.



STUDY GUIDE

In this lesson, we will introduce what may be called a logical interpretation of Scripture. By this, we simply mean that in order to interpret Scripture rightly, one must understand how the propositions of Scripture are logically related. The goal of logical interpretation is to think the thoughts of the author of Scripture after him.

Obviously, some sections of Scripture are more tightly argued than others. Therefore, although logical interpretation might be most fruitful in the epistles of the New Testament, for example, logical interpretation can be applied to any passage of any biblical book—even Proverbs and the Psalms.

EXERCISE 1: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LOGIC

The first step in interpreting the logic of the Bible is to identify the words that signify logical connections. These key words will signal how the argument is constructed.

1. In the following paragraph, underline all the words that, in your mind, somehow signify logical relationships.

Philemon 1:13-17

¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

Now record the missing key words and phrases as they are read by your teacher.

and, moreover, _____, likewise, neither, nor, then, or, _____,
while, on the one hand, in that, by, even as, as...so, like, _____,
not...but, that is, for, because, _____, therefore, consequently, accordingly,
_____, that, in order that, if...then, except, when, whenever, after,
before, where, wherever, so, _____, yet, nevertheless, however

As you are marking the biblical text in your inductive study, you should somehow identify these key words (listed above), whether you circle, underline, or highlight them.

🔗 EXERCISE 2: PROPOSITIONS IN RELATIONSHIP

In logical interpretation, a student of the Word reads slowly and thinks carefully about the propositions of the text. John Piper describes propositions:

“Words begin to convey determinate meanings only as they are seen to be parts of a proposition. Propositions are the basic building blocks of a text. ...A proposition is a simple assertion about something. The word “Jesus” conveys no determinate meaning when I say it alone. But, when I say, “Jesus wept,” a very clear meaning is conveyed because this statement is a proposition.”¹⁵

Once propositions are identified, the relationship between propositions is considered. This is where the conjunctions (listed above) come into play.

2. Describe in detail the logical relationship between the following propositions. Underline any key words. Record your own thoughts before discussing as a class.
 1. I would have been glad to keep him with me,
 2. in order that he might serve me on your behalf

15 John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis*, 16-17.

1. no longer as a slave
2. but more than a slave,
3. as a beloved brother

1. if you consider me your partner,
2. [then] receive him

🔗 EXERCISE 3: LOGICAL PARAPHRASING

In the preceding exercise we described the logical relationship between certain propositions. If we were to transcribe our descriptions, then we would essentially be using the sixth strategy that this course presents.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.

To paraphrase the logic of a section of Scripture, we start by identifying key words. Next, we consider the relationships between the propositions in the text. Then, we actually write an amplified paraphrase that explicitly communicates our understanding of the text's logic.

Writing such a paraphrase is simply a tool for uncovering the logical progression of the author's argument. It is intended to give the student a better grasp of the main point of the passage and an understanding of how each proposition clarifies, supports, or qualifies the main point. In addition, logical paraphrasing will often force a student to ask questions of the text that they might not otherwise ask.

The following paraphrase of Philemon 1:13-14 demonstrates the use of this sixth strategy. Study this example before trying a paraphrase of your own. Notice that some of the antecedents of the pronouns in this text have been supplied by the context.

Philemon 1:13-14

¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.

Logical Paraphrase:

I, Paul, would have been glad to keep Onesimus with me, so that by staying with me, he might serve me on your behalf, Philemon. Onesimus could have served me while I am still in prison. And you know that I am in prison for the sake of the gospel. But I preferred not to keep him with me without your explicit consent. Therefore I'm sending him back to you in order that your goodness might not be forced by my decision, but, if you did decide to send him to me, that decision would flow from your own accord. And I believe that voluntary goodness is much better than compelled goodness.

Summary Statement of the Logic:

The reason Paul did not keep Onesimus was so that Philemon's goodness would not be compelled.

3. Write a paraphrase of Philemon 1:15-17 that clarifies the logical relationships between propositions and makes explicit what you think is implied. Then compose a statement that adequately summarizes the main logical point of the passage.

Philemon 1:15-17

¹⁵ *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,* ¹⁶ *no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* ¹⁷ *So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.*



Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 2:12-18. Read this passage repeatedly. In addition to recording your observations and questions, practice logical interpretation. Begin by identifying and underlining all the words that signify logical relationships. If it helps you to create a sentence flow of this text, do that first.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 15

Day 2 Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-13 in order to make the logic and sense of these verses explicit. Choose your words carefully.

Day 3 Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:14-16.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 21

Day 4 Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:17-18 and then review your logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-18. Does it accurately convey the sense of this passage? Has this assignment increased your understanding of the passage? Has it forced you to ask questions that you may not have asked otherwise? Be prepared to discuss your paraphrase during the next class period.

Day 5 Discern the main point of Philippians 2:12-18 and write it down.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Does God's sovereign work (Philippians 2:13) *motivate* or *discourage* you from pursuing sanctification?

2. Are you motivated to prove yourself blameless and innocent?

3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- John Piper, "Build Your Life on the Mercies of God," an online sermon at desiringGod.org.
- John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis*, an online booklet at desiringGod.org.



A Logical Paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-18

Main Point of Philippians 2:12-18

“Every Word of God Proves True”

7

§ INTRODUCTION

John Piper writes about John Bunyan:

*One of the greatest scenes in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is when Christian recalls in the dungeon of Doubting-castle that he has a key to the door. Very significant is not only what the key is, but where it is:*

“What a fool I have been, to lie like this in a stinking dungeon, when I could have just as well walked free. In my chest pocket I have a key called Promise that will, I am thoroughly persuaded, open any lock in Doubting-Castle.”

“Then,” said Hopeful, “that is good news. My good brother, do immediately take it out of your chest pocket and try it.” Then Christian took the key from his chest and began to try the lock of the dungeon door; and as he turned the key, the bolt unlocked and the door flew open with ease, so that Christian and Hopeful immediately came out.

Three times Bunyan says that the key was in Christian’s “chest pocket” or simply his “chest.” I take this to mean that Christian had hidden it in his heart by memorization and that it was now accessible in prison for precisely this reason. This is how the promises sustained and strengthened Bunyan. He was filled with Scripture. Everything he wrote was saturated with Bible. He poured over his English Bible, which he had most of the time. This is why he can say of his writings, “I have not for these things fished in other men’s waters; my Bible and Concordance are my only library in my writings.”¹⁶

Though Piper and Bunyan are not directly addressing what we will learn in this lesson, notice that Bunyan’s only tools were his Bible *and his concordance!*

16 John Piper, “To Live Upon God That is Invisible,” an online biography of John Bunyan at desiringGod.org.

Certainly Bunyan knew Scripture well, but even this great man of God used a concordance when his memory failed. Bunyan is an example to us in more ways than one.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ appreciate the value of using a concordance
- ▷ learn the basic skills of using a book, or an internet, concordance
- ▷ practice using a concordance to learn about biblical words or phrases



In this lesson we come to a study strategy that will be familiar to many already. Almost all courses on inductive Bible study incorporate word studies or instructions for using a concordance.

There is strong theological warrant for doing word studies. This course espouses a view of *plenary inspiration*—that every word written in Scripture is precisely the word God intended to use. This means that not a single word in Scripture is accidental. Though every word choice may not be equally significant, nevertheless this doctrine of plenary inspiration gives us great confidence that studying the particular words of Scripture is a meaningful exercise. In this lesson, then we will learn how to do beneficial word studies.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.

Unfortunately, in our opinion, many of the courses or Bible studies that incorporate word studies do so in an unhelpful way. The reason is that not many have a good grasp on semantics and the proper use of language.

It is not within the scope of this lesson to outline all the problems to avoid in doing a word study. We do, however, want to introduce you to what may be the three most common word-study fallacies, as described by D. A. Carson.

🌀 THE ROOT FALLACY

“One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually *has* a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word.”

A modern, English example of this fallacy is the attempt to derive “the meaning of ‘butterfly’ from ‘butter’ and ‘fly,’ or the meaning of ‘pineapple’ from ‘pine’ and ‘apple.’ Even those of us who have never been to Hawaii recognize that pineapples are not a special kind of apple that grows on pines.”

🌀 FALSE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TECHNICAL MEANING

“In this fallacy, an interpreter falsely assumes that a word always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning—a meaning usually derived either from a subset of the evidence or from the interpreter’s personal systematic theology. An easy example is the word *sanctification*. In most conservative theological discussion, sanctification is the progressive purifying of the believer, the process by which he becomes increasingly holy after an instantaneous ‘positional’ or ‘forensic’ justification. But it is a commonplace among Pauline scholars that although the term *sanctification* can have that force, it commonly refers to the initial setting aside of an individual for God at his conversion.”

🌀 ILLEGITIMATE TOTALITY TRANSFER

“The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word’s entire semantic range.”¹⁷

In other words, this is the fallacy of bringing all the possible meanings of a word to bear on one particular context.

¹⁷ All of the citations in this section are taken from D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1996). The page numbers of the citations are, respectively, 28, 30, 45, and 60.

1. As you consider each of these fallacies, can you think of any examples you've encountered? Record them below before discussing them with the class.

HOW TO USE A CONCORDANCE

Having cautioned about some of the mistakes that can easily be made in doing a word study, let us reaffirm that doing word studies are profitable. The best way of doing a word study is to use a concordance. There are now two kinds of concordances that are widely available.

Book Concordance:

Many study Bibles have an abbreviated concordance toward the end, but using a book concordance is just as easy. To find the word you are studying, simply search for it in its alphabetical order (just like a dictionary). Once you locate the word, there will be a number of biblical entries underneath that word, indicating some, if not all, of the occurrences of that word in the biblical text. Sometimes concordances inform you of the underlying Greek or Hebrew word (usually using Strong's numbers). You may then be able to study the meaning of that Greek or Hebrew word. But avoid making word fallacies! See D. A. Carson's book *Exegetical Fallacies* (listed in Additional Resources section), for a helpful discussion of common word fallacies.¹⁸

¹⁸ BibleArc.com is an excellent online resource for word studies, as well as learning more about study techniques like diagramming, phrasing, and arcing. As of May 17, 2016, a video tutorial for English word studies is available in the Help section.

