

Bible Study Methods

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Where does the Bible come from?

Lesson 1

Before we learn how to study this wonderful book, let us see how we received it.

A. The Word “Bible”

1. The word comes from the Greek word "Biblos"; a reed from which the early books (scrolls) were made.
2. The word gradually changed to mean “book of books”, “one book which consists of many”.

The Bible consists of 66 books: 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books.

B. The Bible was received over a long period of time

It took about 1600 years to write the Bible. It began 1500 years before Christ and continued until about a hundred years after Christ, when the Apostle John finished the work on the island of Patmos.

C. The Bible was written by a large group of chosen people

There were 40 people involved in receiving and writing down the Word of God. They were very different – from shepherds to kings, farmers to prophets, fishermen to doctors and apostles, etc., but the real author is none other than the Holy Spirit, who inspired them all.

D. The original writings

The original hand writings no longer exist – but very early copies do.

The Jewish Scribes of those days were trained to copy with extreme care and awe.

1. They spoke each word aloud before they wrote it down.
2. They had to clean their pen before they could write God’s name in any form.
3. Before they could write "Jehovah" they had to wash themselves, so that the name should not be defiled!
4. When they had finished writing, the work was carefully compared with the original. If just one mistake was found, the writing was destroyed and they had to start all over again.

You can see how God watched to see that His Word was brought to us exactly as it was given by the Spirit in the beginning.

E. How was the Bible inspired?

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-16

1. This speaks of all the Holy Scriptures and it says that they are given by the inspiration of God.
2. The Greek word for inspiration means "in breath" by God.
3. The Bible has been brought into existence by the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit. So, the original must be absolutely free from error, because God, who is absolute truth, cannot speak any untruth at all.

Also Read 2 Peter 1:20-21

1. You see that they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
2. God did not make them automatic "typewriters" but He used their personalities to express His message. We meet Moses with his strong character, David with his poetic nature and the Apostle John overflowing with love, etc.
3. The writers themselves were not in doubt that it was God Himself who gave them the words:
 - a) Moses wrote: "God spoke all these words", Exodus 20:1. "These are the things the Lord has commanded you to do", Exodus 35:1.
 - b) David wrote: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me and His word was on my tongue", 2 Samuel 23:2.
 - c) Jeremiah says: "The word of the Lord came to me", Jeremiah 1:4.
 - d) The Apostle John wrote: "The revelation of Jesus, which God gave – to his servant John", Revelation 1:1.
 - e) Josephus, the Jewish historian writes (p640): "Now there was about this time one Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many Jews and Gentiles. He was the Christ".

F. Did God inspire word for word or just the thoughts?

Read 1 Peter 1:10-12

It is clear that the prophets did not always completely understand the words God gave them. They just had to write them down.

Read Psalm 22:16-19

1. How could David understand the crucifixion? It was a Roman way of execution

which came into use hundreds of years later. But he wrote: "They have pierced my hands and my feet", etc.

2. How could Moses write about creation, if he did not get it word for word from God? (He probably received it when he was on the mountain for 40 days.)

So God surely gave it to them all, word for word.

G. The Bible is inspired, word for word

Read Matthew 5:18

(The Hebrew and Greek texts are obviously very accurate. Translations into different languages can sometimes spoil the accuracy of the text.)

1. **The Bible itself gives testimony of word for word inspiration.**
2. **Jesus tells us, "not the smallest letter, not the smallest stroke of a pen", from the Word of God shall pass away before it is fulfilled.**
3. **Different New Testament events where an Old Testament passage is quoted to prove something:**
 - a) **Read Luke 20:37.**
Here Jesus proves the resurrection with a word from Exodus 3:6 that points to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - b) **Read Hebrews 12:26-27.**
Here the writer proves with two words from the book of Haggai that there is a judgment to come "once more".
 - c) **Read Galatians 3:16.**
Here Paul proves that Christ is the Seed (singular not plural form of 'seed' in the Old Testament).
4. **The testimony of Jesus for word for word inspiration.**

Read Luke 24:44

Jesus said: "all the things spoken in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled". Not some of it but all of it.