§ EXERCISE 1: CONCORDANCE WORK ON “ANTICHRIST”

We will now attempt a small-scale word study on the word “antichrist.” Before we study this word, think about what preconceptions you have about its meaning. What do you think it means? Where would you guess that this word occurs in the Bible?

2. Use your Bibles to look up all the occurrences of this word, listed below. Record any observations on what this word means in each context and then summarize your findings.

Notes on 1 John 2:18 (2x)

1 John 2:22

1 John 4:3

2 John 1:7

Summary

🔗 EXERCISE 2: CONCORDANCE WORK ON “LAST DAYS”

We will now examine the phrase “last days.” Again, what preconceptions do you have about the meaning of this phrase?

3. Use your Bibles to look up all the occurrences of the phrase “last days.” Record any observations on what this word means in each context and then summarize your findings.

Notes on Acts 2:17

2 Timothy 3:1

Hebrews 1:2

James 5:3

2 Peter 3:3

Summary



§ HOMEWORK

Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 2:19-30. Using a concordance, find every occurrence of the phrase “fellow worker(s).” This phrase occurs in Philippians 2:25 and the goal of our concordance work will be a better understanding of what it means in this verse. List the other references you find in the left-hand column of the assignment sheet.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 2 to memorize that is personally significant.

Day 2 Focus on the first half of the references for the phrase “fellow worker(s),” reading the surrounding context for each. Record your observations. Here are a few questions that might focus your study: 1) Can this phrase refer to men and women? 2) Does this phrase refer specifically to leaders? 3) Does this phrase occur frequently with other particular words or phrases? 4) In what contexts does this word occur?

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 2 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 32

Day 3 Focus on the second half of the references. Record observations about what this phrase means in each context.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 35

Day 4 Write a summary of how the phrase “fellow worker(s)” is used in the New Testament. How does this word study contribute to your understanding of Philippians 2:25?

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

Day 5 Discern the main point of Philippians 2:19-30 and write it down.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. How might the doctrine of inspiration motivate your completion of word studies?
2. Could your life serve as a model for others as Epaphroditus' life did?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
- ▷ John Piper, "The Good, Insane Concordance Maker," an online article at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, "Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning, Part 1a," seminar notes at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, "Biblical Eldership, Part 1a," seminar notes at desiringGod.org.



Concordance Work on “Fellow Worker(s)” in the New Testament

Reference	Observations
Rom 16:3	
Rom 16:9	
Rom 16:21	
1 Cor 3:9	
1 Cor 16:16	
2 Cor 8:23	
Col 4:11	
Phm 1:1	
Phm 1:24	
3 John 1:8	
Phil 2:25	
Phil 4:3	

Written Summary

Main Point of Philippians 2:19-30

The Blessing of Different Translations

8

🔗 INTRODUCTION

Many parts of the world have a *single* translation of the Bible in their language. Some parts of the world have no Bible, but in America, there is no lack of English translations. This is a blessing. The church in America would be impoverished if everyone used the same translation of the Bible or if no new translations were ever made.

That being said, not all translations are equally fit for the various things for which Bibles are used. For example, it would probably be unwise to encourage your six-year-old daughter to read the *King James Version* of the Bible. But likewise, it would be foolish to do serious Bible study in *The Message*. In fact, particularly for study, it is best to use a variety of translations, if possible. This allows the reader to spot the different decisions that the translations have made, because *every translation is also an interpretation* of the original languages. So rather than the multiplicity of translations causing confusion or despair, the multiple English translations of the Bible should give us new insights and questions, and sharpen our understanding of the Word of God.

🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the value of studying various translations
- grasp a brief history of the English Bible and basic translation philosophy
- compare different translations and thereby form new observations and questions



There are a number of English translations and paraphrases of the Bible. How should we think about this variety of translations?

Reproduced below you will find a smattering of comments that John Piper has made during his sermons in the last thirty years. Although most of these comments are not intended to directly address translation philosophy or reliability, hopefully it will give you an idea of the various ways in which one preacher has interacted with the English translations.

“Almost all English translations miss a beautiful opportunity to preserve in English a play on words that occurs in Paul’s Greek.”¹⁹

“The translations of vv. 19 and 20 differ. The most modern translation, I think, misses the boat when they begin v. 20 with ‘whenever.’”²⁰

“I know that the translations differ here a little bit. But I don’t think the differences are serious. ...All these are possible from the Greek wording. And they are not in the end very different.”²¹

“To bring together all the various translations that are out there, let me give you a literal rendering of this verse so you can see more clearly the relationship between the words.”²²

“In fact, I am not sure the translations are exactly right in the word order. Word order in Greek is usually not decisive in what modifies what. But if a modifier can go both ways, word order can be important.”²³

19 John Piper, “Grace, Gratitude, and the Glory of God,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

20 John Piper, “If Our Hearts Do Not Condemn Us, We Have Confidence Before God,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

21 John Piper, “All Things for Good, Part 1,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

22 John Piper, “Girding the Mind to Guard Your Hope,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

23 John Piper, “Thank God for an Inspired Bible,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

“The second reason is given in verse 2: Don’t eat the bread of anxious toil because ‘God gives to his beloved in his sleep.’ Some translations say, ‘He gives his beloved sleep.’ Either is a possible translation from the Hebrew. One implies that God helps a person rest at night, the other implies that while a person is resting God is busily at work in the world to bless him. Which fits the context better?”²⁴

“Many translations will obscure this, but not the best ones.”²⁵

“Some translations say ‘by Jesus Christ.’ Some say, ‘for Jesus Christ.’ The original Greek can mean the one as easily as the other. Both are probably true in Jude’s mind. But let me show you why the NASB chose to say ‘for Jesus Christ.’”²⁶

1. In your mind, what can be learned about the English translations of the Bible from this sampling of comments? How should we approach English translations?

“I praise God that we have the Bible in English. What a gift! What a treasure! We cannot begin to estimate what this is worth to Christians and churches, and even to the unbelievers and the cultures of the English-speaking world. Ten thousand benefits flow from the influence of this book that we are not even aware of. And the preaching of this Word in tens of thousands of pulpits across America is more important than every media outlet in the nation.

24 John Piper, “Don’t Eat the Bread of Anxious Toil,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

25 John Piper, “Jesus Christ: Infinitely Superior to Angels,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

26 John Piper, “Learning to Pray in the Spirit and the Word, Part 1,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

I would rather have people read any translation of the Bible—no matter how weak—than to read no translation of the Bible. If there could be only one translation in English, I would rather it be my least favorite than that there be none. God uses every version to bless people and save people.

But the issue before the church in the English-speaking world today is not “no translation vs. a weak translation.” It is between many precious English Bibles. A Bible does not cease to be precious and powerful because its translators overuse paraphrase and put way too much of their own interpretation into the Bible. That’s the way God’s Word is! It breaks free from poor translations and poor preaching—for which I am very thankful. But even though the weakest translation is precious, and is used by God to save and strengthen sinful people, better translations would be a great blessing to the church and an honor to Christ.”²⁷

EXERCISE 1: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

In this lesson we will present a brief overview of translation philosophy, including some comments about the most popular contemporary translations. To put the matter in perspective, though, we will first present a brief overview of the history of the English Bible.

2. Complete this matching assignment by assigning each name or title a corresponding description and date. Write both appropriate letters to the left of each name or title.

Name or Title:

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| _____ | 1. English Revised Version |
| _____ | 2. William Tyndale |
| _____ | 3. John Wycliffe |
| _____ | 4. New International Version |
| _____ | 5. Johann Gutenberg |
| _____ | 6. The Geneva Bible |
| _____ | 7. The King James Bible |
| _____ | 8. Myles Coverdale |

²⁷ John Piper, “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at desiringGod.org.

Description:

- A. became the dominant English Bible for three hundred years
- B. the first Bible to include chapter and verse numbers
- C. wrote the first English translation of the Bible
- D. the first Bible to exclude the Apocrypha (intertestamental books)
- E. the best-selling modern English translation of the Bible
- F. printed the first English New Testament and was later martyred for it
- G. printed the first complete Bible in the English language
- H. his invention of the printing press allowed the Bible to be mass-produced

Date:

- I. 1380s
- J. 1450s
- K. 1526
- L. 1535
- M. 1560
- N. 1611
- O. 1880s
- P. 1973

📌 EXERCISE 2: TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY

Now that we have a little background, we will take a look at basic translation philosophy.

3. Fill in the following spectrum as your teacher provides the information:



🔗 EXERCISE 3: TRANSLATION COMPARISON

The two previous exercises have been building toward our eighth study strategy. How can we turn the multiplicity of English translations into a blessing? Knowing that each translation (to different degrees) is also an interpretation of the original languages, we can thoughtfully compare translations in our inductive study of the Bible. Comparing different translations will help us make observations and ask questions, will sometimes make the logic of a passage more explicit, and will prompt us to examine particular words.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.

4. Compare the following translations of Philippians 3:7-8 by underlining, circling, or otherwise marking similarities and differences between the translations. If you have a set of colored pens or pencils, they will come in handy for translation comparisons.

English Standard Version (ESV)

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...

New International Version (NIV)

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ...

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ

The Message (a paraphrase)

⁷ The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. ⁸ Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ

New Living Translation (NLT)

⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

King James Version (KJV)

⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ...

5. After comparing these different translations, what do you now know (or appreciate) that would not have been possible to know by reading a single translation? What new questions do you have? Record your reflections below.



Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 3:1-16. Read this passage repeatedly. Record your observations and questions.

Day 2 Do a translation comparison and analysis on Philippians 3:2-4a using the provided worksheet. Underline, circle, or otherwise mark similarities and differences between the translations. If you have a variety of colored pencils, pens, or highlighters, this might be preferable. Record your observations.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 7

Day 3 Do a translation comparison and analysis on Philippians 3:4b-6 using the provided worksheet. What are the striking similarities and differences?

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 13

Day 4 Review the translation comparison you've completed. What observations and questions has your translation comparison prompted that might not have been prompted by reading a single translation alone?

Day 5 Discern the main point of Philippians 3:1-16 and write it down.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Which Bible translation do you prefer? Why? How do you feel about the other translations?
2. What things might you need to count as loss for the sake of knowing Christ?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Always Singing One Note—A Vernacular Bible,” an online biography of William Tyndale at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ John Piper, “Exodus 21:22-25 and Abortion,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.
- ▷ Brunn, Dave. *One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- ▷ Köstenberger, Andreas J. and David A. Croteau. *Which Bible Translation Should I Use?: A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Versions*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012.



English Standard Version (ESV)

² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law, blameless.

New International Version (NIV)

² Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—
⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness, based on the law, faultless.

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

The Message (a paraphrase)

² Steer clear of the barking dogs, those religious busybodies, all bark and no bite. All they're interested in is appearances—knife-happy circumcisers, I call them. ³ The real believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ's praise as we do it. We couldn't carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it—⁴ even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials. You know my pedigree: ⁵ a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day; an Israelite from the elite tribe of Benjamin; a strict and devout adherent to God's law; ⁶ a fiery defender of the purity of my religion, even to the point of persecuting the church; a meticulous observer of everything set down in God's law Book.

New Living Translation (NLT)

² Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil and their evil deeds, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. ³ For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in my own effort. We rely on what Christ has done for us. ⁴ Though I could have confidence in myself if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! ⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and member of the tribe of Benjamin – a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so jealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

King James Version (KJV)

² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. ³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. ⁴ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.



Translation Comparison on Philippians 3:2-6

Main Point of Philippians 3:1-16

Prophecies, Parables, Proverbs— Oh My!

9

§ INTRODUCTION

The Bible has a dizzying array of genres. Prophecies, parables, and proverbs meet chronologies, battle accounts, and historical narratives. Detailed instructions for the construction of the tabernacle give way to vivid and poetic descriptions of human love. The Bible, in all its genres, simply *cannot* be read as a flat, uniform whole. Rather, sensitivity to the variety of biblical genres gives our reading a depth and texture not otherwise possible. Literary interpretation recognizes the difficulty of this task and provides “rules” that can help us navigate through the bewildering collection of materials that have been artfully stitched together into a single, unified book.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of literary interpretation
- gain a basic familiarity with some of the major biblical genres
- practice identifying the characteristics of these various genres



This course focuses on Philippians, which is an epistle of the New Testament. In some ways, New Testament epistles are the easiest place to begin inductive study. But once you complete this course and want to venture into other parts of the Bible, you will need to learn how to interpret other genres. This lesson and the next lesson start to build the foundation for such an endeavor, but don't despair! The many skills we've learned in studying Philippians can be applied to *any* genre of the Bible. And as always, a careful, patient, humble reading of the text is the most vital element in reading any genre.

Here is the third and final principle for sound interpretation. Remember that these three principles should be kept in mind throughout the inductive process.

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.
3. **Literary Interpretation:** The Bible is a collection of many different literary genres, each with its own "rules" of interpretation. Learn these rules and interpret carefully.

Since this an introductory course, we will not have nearly enough time to adequately cover the various genres and the interpretative approach that each genre demands. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you consult the Additional Resources listed at the end of this lesson and the next as you engage in further study. These resources will develop your ability to read the biblical genres with literary sensitivity.

This lesson will attempt to describe some of the biblical genres and give you some brief practice in identifying the various genres. In other words, this lesson aims to form what may be called "literary competence" at a very basic level:

“Specifically, literary tools help Bible readers to develop what John Barton calls literary competence. Each kind of literature has its own frame of reference, ground rules, strategy, and purpose. Literary competence is the ability to discern cues within the text that indicate what kind of literature we are working with and, hence, what to expect or not to expect from it. The Bible student who knows the formation and function of each literary type is in the best position to interpret correctly and to avoid serious misunderstandings.”²⁸

 EXERCISE 1: INTRODUCING THE BIBLICAL GENRES

As the above quotation suggests, the first step in literary competence is to be able to discern “what kind of literature we are working with.” Therefore, the following exercise is intended to outline eight major genres within the Bible. There are doubtless many “sub-genres” within each major genre, and some of the genres below occur within each other (e.g., parables occurring within Gospels). As you gain more biblical, literary competence, these categories will be refined.

1. Complete this matching assignment by assigning each genre a corresponding description. Write the appropriate letters to the left of each genre.

	<i>Genre</i>
_____	1. Historical Narrative
_____	2. Law
_____	3. Prophecy
_____	4. Poetry
_____	5. Proverbs
_____	6. Gospels
_____	7. Parables
_____	8. Epistles

Description:

- A. brief, memorable statements that portray practical truth
- B. a genre combining biography and teaching within a theological agenda
- C. simple, illustrative stories that call for a response from the hearers
- D. commands that define how God’s people are to act within the covenant
- E. occasional letters that were intended to be read publicly

²⁸ William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1993), 260.

- F. oracles proclaiming God’s word and calling for obedience (not merely foretelling)
- G. portions of Scripture that depict characters involved in a series of events
- H. figurative or imaginative writing in a stylized, and often parallel, structure

Once you have completed this matching exercise, your instructor will briefly lead you through a number of descriptions of these genres, as cited from some of the secondary literature listed in the Additional Resources section.

Historical Narrative

Narrative is the most common genre in the Bible. Identifying narrative is fairly straightforward and shouldn’t pose too many problems.

“Narrative in its broadest sense is an account of specific space-time events and participants whose stories are recorded with a beginning, a middle, and an end.”²⁹

Law

The term “Law” can refer to the Mosaic Law or even the first five books of the Bible. This lesson will treat ‘law’ as a literary genre that includes divine commands and the accompanying blessings and curses.

“By ‘law’ the English Bible reader understands the legal rulings and moral injunctions found within the Pentateuch.”³⁰

Prophecy

“Prophecy is a much larger biblical genre than most people think. All too many connect the word prophecy with the idea of futurology. But the bulk of prophecy in both the earlier prophets, the latter prophets, and the New Testament prophets actually involved God’s messengers speaking the word of God to a contemporary culture that needed to be challenged to cease its resistance to the word of God. As such, these prophets were ‘forth-tellers.’”³¹

29 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moses Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 69.

30 Gordon J. Wenham, “Law,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, eds. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et. al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 442.

31 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 139.

As this excerpt indicates, the prophetic literature of the Bible does include pronouncements of future judgments or restoration, but includes much more than that too. Prophetic literature often builds upon God's law and God's covenant.

Poetry

“Ancient—and especially biblical—poetry is not a purely aesthetic object, but is indeed concerned with the communication of truth. So although we call it biblical ‘poetry’ because it is artistic and beautiful language, it is not deliberately ambiguous or mystical.

The distinguishing mark of poetry in the [Old Testament] is not primarily rhyme, alliteration, or meter (although these occur from time to time), but what is commonly called ‘parallelism.’ Parallelism occurs where two (or more) lines of approximately equal length in numbers of syllables and similar grammatical structure deal with the same subject. The second line advances a bit more information or a different depiction than the first line, either by addition, contrast, or specification.”³²

“Poetry consists of written compositions typified by terseness, vivid words, and a high degree of structure. Put differently, poetry displays a higher degree of structure, sound, and language than prose.”³³

Proverbs

Proverbs are usually associated with the broader category of wisdom literature. For the purposes of this lesson, we will consider proverbs as a separate genre.

“Proverbs are brief sayings that are memorable, embody the wisdom of many, possess a fullness of meaning with a wide application, and have a bit of kick or bite to them to ensure their saltiness and continued usefulness.”³⁴

Gospels

The first four books of the New Testament warrant their own literary category.

32 Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994), 216.

33 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 216.

34 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 99.

“[Gospels are] not biographies—although they are partly biographical. . . . They are, to use the phrase of the second-century church father Justin Martyr, ‘the memoirs of the apostles.’ Four biographies could not stand side by side as of equal value; these books stand side by side because at one and the same time they record the facts about Jesus, recall the teaching of Jesus, and each bears witness to Jesus.”³⁵

Parables

The parables of the Bible, and especially those found in the teaching of Christ, vary in form and function. Broadly considered, however, the following definition may suffice:

“Most parables are stories or depictions of earthly life which both illustrate spiritual truth and provoke a response to it.”³⁶

Epistles

The book of Philippians would be categorized in this final genre we are to consider.

“[Epistles] are all what are technically called occasional documents (i.e., arising out of an intended for a specific occasion), and they are from the first century. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus belonging to all time, they were first written out of the context of the author to the context of the original recipients.”³⁷

As a reader of Scripture, you are probably already aware of these various genres. It is the intention of this lesson to encourage you to think more deliberately about these genres and how the interpretive approach to each will be determined by the kind of genre.

35 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.116 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

36 McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 221. Italics removed.

37 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.48 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

🔗 EXERCISE 2: NAME THAT BIBLICAL GENRE

Having been briefly introduced to eight major genres within the Bible, we will now practice identifying each one by looking for clues within the text.

2. Each of the following biblical passages is given without reference information. By reading the passage carefully, decide what kind of biblical genre this passage represents. Record observations that support your decision.

Passage #1

But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Passage #2

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not

in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Passage #3

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, "Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?" And he answered him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

Passage #4

These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

Passage #5

Now an old prophet lived in Bethel. And his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told to their father the words that he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he mounted it. And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. And he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread."

Passage #6

You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. You shall not eat any abomination. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.

Passage #7

After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

Passage #8

Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool. An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him. Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly. If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.

 **VARIATIONS ON A THEME**

Thus far, we have learned a number of strategies for studying particular texts. In this lesson we will introduce a new way of approaching the Bible: by doing thematic studies.

A thematic study is a way of bringing together a number of different verses that address a single topic. Therefore, for example, one could study the way in which suffering is portrayed in the letters of Paul. Though thematic studies can span the entire Bible, it is often profitable to limit the study to a particular biblical author, or even to a particular biblical book. This makes doing a thematic study more manageable.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.

The methodology for doing a thematic study is simple. First, a theme must be chosen. Second, all the relevant texts addressing this theme must be identified and listed. It is within this second step that you may choose to limit your search to a particular sub-section of the Bible. Sometimes relevant texts can be identified through a series of word searches. Third, each passage should be studied carefully within its context and observations pertaining to the theme should be recorded. And fourth, once each text has been investigated, theological reflection should seek to harmonize the contributions made by each text. This most often will take the form of writing a theological summary of your investigation.



§ HOMEWORK

Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 3:17–4:9. Read this passage repeatedly. Record your observations and questions. Discern the main point and write it down. The rest of the homework assignment will deal with Philippians as a whole.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 3 to memorize that is personally significant.