Read Luke 24:25

- a) Here Jesus rebukes them for not believing in **all** that the prophets have said.
- b) Jesus never questioned any part of the scriptures. For example, He had no problem with Jonah being swallowed by a big fish, Matthew 12:39-40.

5. **The archaeological testimony.**

Read Exodus 1:11 and 5:7

When they dug out the supply buildings which the Israelis had built while they were slaves in Egypt it could clearly be seen that, at a certain level of the building, there were suddenly bricks without straw.

Read 2 Kings 18:14.

Here the Assyrian King demands of King Hezekiah 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold.

Recently they found some Assyrian documents from King Sennacherib's time and these confirmed that the tax put on King Hezekiah was exactly as the Bible says.

Archaeologists constantly confirm the detailed truth of the Word of God as they dig in the Holy Land.

6. **The testimony of life.**

Knowingly or unknowingly civilisation and its moral standards are fashioned after the Ten Commandments.

John 6:63: Jesus gives “spirit life” to our lifestyle regardless of culture.

John 16:13: His Holy Spirit will guide His disciples into all truth.

The great power of the Word of God is revealed in daily life:

Hebrews 4:12-13; Romans 1:16: to discover, reveal and remedy a person's condition.

John 1:12: to save.

Ephesians 5:26: to cleanse / sanctify.

John 6:40: to assure us of eternal life.

Are you aware of any other philosophy or religion that does this for mankind?

Why should we study the Bible?

Lesson 2

A. Introduction

- Is it not sufficient just to read the Bible?
- Is it really necessary to study and research, which requires much effort?

Yes. It is absolutely necessary because:

1. It is an inexhaustible treasure.

Read Psalm 119:162 and Job 11:7-9

- a) Treasures are seldom found on the surface. You must dig for them.
- b) You will find, as Job did, that there are no limits when you search for the deep things of God.
- c) The Word of God is the greatest, most valuable, treasure on earth.

Illustration: For how much silver and gold would you sell your Bible, if you were never allowed to have another one?

I would not sell it for all the gold in the world!!

2. It is a divine revelation.

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17

It is the only book in man's possession "written" by God and revealing His will.

In it we find God's revelation about man, sin, death, hell, about the way of salvation, eternal life, heaven, about the Christian life, the church, the future – yes, about anything concerning life and godliness.

It is God Himself reproving, correcting and instructing. His purpose is to keep us on the straight road – in His perfect will.

If we allow the Word to do its work, we will be complete (perfect) and thoroughly equipped for every good work. Verse 17.

3. There is great joy and benefit in studying God's word.

Read Psalm 1:2-3

- a) "Like a tree" which constantly drinks the living water.
- b) Notice – we should "meditate" on His Word **day and night**. Meditate means

"to think deeply about".

- c) The result will be growth and plenty of fruit; a life that will prosper in the will of God.

Read Psalm 119

- a) This is the longest chapter in the Bible, having 176 verses.
- b) Almost every verse mentions the Word of God and the wonderful benefit there is for the one who studies and keeps it. (NB. It is enough if God says something once only. Don't allow the advertising syndrome of repetitiveness to determine your spiritual life.)
- c) Go through each of these verses (in your own time) and you will be completely convinced of the blessing and importance of studying the Word of God.

Read Joshua 1:7-8

- a) Here the Lord Himself commands Joshua to read and meditate on His Word day and night.
- b) It is clear here that the study of the Word has an exact purpose: that we may carefully do everything written in it. The result of this will be that we may prosper and be successful.

A parallel Scripture in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:17) tells us "that the man of God may be perfect and fully equipped".

B. Symbols for the Word of God

The many "symbols" used in the Bible for the Word of God also indicates some of the powerful results of studying the Word. Let us look at some of them:

1. A lamp and a light.

Read Psalm 119:105

- a) Right from the first page of the Bible, where darkness is upon the face of the earth, we see that God's Word brought forth light.
- b) In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read that Jesus, as the Word, shines into darkness and overcomes it. John 1:5.
- c) All unsaved people are in spiritual darkness. Satan has blinded their minds so that the light of the gospel cannot shine upon them. 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- d) But: "God has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son". Colossians 1:13.