Day 2 Study the theme of joy in the letter to the Philippians. Do this by first recording all the verses in Philippians that are relevant to this theme. This may be done by looking for occurrences of forms of the words “joy” and “rejoice.”

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 3 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Day 3 Focus on the first half of the verses you recorded yesterday. Record your observations on how each reference contributes to our understanding of the theme of joy.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 29

Day 4 Now focus on the second half of the verses you recorded on Day 2. Record your observations on how each reference contributes to our understanding of the theme of joy.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 36

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 22

Day 5 Compose a written summary of your understanding of the theme of joy in Philippians. Use complete sentences. Reflect on how this theme may have altered your understanding of joy in the Christian life.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.



§ APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is your Christian life characterized by joy? Are you pursuing joy in God?
2. What are some examples of things that are excellent and worthy of praise (Phil 4:8)? How often do you think about these things?
3. Your own reflections:

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993).
- Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Mosés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).
- Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997).
- Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
- Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994).



Study on the Theme of Joy in Philippians

Reference: *Observations:*

§ WRITTEN SUMMARY

Main Point of Philippians 3:17-4:9

“Of Making Many Books There Is No End”

10

§ INTRODUCTION

The emphasis in this course has been on studying the Bible for yourself, without the help of any secondary literature. The value of this habit cannot be stressed strongly enough. Constantly depending on other people’s work will deaden your own skills of observation and interpretation. There is nothing that can substitute for the joy and benefit of harvesting insights by, as it were, the sweat of your own brow. Studying, meditating, and letting the Word dwell in you richly will also bring the greatest life transformation.

That being said, there *is* a time and place for consulting the commentaries and other secondary literature. We would be foolish not to gain from the insights that have been granted to so many others who have gone before us. To that end, it is important to build your own theological library, so that you can use the research of others to enhance your own study of the Bible. Although your library will probably never match the library of your church, let alone the library of a seminary or university, it is helpful to have a few resources on hand. At the end of this session we provide a list of resources that you may want to buy. Slowly and steadily building your library, and actually *using the resources you have*, will bring lifelong benefit to your study of the Word.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- learn, through discussion how Philippians portrays Christian joy
- practice identifying and correcting common mistakes in interpretation
- become familiar with some basic resources for a personal, theological library



§ STUDY GUIDE

In the last lesson we introduced the principle of literary interpretation. In this lesson we want to continue developing upon that principle by learning some of the “rules” for interpreting different genres found in the Bible.

This is not unrelated to use of secondary resources. Given the limited scope of this course, we cannot explore the various biblical genres in any depth. In your further inductive study, however, learning how to read each genre of the Bible will be a crucial part of your interpretive work. Therefore, in tackling any book of the Bible for study, you will probably have to lean heavily on secondary resources for guidance on the literary genre (and historical background) of the book.

§ INTERPRETING THE BIBLICAL GENRES

Building upon the last lesson, this lesson will introduce you to some of the conversation in the secondary literature on the topic of interpreting the various biblical genres. We will proceed through the eight categories of genre that were introduced in the last lesson.

Narrative

Interpreting sections of narrative is harder to do without the broader context. Therefore it is very important to read large sections of narrative at a time. If you were ever to study the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, for instance, the step of reading each book in one sitting would be very important.

This is true because the meaning of individual narratives is to be found in the larger stories of which they are a part.

“Note this carefully: every individual Old Testament narrative (bottom level) is at least a part of the greater narrative of Israel’s history in the world (the middle level), which in turn is a part of the ultimate narrative of God’s creation and his redemption of it (the top level). This ultimate narrative goes beyond the Old Testament through the New Testament. You will not fully do justice to any individual narrative without recognizing its part within the other two.”³⁸

38 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.80 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

So, for example, in studying stories about King David, we must constantly remember his place in Israel's history and in God's plans of redemption. Fee and Stuart helpfully list ten principles for interpreting narratives. We will reproduce only five of them here:

- “1. An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.*
- 2. An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.*
- 3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.*
- 4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.*
- 5. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.”³⁹*

Law

Interpreting Old Testament law is difficult for a Christian because we must not only attempt to understand the original intent of Moses, but we must also interpret law in light of Christ's coming. When God gave the Law to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, he certainly had in mind the sending of his Son in the fullness of time. Here are two general guidelines for interpreting law and our relationship to it as Christians

Do see the Old Testament law as God's fully inspired word for you.

Don't see the Old Testament law as God's direct command to you.

Do see the Old Testament law as the basis for the Old Covenant, and therefore for Israel's history.

Don't see the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the New Covenant except where specifically renewed.⁴⁰

39 Ibid., 83-84.

40 Ibid., 163-164.

John Piper wrote the following comments in response to the question, “What then shall those who are justified do with the Law of Moses?”

“Read it and meditate on it as those who are dead to it as the ground of your justification and the power of your sanctification. Read it and meditate on it as those for whom Christ is your righteousness and Christ is your sanctification. Which means read and mediate on it to know Christ better and to treasure him more. Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30; 14:9). So to know the God of the Old Testament is to know Christ. The more you see his glory and treasure his worth, the more you will be changed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), and love the way he loved—which is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).”⁴¹

We must remember, however, that for Israel the law was the covenant stipulations to be kept. It was demanded of them as God’s people.

Prophecy

As we have said before, interpreting prophecy entails more than looking for fulfillment of predictions. That is because prophecy includes more than just pronouncements about the future.

“To see the prophets as primarily predictors of future events is to miss their primary function, which was to speak for God to their own contemporaries. ... [The prophets] are God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if the Law is kept, blessing will result; but if not, punishment will ensue.”⁴²

When interpreting future-oriented prophecy, however, we should keep in mind this assertion:

“The Bible itself offers the best guide to the interpretation of prophecy. It indicates which prophecies were fulfilled during the [Old Testament] and [New Testament] periods and suggests patterns for interpreting [Old Testament] prophecies today.”⁴³

41 John Piper, “How to Use the Law Lawfully to Bear Fruit for God,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

42 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.166, 168 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

43 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 310.

One important thing to note about prophecy is its frequent double layering of time referents. Fee and Stuart again explain:

“...Some of the prophecies of the near future were set against the background of the great, eschatological future, and sometimes they seem to blend.

...Thus there are some things in the prophets that may belong to the final events of the age. But the temporal judgments that are often spoken of in conjunction with those final events must not be pushed into the future as well...”⁴⁴

The common illustration used to communicate this point is one of parallel mountain ranges. From a distance it may appear that parallel mountain ranges are stacked upon one another. This can be compared to the prophetic vision of old covenant prophets who may not have been able to distinguish the first and second comings of the Messiah. As we move farther along in biblical history, however, it's as if we are coming upon the first mountain range, only to discover that a second mountain range stands behind it, and a great distance is fixed between the ranges. Therefore, in interpreting prophecy we must allow our own eschatological perspective to inform how we read this blending of the near and distant future.

Poetry

Poetry is not to be interpreted mechanically. Rather, we should enjoy it for what it is! In addition, the inductive student should heed the following warning:

“One needs to be aware that Hebrew poetry, by its very nature, was addressed, as it were, to the mind through the heart (i.e., much of the language is intentionally emotive). Therefore, one needs to be careful of over-exegeting the Psalms by finding special meanings in every word or phrase, where the poet may have intended none.

...It is likewise important to remember that the vocabulary of poetry is purposefully metaphorical. Thus one must take care to look for the intent of the metaphor.”⁴⁵

44 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.182 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

45 Ibid., 189, 190.

Proverbs

Proverbs also pose a special challenge for those who are rigid in their approach to the Bible.

“A common mistake in biblical interpretation and application is to give a proverbial saying the weight or force of a moral absolute. Proverbs are catchy little couplets designed to express practical truisms. They reflect principles of wisdom for godly living. They do not reflect moral laws that are to be applied absolutely to every conceivable life situation.”⁴⁶

Knowing the intended purpose of the proverbs helps us avoid misinterpretations.

“Proverbs state a wise way to approach certain selected practical goals but do so in terms that cannot be treated like a divine warranty of success. The particular blessings, rewards, and opportunities mentioned in Proverbs are likely to follow if one will choose the wise courses of action outlined in the poetical, figurative language of the book.”⁴⁷

“Each inspired proverb must be balanced with others and understood in comparison with the rest of Scripture. ...No proverb is a complete statement of truth. No proverb is so perfectly worded that it can stand up to the unreasonable demand that it apply in every situation at every time.”⁴⁸

Gospels

The biblical Gospels are biographical in nature, but we would be mistaken to read them as though they were intended to be exhaustive accounts of what Jesus said and did (cf. John 21:25).

“...in reading and studying the Gospels one must take seriously not only the evangelists’ interest in Jesus per se, what he did and said, but also their reasons for retelling the one story for their own readers. The evangelists, we have noted, were authors, not merely compilers. ...They were authors in the sense that with the

46 Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 89.

47 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.220. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

48 *Ibid.*, 222, 223.

*Spirit's help they creatively structured and rewrote the material to meet the needs of their readers.*⁴⁹

Therefore, the Gospel writers selected, arranged, and adapted the material about Jesus that they had. The Gospels have *theological* agendas and not merely historical interest in Jesus.

*“Although it is not uncommon for scholars to argue that the gospel narratives are unreliable, we cannot really preserve the message of the New Testament if we minimize its historical foundation. Nevertheless, the Gospels were written not merely to communicate factual information, nor were they composed according to the methods and expectations of modern history-writing. The authors were very selective in the material they chose to include and, furthermore, presented it in a way that reflected their own (inspired) interpretation and application of the facts. They wrote as both historians and theologians.”*⁵⁰

Parables

There is still much current debate about how exactly we should interpret (and teach) the parables of Jesus. It does seem clear, though that we should not read too much into the details of the parable, but rather focus on what effect the parable was intended to have.

“It is this ‘call for response’ nature of the parable that causes our great dilemma in interpreting them. For in some ways to interpret a parable is to destroy what it was originally. It is like interpreting a joke.

*...The two things that capture the hearer of a joke and elicit a response of laughter are the same two things that captured the hearers of Jesus’ parables, namely their knowledge of the points of reference and the unexpected turn in the story.”*⁵¹

Thus, our way of preserving the force of the biblical parables is to retell the parable in such a way that the points of reference are comparable and the desired response is the same. There are a number of books that are solely devoted to interpreting the parables, including Blomberg’s *Interpreting the Parables* and Kistemaker’s *The Parables*.

49 Ibid., 126-127.

50 Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 104.

51 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.138, 139. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

Epistles

By working through Philippians during this course, hopefully you have an idea of the challenges that a New Testament epistle presents. Here is Fee and Stuart's advice:

"Most of our problems in interpreting the Epistles are due to this fact of their being occasional. We have the answers, but we do not always know what the questions or problems were, or even if there was a problem. It is much like listening to one end of a telephone conversation and trying to figure out who is on the other end and what that unseen party is saying. Yet in many cases it is especially important for us to try to hear 'the other end,' so that we know what our passage is an answer to."⁵²

The discipline of trying to hear the other end of the telephone conversation is sometimes called a mirror-reading of the text. Though this exercise can be dangerously speculative, it is sometimes an important part of interpreting a New Testament epistle (such as the book of Galatians).

EXERCISE 1: DEBUNKING MISINTERPRETATIONS OF GENRE

Now that we've briefly surveyed basic interpretive principles for reading some of the major categories of biblical genre, we will try to put this knowledge to use.

2. Each of the following biblical passages is given with an interpretation. Interact with the interpretations by recording your agreements and disagreements with their methodology or conclusions. Support your ideas with arguments from the Bible. You may use your English Bibles to study the broader context.

Passage #1 – Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:3

¹⁰ *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,* ¹¹ *"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."* ¹² *But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."* ¹³ *And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"* ¹⁴ *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" [...]*³ *And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son.*

52 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.48. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com

Interpretation: “Christians have been wrong to see this prophecy (in 7:14) as referring to Jesus. In the Old Testament context, the sign is given *to Ahaz*. Moreover, the prophecy is fulfilled in the next chapter.”

Passage #2 – Exodus 20:8-11

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Interpretation: “No one will argue that the Ten Commandments aren’t binding on Christians today. But then why do we disregard the Sabbath command? We should observe Saturday, not Sunday, as a day of rest because that is when the Jews rested. Furthermore, work of any kind on the Sabbath should be prohibited.”

Passage #3 – Psalm 44:18-25

¹⁸ *Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way;*
¹⁹ *yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death.* ²⁰ *If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god,* ²¹ *would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.* ²² *Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.* ²³ *Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!* ²⁴ *Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?* ²⁵ *For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground.*

Interpretation: “This psalm is troubling. It teaches us that sometimes God forgets about us, and even ‘goes to sleep.’ Or, I suppose it could be teaching us that it is okay to question God or to get angry with him. Either way, it’s hard to see why this is in the Bible.”

Passage #4 – Judges 4:4-9

⁴ *Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.* ⁵ *She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.* ⁶ *She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, “Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ^{10,000} from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.’”* ⁷ *And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?”* ⁸ *Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”* ⁹ *And she said, “I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”* Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Interpretation: “This text clearly demonstrates that women had positions of leadership within the Old Testament. Therefore, we should not bar a woman from being an elder or pastor in our churches today.”

Passage #5 – Proverbs 22:4-6

⁴ *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*

⁵ *Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.* ⁶ *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Interpretation: “According to this passage, if someone isn’t rich and honorable, then they must not be humble. Furthermore, if parents have a wayward child it is clearly a sign that the parents failed somehow in their parenting.”

Passage #6 – John 2:13-16

¹³ *The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* ¹⁴ *In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.* ¹⁵ *And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and over-turned their tables.* ¹⁶ *And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”*

Interpretation: “The gospel writers couldn’t get their facts straight. The author of the gospel of John places this incident near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, while the synoptic gospels place it near the end (cf. Matt 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-18, Luke 19:45-46). This demonstrates that the gospels are unreliable as historical accounts of what Jesus said and did.”

Passage #7 – 1 Corinthians 11:4-8

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head- it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

Interpretation: “Paul lays down a clear command in this passage. Women should cover their head in church, plain and simple. If you want to discard this command as culturally irrelevant, you might as well throw out all of Paul’s commands to the church.”

Passage #8 – Luke 18:2-8

² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?” ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Interpretation: “Does Jesus really equate God with an unjust judge in this passage? It also seems as if this parable teaches that prayer is ‘wearing down’ or ‘bothering’ God. Because the elect are parallel to the widow in the parable, are we to understand that the elect are likewise poor and destitute? Who is the church’s adversary (v. 3)?”

🔗 SECONDARY RESOURCES—WE RECOMMEND THEM

Before we dive into some helpful secondary resources, keep this in mind:

“We must beware of the temptation to replace the study of Scripture with the reading of good books about the Scripture. If you want to know if a man has studied well, don’t ask him to show you his library. Ask him to show you his personal notebooks where he has recorded his own authentic insights into the Word of God.”⁵³

This course is designed to help you mine your own authentic insights from the Word of God. As the introduction suggests, however, it would be foolish to ignore the insights that God has given to the great men and women of previous generations.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.
10. Consult secondary resources.

Consulting secondary resources, then, is the tenth and final study strategy we are presenting in this course. It is deliberately the last strategy because we believe it is best to do the first nine steps *before* you consult other resources. Consulting secondary resources, however, does not end your inductive study. Rather, reading the arguments of a commentator on the biblical text should send you back to the text to see if what they are asserting is true. Remember to be a good Berean (Acts 17:10-12)!

53 John Piper, “The Ministry of the Word,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

Resources We Recommend

We consider the following list to be but a few of the resources that could be helpful to you as you pursue your own inductive Bible study. By recommending these resources, we do not thereby condone everything that is written in them.

- ▷ *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1994)
A single-volume Bible commentary representing the evangelical perspective. This commentary has articles written by excellent scholars in their field of expertise.

- ▷ IVP Bible Dictionary Series
Reference works containing articles on biblical themes, interpretation, historical context, and each book of the Bible.

- ▷ Ferguson, Everett, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).
The third edition is an updated and expanded version of a standard work on the historical backgrounds to early Christianity.

- ▷ Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) and D. A. Carson et al., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).
Introductions to the historical setting and meaning of the Old and New Testament. These volumes deal with critical methodology and survey past scholarship.

- ▷ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001)
A valuable reference with entries on topics within systematic, historical, and philosophical theology.

- ▷ Carson, D. A., *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
This book alerts its readers to common exegetical fallacies. Reading this book will make you more aware of the mistakes you unwittingly commit.

- ▷ Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).
A clear, readable, and worshipful presentation of systematic theology.
- ▷ *Desiring God Ministries* (desiringGod.org)
A vast online resource of John Piper's ministry. Search for the article, "What Are Some Books That DG Recommends?"
- ▷ DeRouchie, Jason S., ed. *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013).
An Old Testament survey textbook, aiming to show the make clear the ways in which the Old Testament points to Christ and portrays the back-drop to the revelation of the New Testament.
- ▷ Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible. 40 Questions*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.
Answers 40 questions that are common amongst students of the Word.
- ▷ Doriani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001.
Practical advice to appropriately apply the Bible and avoid mishandling scripture.

In addition to these resources, see also the resources that are listed in the Additional Resources sections throughout the course. We also recommend online resources, such as BibleArc.com, Logos, and Accordance, where you can gain access to thousands of resources.



Day 1 Concentrate your study on Philippians 4:10-23. Read this passage repeatedly. Combine all the strategies that we have learned thus far: sentence flows, making observations, discerning the main point, asking questions, checking cross-references, logical analysis, concordance work, comparing translations, and investigating biblical themes.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 4 to memorize that is personally significant.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 37

Day 2 Continue your inductive study of Philippians 4:10-23.

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 4 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 27

Day 3 Continue your inductive study of Philippians 4:10-23.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 28

Day 4 *After you have done all of your own work, read the commentary handout (provided by your teacher for this session).*

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 34

Day 5 After reading the commentary, compare your own inductive study to it. What have you gained by consulting a secondary resource? What areas of agreement and disagreement do you have? What are the benefits and limitations of a commentary? Come to the next session prepared to discuss your thoughts.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.


 **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- ▷ William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993).
- ▷ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Mosés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- ▷ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).
- ▷ Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997).
- ▷ Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
- ▷ Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994).



Inductive Study of Philippians 4:10-23

Logical Paraphrase:

Concordance Work:

Translation Comparison:

Applying the Word

11

§ INTRODUCTION

We have now come to what is perhaps the most important lesson of this course, because in it we will focus on the application of the Word. The lessons preceding this one have been building up to it, for if we are to rightly apply the Word we must first interpret it accurately. But sound interpretation is not enough! Listen to the warning of C. J. Mahaney:

However, we can often forget that a knowledge of Scripture alone is not sufficient. Of course, James won't let us forget that we must "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). This verse tells us that apart from obedience, knowledge can be deceptive.

...The problem occurs when we assume that merely attending a conference, or listening to a sermon, or reading a book [or, we could add, studying the Bible] signifies actual change. We can even be deeply moved by profound scriptural truth but never actually grow in godliness. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Peter Davids elaborates, "No matter how extensive one's scriptural knowledge, how amazing one's memory, it is self-deception if that is all there is. True knowledge is the prelude to action, and it is obedience to the Word that counts in the end."⁵⁴

Therefore, this lesson will attempt to provide some principles for appropriate application of the Word. Most often, though, it is not a matter of understanding what we must do—we often know what the Word is calling us to. Most often it is a matter of actually putting the Word into practice.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ discern what consultation of secondary resources can and cannot accomplish
- ▷ explain some ways in which the Word can be inappropriately applied to our lives
- ▷ understand several principles for appropriate application

54 C. J. Mahaney, "The Pastor's Priorities," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 120.



STUDY GUIDE

The application of God's Word is an essential step in inductive study. But during this course thus far we've concentrated on understanding the message of Philippians in its original, historical context. Our inductive study of Philippians has confirmed that the situation Paul is addressing is, in some ways, radically different from our own. Aside from historical and cultural differences, it is almost too obvious to state that we, as twenty-first century readers, did not send a gift to Paul! Likewise, Paul's travel plans are not of immediate relevance to us. But as we discerned earlier in this course, these two things were part of the occasion for Paul writing the letter. So how can this letter, then, be relevant and even authoritative for us? To convey this problem most acutely, imagine that some present-day missionary from Italy was thanking friends of his in Greece for supporting him financially. Somehow your church receives a copy of this letter and your pastor encourages you to read from it as determinative for your life! How can this be?