- e) For the child of God, the Word is a wonderful guiding light. "We would do well if we heed it". 2 Peter 1:19.

Illustration: If a ship's captain heeds the guidance of the lighthouse he will do well. If he ignores it, he will end in great disaster! The same is true for any person who ignores the Word of God!

2. **A mirror.**

Read James 1:22-25

Who do I see when I look into a mirror? I see myself! The Word shows me "what I really look like". But it also encourages me to correct my appearance. If I do, the Word says I will be blessed.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Word also shows us Jesus in all His glory. As we keep on looking at Him in "the mirror" we are transformed into His likeness, from one degree of glory to another. Just as we use the natural mirror several times a day – let it be the same with the spiritual mirror. We are encouraged to meditate on the Word day and night.

3. **A Bath.** (Washing with water)

Read Ephesians 5:26

Physically we know how important it is that we wash daily.

Spiritually it is the same – there is an ongoing washing process needed. The Word is like wonderful cleansing water that washes our soul, as we study it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Word introduces the blood of Jesus which washes away stains, wrinkles and blemishes. It makes us radiant, holy and blameless.

As we study and apply the Word we are being changed from glory to glory into a radiant "bride".

4. **Food.**

Read Hebrews 5:12-14

Just as our physical body cannot function without food, so our spiritual life needs the food of the Word. It must be a balanced diet fit for the level of maturity of the person.

"Milk" is the wonderful gospel and the foundational teachings found in Hebrews 6:1-2. "The solid food" is the study of the deep wonderful truths of the Word of God.

If we study and apply the Word, we will grow in maturity and will be able to teach others.

5. **A sword.**

Read Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12

The Word is a wonderful weapon to defeat the enemy – the very weapon Jesus used when tempted by Satan. Luke 4:4 and 8.

The Word also has the ability to cut right into the very core of our being. See for example the account of the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:37.

A natural warrior needs daily training to be really skilled with his sword. The same applies to a spiritual warrior.

6. **Seed.**

Read Luke 8:11

There is life and great potential in the Word. The better prepared the soil of the heart is, the more effective and fruitful the Word becomes in our lives.

7. **There are several other symbols** which show the powerful effect of the Word. We will not discuss them here in detail, but some of them are:

- a) Rain and snow : Isaiah 55:10-11.
- b) A hammer : Jeremiah 23:29.
- c) Fire : Jeremiah 20:9.

The importance of research and interpretation

Lesson 3

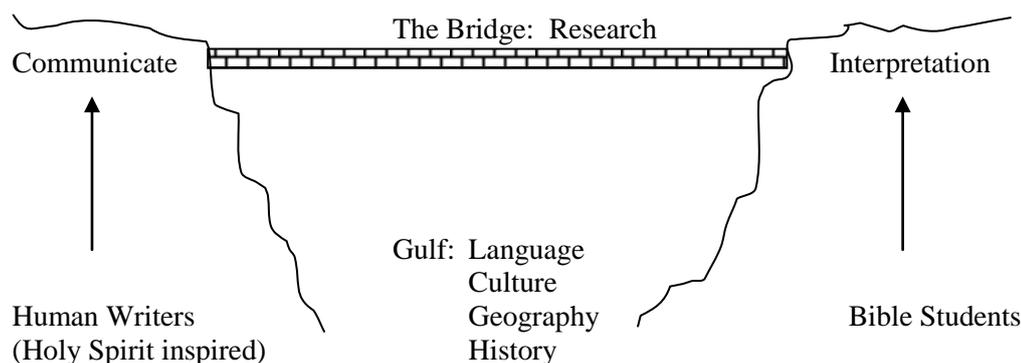
A. Introduction

The Bible is God speaking to man using human vessels through which to communicate His truth. In many ways He adapted and communicated His message through their own frames of reference (meaning their world, surroundings and language) but in such a way that it is ever up-to-date and speaks powerfully throughout history.

That God used this way of communication presents the Bible student with four major problems:

1. The Bible was originally written in the languages Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. There are modern versions of these languages today but they have changed a lot.
2. The cultural contexts of the writers were very different from ours today.
3. The geographical context of the Bible writers is foreign to most Bible students today.
4. The historical context of the writers differs greatly from that of today.

These four foundational problems in the understanding of scriptures are like a big gulf that exists between the Bible writers' and the Bible students' frame of reference and a bridge between the two needs to be built.



In order to build this bridge between our understanding and theirs, certain tools are needed. You will become familiar with a few of these through this course.

B. How to interpret the Bible

1. The true meaning.

To interpret is to search and find the true meaning of the author; the Holy Spirit. So when people say: "Everyone has his own interpretation of the Bible" or "The two

things people can never agree on are religion and politics" – that only reflects our shortcomings in understanding what God is really saying in His Word. The Bible is always correct. Limited human understanding is what causes differences of opinion.

2. **Some basic principles for interpretation.**

Let us approach the Bible with an open mind and spirit, holding fast to some basic principles for interpreting the Bible:

- a) The Bible is authoritative and should always be fully trusted.
- b) The Bible contains its own laws of interpretation which, when properly understood and applied, will bring forth the correct meaning of a given message. Use Scripture to interpret Scripture.
- c) The final aim of interpretation is to discover God's meaning. Where applicable, search for the original meaning of the words – the way they were intended to be understood. Don't twist their meaning.

3. **Four important steps in approaching the Bible.**

Approach the Bible with this attitude: to study, interpret and apply the Word of God in the following way:

- a) **Observation**: Approach the Word like a detective. No detail is unimportant; no "stone" should be left unturned. List every observation carefully for further thought and comparison in your notebook.
- b) **Interpretation**: The question here is: "What does this passage really mean?" Approach the text with all kinds of questions and seek answers, such as: "What did this mean to the people who first received it?" – "Why did he say this?" – "How will this work?" – "What is the main idea here?", etc. Interpret the passage in the context in which it is given.
- c) **Correlation**: How does this scripture relate to other Bible references on the subject? Co-ordinate your study with whatever else the Bible is saying on this subject. An accurate understanding of the Bible on any subject takes into account all that the Bible says about that particular theme.
- d) **Application**: The question is: "What does this mean to me?" Application is the goal of the first three steps. Remember the Bible is God speaking and His Word demands a response.

C. **Rules for interpretation (tried and tested)**

In order not to go astray in interpretation there are certain rules which must always be followed:

RULE 1:

Work from the point of view that the Bible is authoritative.

1. In matters of religion the Christian submits, either consciously or unconsciously, to one of the following three as his final authority:

a) Tradition b) Reason c) The Scriptures

John 5:39 – Scripture is the authority! Don't hide your conviction.

A true Christian must have the Bible as his final court of appeal. He must trust that God has inspired, and caused the writing of, every word in that book. 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

2. All scripture is authoritative, but there are some instructions you are not meant to follow. They were given to specific people for specific purposes, such as: "Noah, build an Ark!" – "Samson, don't cut your hair!"
3. We must be careful not to use fancy logic to avoid doing what God requires of us. Secular man is drifting further and further away from the Biblical absolutes, and the church under pressure tries to take a new "modern" approach to the Biblical commands regarding such things as divorce and a wide variety of moral questions.

More often than not this "modern" approach is nothing more than covered up immorality and clear disobedience to the Word of God. Such trends originate in an unwillingness to submit to the authority of the Bible.

For a true Christian the Bible is, and will always remain, authoritative and supreme.

RULE 2:

The Bible interprets itself – Scripture best explains Scripture.

1. When you study the Bible, let it speak for itself. Neither add to nor subtract from it. (That was what happened in the Garden of Eden when Satan came and Eve quoted God's Word.) Let the Bible be its own commentary.

Example: Isaiah 7:14 "The virgin shall be with child and will give birth to a son". The Hebrew word can be translated either "virgin" or "young woman".

But this same verse is quoted by Matthew in reference to the virgin birth of Jesus, Matthew 1:23. In Greek, however, the word has only one meaning: "virgin". In other words, Matthew interprets the word from Isaiah for us as meaning "virgin".

2. A further application of this rule is in the use of cross-references in your Bible study. Let scripture explain scripture. The Bible will interpret itself if studied properly.

RULE 3:

Faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for us to understand and properly interpret

the scriptures.