The fact of Paul's apostleship and the doctrine of inspiration do, in fact, make this letter binding on us today. But this still does not solve the problem of how we should apply Philippians appropriately.

The first thing to recognize is that the specific application of Philippians may vary from person to person or from church to church. Certainly there are general injunctions that would remain the same. But since we are all in different places spiritually, we will need to have the Word address and shape us in different ways. So while the original meaning is fixed, the application might vary in its details:

"The terminology adopted for the stages of application varies. Some speak of application as part of interpretation, while others think of it as a separate step. Some talk of what the text meant versus what it means. One of the most popular distinctions that evangelicals have utilized follows E. D. Hirsch's discussion of meaning vs. significance. 'Meaning' refers to the ideas the biblical text originally intended to communicate to its readers; 'significance' refers to the implications of that meaning in different, later situations. From this vantage point, therefore, the meaning of any given passage of Scripture remains consistent no matter who is reading the text, while its significance may vary from reader to reader."⁵⁵

55 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 401.

Again, let us cite an excerpt from Bethlehem's Affirmation of Faith:

...Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations.⁵⁶

🔗 INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION

There are at least three ways in which it would be inappropriate to apply Philippians. First, we should avoid **over-spiritualizing** the text. An example of this might be considering Paul's imprisonment and then asking about what "spiritual" prisons we find ourselves in and what our attitude should be in waiting for deliverance. Another bogus question would be to ask yourself, "Who are the mutilators of the flesh in my life?" and then derive some kind of spiritual insight based on a parallel from Philippians 3. Although these examples may be exaggerated, spiritualizing is a common tendency in the church.

Second, we should beware of **uncritical imitation** of biblical characters. Philippians is somewhat unusual in this regard since Paul deliberately offers himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as models for the Philippians. This mistake is much more common in applying the examples of Old Testament characters who aren't necessarily described in order to commend for imitation, but described for other reasons. But even in Philippians it would be a mistake to infer that every missionary gift should be hand-delivered or that imprisonment is always God's plan for advancing the gospel through missionaries.

Third, we shouldn't **moralize** from the text. A possible example of this would be to construct a lengthy exhortation from Philippians 1:15. Such an exhortation could run something like this: "Paul here is laying out the two ways in which one can preach the gospel. You can preach it from envy or you can choose to preach it from goodwill. Everyone inevitably falls into one of these two camps. So the question this text is asking you is: 'What kind of preacher of the gospel will you be? Will you preach from envy or from goodwill?' Therefore, let's be those who preach from goodwill." As you can see, this exhortation is not totally invalid, but it is not directly related to what Paul is intending in the text and it can easily eclipse the intended message of Philippians.

⁵⁶ Taken from Elder Affirmation of Faith, Section 1.3.

1. Brainstorm other ways in which the book of Philippians could be misapplied. Or think about invalid approaches to application that you've encountered in other parts of the Bible. Record your thoughts below and be prepared to share them with the class

APPROPRIATE APPLICATION

Therefore, how *should* we apply Philippians? This lesson will introduce ten general principles for the appropriate application of the Word. They are listed below and then explained in more detail.

Ten Principles for Appropriate Application

1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.
2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.
3. Receive God's Word directly in comparable situations.
4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.
5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.
6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.
7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.
8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.
9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.
10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

1. *Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.*

This first principle simply recognizes that application follows observation and interpretation in the inductive process. If you are careful and deliberate in your interpretation of the Bible, appropriate application will come much more easily. Don't discard all of the previous work you've done in interpretation once it comes time for application.

In addition, it is imperative that we thoroughly understand the author's main point in each section and his overall purpose in writing. Our application should be in line with the author's intended, textual effect. In other words, ask yourself what the original author was trying to accomplish in writing. Then, ask yourself whether the author's purpose is being realized in your reading of the text. As part of this process it is also fitting to ask what God may have intended in including the particular book as a part of his Holy Scripture. What messages and benefits would the church of Jesus Christ be lacking if this book was not included in the canon?

Here are reflections that complement what we've been stressing:

"I have argued that the Bible is much more than a book of information, more even than divinely revealed information. It is a collection of divine communicative actions that continue to work their effects in those who read in Spirit and truth.

How should we respond to Scripture as God's communicative action? For every communicative action there is an equal and opposite communicative reaction. Well, not quite. Readers do not always behave according to Newton's third law of motion. Yet responsive readers should respond to the biblical text in a fitting manner, a manner that is appropriate to what the text itself is doing. Because God does many things with words, our responses too will be varied: we must affirm the doctrine, obey the law, hold fast in hope to the promises, rejoice in the gospel."⁵⁷

This is exactly right. Doctrine should be affirmed, promises should be cherished, warnings should be heeded, commands should be practiced, arguments should be understood, etc. We ought to put ourselves in the pathway that the text and Spirit are already moving along.

57 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2002), 39.

2. *Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.*

The Bible is about God. It is a revelation of his character and his wise plan for creation. Certainly the Bible includes God's will for our lives, but we misunderstand the Bible if we think it is primarily about us.

Therefore, in reading the Bible we should always be alert to what the Bible is revealing to us about the nature and glory of God. And whatever we learn of God from the Bible we must be ready to embrace and worship. So as you read, consciously think about what the text is teaching us about God.

More specifically, though, we ought to be Christ-centered in our reading of the Bible. As Jesus instructed his disciples, all Scripture is about him.

Luke 24:25-27, 44-48

²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ...⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things."

John 5:39-40

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

3. *Receive God's Word directly in comparable situations.*

There are times when the original recipients will be in a situation that is directly comparable to situations that we find ourselves in. In these instances, it is easy to apply the Bible's teaching. So, for example, you may find yourself worrying about the future. Jesus spoke directly to this situation in Matthew 6:25-34. As readers of the Bible, we have little to do in converting this first-century message into 21st-century application.

The skill in applying this principle, however, is in discerning what are comparable situations. Practice and the community of faith will help you develop this needed discernment.

4. *Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.*

This principle of application should be used in conjunction with the previous one. There are times when the original recipients are not in directly comparable situations to our own. This will often happen when cultural or historical situations are different from what we experience today.

John Piper leads us through an application of this principle:

“A Holy Kiss of Affection

First, then, consider the holy kiss in verse 16. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” After saying Greet thirteen times, he now gives them one urging for how to do it. Kiss my precious friends for me. If I were there, I would kiss them. What should we think about the “holy kiss” (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)? Five observations may be helpful.

1. It Was a Common Custom

It was a widespread custom outside the church to kiss friends and guests. When Jesus was invited to dinner by Simon the Pharisee, Simon didn’t kiss him, but a woman anointed his feet and kissed him. Jesus said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet” (Luke 7:45). It was a gracious custom. That’s why it wasn’t strange when Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:48). It was a common greeting.

2. It Was Holy

Paul said that the kiss Christians should use is holy. He called it a holy kiss. There are many ways for a kiss to be unholy. Judas’ kiss of betrayal certainly was unholy. The kiss of adultery is unholy. The kiss of fornication is unholy. The kiss of homosexuality is unholy. The kiss of seduction is unholy. I’m sure Paul would say, “If that’s the only way you can kiss, don’t kiss.” But there is another way to kiss. Pure, holy, deep, blood-bought affection.

3. It Was Family Affection

This affection is a family affection, not a romantic one. It's the affection I felt when I kissed my father goodbye five hundred times as a boy sending him off to preach the gospel, and then welcoming him home again.

4. It Was a Physical Demonstration

The holy kiss is physically demonstrative, not just words. Healthy families are not afraid to touch each other. It's the mark of unselfconscious security and love and warmth. A visiting woman came up to me at the all-campus outdoor service last August and said, "I love to watch the men of your church. They seem natural and manly in the way they embrace each other." I felt very happy about that.

5. It Was Culturally Conditioned

I doubt that we should say that this "kiss of love" (1 Peter 5:14) is a universally binding requirement for all believers in all times and all places. Paul didn't describe it as an obligation rooted in creation or in the gospel. He took what was there in the culture and said, "Make it holy." There may be cultures and situations where a kiss would not communicate what Paul desires. Hugging might. Handshaking might. But it may be that Paul would say, "The cultural basis that gives rise to the holy kiss is a better cultural basis than one that leaves us with no meaningful physical expressions of family affection among Christians." In other words, if we don't have better cultural expressions of family affection, we probably should go back to this one.

So that's our first consideration. Paul wants the believers in Rome—and us—not just to greet each other with words but with more demonstrative expressions that say: You, as fellow believer in Christ, are precious to me.⁵⁸

You will notice in this excerpt that John Piper is searching for what the holy kiss was intended to communicate. Understanding this yields a principle that is enduring and can be appropriately and culturally applied in our own setting.

Often, it is helpful to use the second principle in tandem with this fourth one. If the historical situation is markedly different, what does the passage in question teach us about God? How might we manifest the character of God in our own culture and time?

58 John Piper, "Carry My Love to My Beloved," an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

5. *Look for the means and motivation for obedience.*

It is easy to limit application to identifying biblical commands and then trying to obey them, but if we strip the biblical commands of the grace that enables obedience and the grace that motivates it, we are at best losing the power for obedience and at worst becoming legalists. Therefore, in applying Scripture and seeking to obey it, always look to see whether the text provides the means or motivation for obedience. Incorporate these things in your reflection and application.

6. *Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.*

This principle grows out of canonical interpretation, which we explained in Lesson 5. The Bible communicates one unified message. Therefore, you should be extremely suspicious of an application which seems to contradict another teaching of Scripture, especially if that other teaching comes from a clearer portion of Scripture or a didactic one. Also, remember to place your study and application within the broader flow of redemptive history. A right handling of this principle would preclude hasty application of Old Testament passages.

7. *Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.*

The Bible was given to the church as well as to the individual believer. When attempting to apply and obey the Bible, remember that you are not the first one to read and interpret the Bible. There is a rich history and community of saints who have gone before you. So recognize your own limitations and the gifts of others by checking your application against church tradition. This is not to say, however, that the church has the same authority as the Bible. We believe that it is Scripture alone that is the final authority for matters of faith and practice.

In particular, you ought to check your application of the Bible against the teaching of your local church and the men of God whom God has placed over you. This becomes most pressing in cases in which your tentative application seems unusual or problematic for some reason.

8. *Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.*

Although not an infallible test, it is wise to determine whether your application of the Word meets the standard of Jesus' statement of the essence of the Law and Prophets. Certainly no valid application of the Bible would urge us not to love God or our neighbor.

This principle has some resonance with the work of Jonathan Edwards on revival. In his book *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* Edwards offers some positive signs that indicate that the Spirit of God is genuinely at work. Here is Sam Storms' discussion:

"Therefore, if people are led to deeper conviction that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, if they are led to deeper devotion and esteem for Christ, if they are led to more honorable thoughts of him, 'it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit' (110). Satan would never do this.

...Edwards' point is that there are certain things that Satan either cannot do or would not do: he would not awaken the conscience of the sinner or make them sensible of sin and guilt; he would not confirm their belief in or their love for the Son of God; he would not increase their love for and belief in the truth and authority of the Scriptures; he would not increase our love or humility."⁵⁹

The same could be said of our application of Scripture. We can be sure that we are not being deceived if our interpretation and application of the Bible is leading to a greater love for God and for neighbor. This, however, does not mean that we shouldn't carefully determine whether the text we are studying is leading us to love God and neighbor in a way we are not anticipating. Rightly interpreting and applying Scripture will show us how to love God and neighbor.

9. *Pray to God throughout the process of application.*

We will state the obvious lest it be taken for granted. In applying the Word, seek the help and illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will reveal areas of your life that need God's transforming grace—areas of which you may not have been aware.

59 These excerpts are taken from <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/jonathan-edwards-and-the-theology-of-revival-2>, accessed on August 20, 2007.

Psalm 139:23-24

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the need for others in the process of applying what you've seen in the Word. Too often our application of the Word falls flat because we've made no provision for putting our application into practice. Although this last principle does not relate to understanding a proper application of Scripture, it does relate to achieving proper application. The accountability and encouragement other believers provide is indispensable. And in sharing what you're learning through the Word, God may challenge and exhort those around you as well!

EXERCISE: SUMMARIZE AND APPLY PHILEMON

After studying through a biblical book section by section, there are two steps remaining in the inductive process this curriculum proposes. First, we recommend that you summarize the book. This will help you to draw together what you've learned as you have studied through the book. Summarizing the book also allows you to return to a broader vantage point and to consider, again, what the book as a whole is about. The summary you compose might well serve as the first thing you consult in reviewing your inductive work at a later time.

After summarizing the book in your own words, then think in a focused way about the application of the book's message. Though we encouraged you to remain sensitive to receiving God's Word throughout the inductive study process, this is a time in which you can devote more concentrated effort to applying what you have learned to your own life.

2. Keeping in mind the ten principles you've just covered, first summarize the book of Philemon in a few sentences. Then record some of your initial thoughts about the 21st-century application of this biblical book.

Philemon

¹¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. ²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



Day 1 Now that we've examined the details of the text, paragraph by paragraph, it is time once again to examine the book of Philippians from a bird's eye view. Read the entire book again in one sitting. Then review your previous homework assignments from Lessons 1-5. Think about how you might summarize the book.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapters 38, 39

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 10

Day 2 Read Philippians again in one sitting. Review your previous homework assignments from Lessons 6-10 and continue to think about how you might summarize the book.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 40

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 41

Day 3 Write a summary of the book of Philippians in a few short paragraphs. Write another summary of the book in one or two sentences. This shorter summary might be something for you to memorize.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 42

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 43

Day 4 Using your notes from all previous homework assignments, reflect on the problems involved in applying Philippians to your life. What obstacles do we face in bridging the gap between the first and twenty-first centuries? Record your thoughts.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 44

Day 5 What would be an *illegitimate* way of applying Philippians? What is the message of the book of Philippians? How is God speaking to you, specifically, through this book? What has he convicted you with this semester? How has he encouraged you and what has he taught you? How has your vision of God been expanded as a result of your study? Record your thoughts on the appropriate application of this book.

Required Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 46

Further Reading: *Living by the Book*, Chapter 12

 APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Was it easier or more difficult to write a summary of Philippians after studying through it this semester? Why? What does this teach you about inductive study?
2. If you had to encourage someone else to read and study Philippians, what would you say to them?
3. Your own reflections:

 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- John Piper, “God Glorified in Good Resolves,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.



Summary of Philippians

Two-Sentence Summary of Philippians



Application of Philippians

Study the Word!

12

§ INTRODUCTION

As our final introductory word, hear this exhortation from John Piper. Though originally spoken to pastors with reference to the original languages, it applies to all students of the Bible:

The life of the church hangs on the word of God (Matthew 4:4). And that inspired word has come to us in the form of a book written in Greek and Hebrew. None of us comes into the world able to read, let alone read Greek and Hebrew. These things must be learned. And they must be learned by study.

And even when they are learned, they only become fruitful when used like mining tools to dig out the gold and silver of Scripture. And the only way to dig is to study. The good hand of the Lord was upon Ezra, the Scripture says, because he “had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:9–10). And Paul tells Timothy to be zealous to present himself to God as a work-man who does not need to be ashamed because he rightly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).⁶⁰

To balance this exhortation, hear also Job, Chapter 28. We can mine for wisdom in God’s Word. But it is God alone who gives it:

Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness. He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon’s eye has not seen it. The proud beasts have not trodden it;

60 John Piper, “The Ministry of the Word,” an online sermon at desiringGod.org.

the lion has not passed over it. Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light. But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, "It is not in me," and the sea says, "It is not with me." It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, "We have heard a rumor of it with our ears." God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. And he said to man, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."

LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand how to apply the book of Philippians
- ▷ review and comprehend the entire process of inductive Bible study
- ▷ be exhorted to make inductive Bible study a life-along habit and joy



You may have noticed already that this course provided no overview of the inductive process at the beginning of the course. Rather, we have deliberately waited until now, at the end of the course, to explain how we think books of the Bible can be systematically studied.

The following section simply explains what we've done during this course and arranges the steps into one inductive process.

📖 OVERVIEW OF THE INDUCTIVE PROCESS

This course was designed to teach you the necessary skills and methodology that you will need in order to study the Bible yourself. Although there is no magic formula for doing inductive study, the following points summarize what we've done in this course and will start you in the right direction.

Step 1. Inductive Bible study requires hard work, patience, and concentration. Remember the student and the fish! To devote yourself to this kind of study, set aside substantial blocks of undistracted time.

Step 2. We recommend studying entire biblical books if possible. Begin by reading through the book in a single sitting. Repeat this several times, observing every detail that is given about the author, the recipients, and the relationship between the two. From these clues, and any other clues that you can find outside the book, attempt to reconstruct the occasion and purpose of the book.

Please note that the author, recipients, and occasion will not always be easily recognizable. This step will be more productive in some books than others.

Step 3. We strongly encourage you to write down all of your observations and ideas. Not only will this discipline force you to be clearer, but it will also provide you with a record of your study that you will benefit from long after you finish. So let your pencil or pen be your second pair of eyes.

Step 4. Once you have grasped the basic content and thrust of the book, attempt to discern its structure. Notice major divisions and minor divisions within the

text and constantly ask yourself what the author is doing in each new section. Compose a chart or outline, or otherwise represent the structure of the book.

Step 5. After gaining something of an understanding for the book as a whole, begin to study through the book, section by section (as determined by your outline). As you study each section remember the following principles and employ the following strategies:

Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.
3. **Literary Interpretation:** The Bible is a collection of many different literary genres, each with its own "rules" of interpretation. Learn these rules and interpret carefully.

Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.
10. Consult secondary resources.

Employ these strategies as you interpret, roughly following the order in which they are listed. It is essential to do your own study before consulting secondary literature! The bulk of your time will be invested in this step, Step 5!

Step 6. When you finish studying through the book, section by section, it is helpful to summarize the message of the book in your own words. Assess what you have learned about the book as a result of your study. To this end, it is helpful to write down everything you know about the book before you begin. When you finish summarizing the book at the end of the process, compare your final summary with your initial one.

Step 7. Make constant application of what you are learning. It is crucial to first understand the author's intended meaning before you attempt to "bridge the gap" between the ancient text and your contemporary situation. Let the vision of God presented in the book shape your mind and your heart and your life. Remember the following principles:

Ten Principles for Appropriate Application

1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.
2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.
3. Receive God's Word directly in comparable situations.
4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.
5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.
6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.
7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.
8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.
9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.
10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

Step 8. Memorize as much material as you can while you study. Give particular attention to verses that strike you as convicting, encouraging, useful, or otherwise significant. Memorizing the Word will allow you to meditate on it throughout the day and quote it to others in evangelism or for encouragement. Review the verses that you memorize periodically so that you don't forget them.

Step 9. Inductive study must be continuously bathed in prayer. God grants insight, understanding, and humility through prayer.

- ▷ So before you start, ask for the Lord's help and guidance.
- ▷ During your study, turn your questions into prayers for illumination and your discoveries into prayers of praise.
- ▷ After you finish, ask the Lord to help you walk by the Spirit in accordance with the Scripture you've contemplated.

Step 10. Consider discussing with others or teaching what you are learning. If you have a study partner or participate in a group study, you will certainly benefit from the accountability and encouragement others can provide. If you have the opportunity to teach others (perhaps leading a Bible study), you will be forced to work harder and present your ideas more clearly. Studying the Word does not end in private application. The Word of God must be proclaimed!



Final Project: A Personal Bible Study Plan

For the final assignment of this course, you must compose a study plan for how you will continue inductive study of the Bible. Structure this plan by answering the following questions (or by devising your own presentation that covers similar material):

1. *Time and Location:* What is the best time of the day and best days of the week for you to study the Bible in a more rigorous and careful manner than “devotional” reading? How long will you be able to study? Where is the best place for you to study?
2. *Subject:* What biblical book would you like to study next? Why this particular book? What do you hope to learn from this book? How long do you anticipate that it will take you to study this book?
3. *Methodology:* What tools and resources will you use to help you study? In what way, if any, will your study of the Bible be different from how you studied the Bible before?
4. *Application:* With whom will you share what you’re learning through your inductive study? Could you teach anyone else what you’ve learned in this class?

Compose thoughtful, paragraph-length responses to each of these questions. Send this assignment to your instructor by mailing it to them or sending it as an email attachment.

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Living by the Book*, Chapters 47 and 48.

The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz



Appendix A

Entomologist Samuel H. Scudder (1837-1911) wrote this account of his first learning encounter with the renowned ichthyologist Dr. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), founder of Harvard University's Lawrence School of Science. The story took place around 1859, was first published (anonymously) in 1873, and has since become a classic lesson in the value of close observation for analysis.



📖 THE STUDENT, THE FISH, AND AGASSIZ; BY THE STUDENT

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

“When do you wish to begin?” he asked. “Now,” I replied. This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol. “Take this fish,” he said, “and look at it; we call it a Haemulon; by and by I will ask what you have seen.” With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me. “No man is fit to be a naturalist,” said he, “who does not know how to take care of specimens.”

[This appendix is reproduced, with modifications, from <http://people.bethel.edu/~dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm>, accessed May 25, 2016.]

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground glass stoppers, and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge, neckless glass bottles with their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half-eaten by insects and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the professor who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish was infectious; and though this alcohol had “a very ancient and fish-like smell,” I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed, when they discovered that no amount of eau de cologne would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view—just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour, I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” said he, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked.” With these encouraging words he added—“Well, what is it like?” He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body.

When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment: “You have not looked very carefully; why,” he continued, more earnestly, “you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!” And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor’s criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, towards its close, the professor inquired, “Do you see it yet?” “No,” I replied. “I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.” “That is next best,” said he earnestly, “but I won’t hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish.”

This was disconcerting; not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw. “Do you perhaps mean,” I asked, “that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?” His thoroughly pleased, “Of course, of course!” repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically—as he always did—upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next. “Oh, look at your fish!” he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue. “That is good, that is good!” he repeated, “but that is not all; go on.”

And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction. This was the best entomological lesson I ever had—a lesson whose influence was extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

An Extra Copy of the Text of Philippians (ESV)

B

Appendix B

¹¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and

continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.²¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning,¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.²¹ They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.²² But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.²³ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me,²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.²⁷ Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was

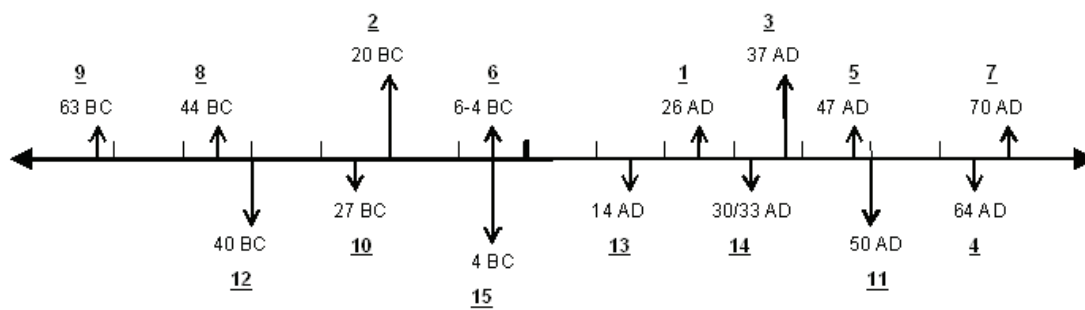
lacking in your service to me. ^{3:1} Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think other-wise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. ^{4:1} Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. ² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no

opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians your-selves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Old and New Testament Background Exercises

C

Appendix C



🔗 EXERCISE: Date the following events by writing each number next to the corresponding date on the timeline above.

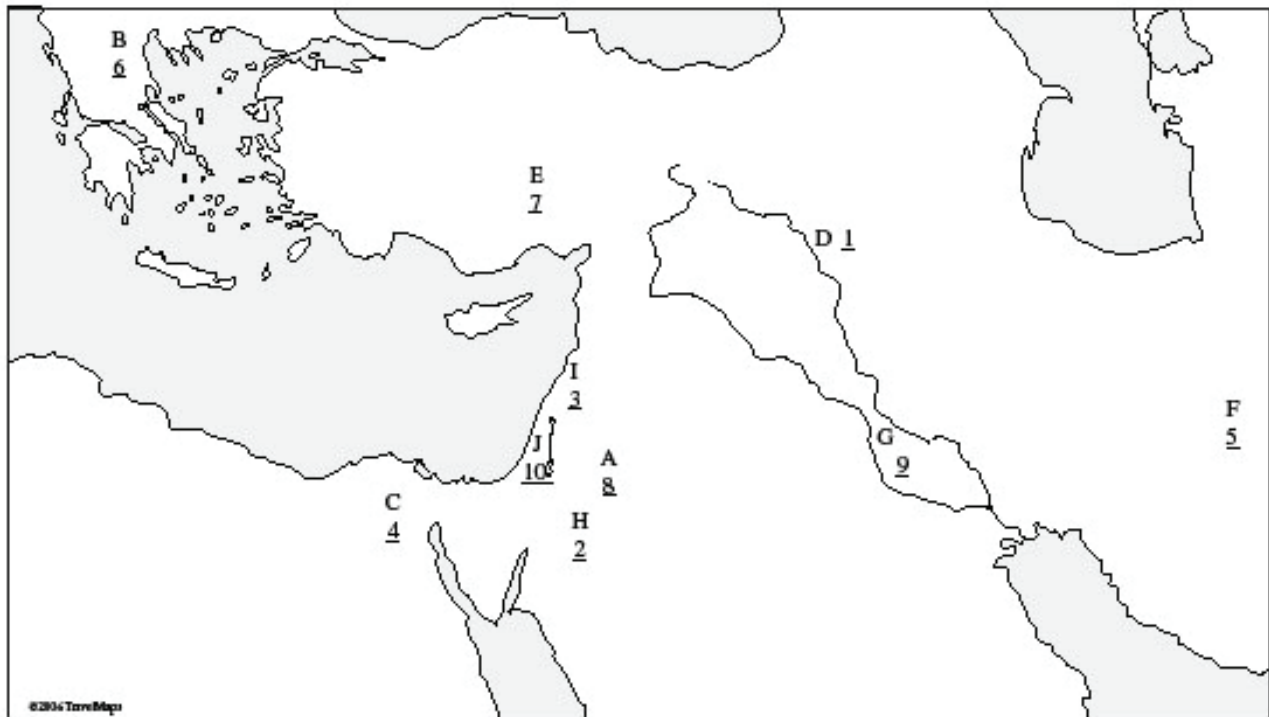
1. Pontius Pilate appointed procurator of Judea
2. Herod begins rebuilding the temple
3. Roman Emperor Tiberius dies
4. Martyrdom of Peter and Paul (approx.)
5. The start of Paul's first missionary journey
6. The birth of Jesus
7. Fall of Jerusalem and destruction of temple
8. Assassination of Julius Caesar
9. Roman general Pompey invades Jerusalem
10. Augustus becomes Emperor of Rome
11. The first New Testament books are written (approx.)
12. Herod crowned king of the Jews
13. Roman Emperor Augustus dies; Tiberius assumes power
14. The death and resurrection of Jesus
15. King Herod dies

Some of these dates are disputed. For a conservative presentation of New Testament chronology, see H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).



🌀 EXERCISE: Match the following geographical descriptions with their location on the map above by writing each number next to the corresponding letter.

1. The hub of Paul's missionary operations and place of his commissioning. **Antioch (Acts 13)**
2. The location of the significant council on Gentile issues. Jerusalem **(Acts 15)**
3. The probable location of Paul and Peter's martyrdom. **Rome**
4. The city of Paul's well-known sermon on the Areopagus. **Athens (Acts 17)**
5. The region that Paul desired the Roman church to help him toward. **Spain (Romans 15)**
6. Paul had a vision urging him to preach in this region. **Macedonia (Acts 16)**
7. The region in which Jesus spent his later childhood. **Galilee**
8. A city in Asia Minor in which Paul spent three years teaching. **Ephesus (Acts 19)**
9. The place to which Paul and others swam after their shipwreck. **Malta (Acts 28)**
10. The native city of Apollos. **Alexandria (Acts 18)**



🌀 EXERCISE: Match the following kingdoms with their location on the map above by writing each number next to the corresponding letter.

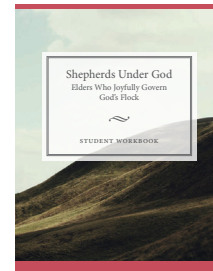
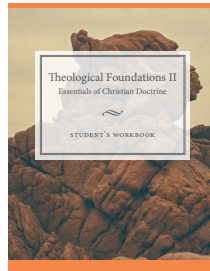
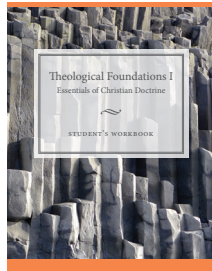
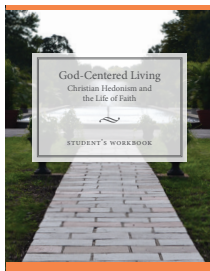
1. This kingdom destroyed Israel in 722 BC. The capitol city was Nineveh. **Assyrians**
2. The people of this kingdom were descendents of Esau. **Edomites**
3. Tyre and Sidon were two prominent cities within this kingdom. **Phoenicians**
4. Israel escaped captivity from under this kingdom in the exodus. **Egyptians**
5. This kingdom ended Israel's exile by defeating the Babylonians. **Persians**
6. This kingdom, prophesied about in Daniel, "Hellenized" the entire region. **Macedonians**
7. An important ancient empire rarely mentioned in the Bible. **Hittites**
8. Ruth came from the people of this kingdom, once subjected to Israel. **Moabites**
9. The people of this kingdom are known as Chaldeans. **Babylonians**
10. Samson and David fought against the people of this kingdom, including Goliath. **Philistines**

Mining God's Word

How to Study the Bible

Mining God's Word: How to Study the Bible is a 12-week course designed to introduce students to inductive Bible study, leading to life-long digging and delighting in God's Word. This course is an introduction to the methodology of inductive study of the Bible. Inductive study consists of careful observation of the text leading to sound interpretation and appropriate application. Students will learn study strategies and principles of interpretation and application throughout the course and apply them to the book of Philippians. Although the book of Philippians will serve as the primary "training grounds," the course aims at imparting study skills that are applicable to the entire Bible. The course also aims at fostering sensitivity to literary genre and at cultivating inductive Bible study as a life-long habit.

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