1. People have two sets of eyes and ears; a physical set and a spiritual set. When studying the Word, man must have his whole attention on the Holy Spirit. Satan does his utmost to prevent people from perceiving spiritual truth. Matthew 13:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4.

The man without the Spirit cannot accept the things of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Until the Spirit starts to work in your life, the Bible is a closed book! We must study the Bible with a deep sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit, realising that He is the one who "will guide us into all truth", John 16:13.

2. Saying that the Bible is our full authority does not always mean that we are right. Consider for example the Jehovah's Witnesses or other sects who claim to follow the Bible, but are very much off-track in some of their ways.

It is a ministry of the Holy Spirit to make the true Christian, who looks for God's guidance, see things from God's point of view. So we must be born again and be filled with the Spirit in order to rightly interpret the scriptures.

When two or more of you differ in your interpretation of God's Word submit your interpretation to each other in the fear of God, Ephesians 5:21, and together seek God's accurate revelation of His truth.

RULE 4:

The church does not determine what the Bible teaches; the Bible determines what the church should teach.

Reason and tradition have a strong authority but they must always bow to the authority of scripture. When there is disagreement between the three types of authority (tradition, reason and the scriptures), scripture must always be the final authority.

RULE 5:

Each passage of scripture has one basic meaning; one interpretation.

God did not intend His Word to have a multitude of meanings, but one sharp clear meaning right down to the commas and grammar. Matthew 5:17-18 and Galatians 3:16.

Remember though that passages of scripture can have more than one application, e.g. 2 Corinthians 6:14.

RULE 6:

Scripture is to be taken literally wherever possible.

No journalist would like to write of the famine and suffering of a country such as India and then have his word interpreted to mean that a great intellectual hunger is coming over the people of India.

But that is the way many people interpret God's Word. When 1 Corinthians 15 speaks about the resurrection from the dead, they say "No, that means a spiritual resurrection".

As regards the return of Christ, some say "No, Christ has returned, in His people", etc.

RULE 7:

Interpret the words in harmony with their original meaning (that they had when they were written).

1. Luke 15:8-10 – The parable of the lost coin. At first it seems unreasonable to make a big feast because she has found her lost coin. Therefore it is important to know that this coin really was a marriage symbol of purity.
2. Matthew 25:1-13 – The same with the oil lamps, which were a symbol essential to a wedding ceremony.

John 4:9, John 12:19-21 and Romans 7:18 – Sometimes the Bible writers themselves will give an explanation.

If the context does not give an explanation, there are many good books that can help us along.

RULE 8:

Parables require special rules of interpretation.

1. The purpose of the parables was to emphasise a specific spiritual truth.
2. We should never try to press more out of it than what it was intended to say. It is very dangerous to build doctrines and teachings on the symbolic language of parables alone.
3. Some guidelines for interpreting parables:
 - a) Determine the purpose of the parable:
In Luke 10:30-37, the parable of the "Good Samaritan", the purpose is clearly stated in verse 29. The same is true for many other parables.
 - b) Make sure you explain the different parts of the parable in accordance with the main design.
 - c) Use only the main parts of the parable to draw a conclusion or give a lesson. For this parable some could say that "oil and wine" in verse 34 stands for the "spirit and the blood", two ingredients necessary for salvation. But this is to go beyond the intended purpose of the parable.

RULE 9:

Though God's revelation in the Bible is progressive, both Old and New Testaments are essential parts for this revelation, as they form a unit.

1. The Old Testament sets the stage for the correct interpretation of the New.
2. The New Testament writers constantly use, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Old Testament happenings to build New Testament doctrine. Jesus in John 3:14;

John 6:31-35. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Galatians 4:21-31; the whole of the letter to the Hebrews.

3. Certain practices in the Old Testament were cancelled by the New Testament, but that was only because they found their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Example: the offering of animals.
4. God's revelation of Himself is progressive as we read through the Bible, but God's character is unchanging.

RULE 10:

Historical facts or events become symbols of spiritual truths only when scripture so indicates.

Example: John 3:16; John 6:31-35; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Galatians 4:22-24.

RULE 11:

A doctrine cannot be considered Biblical unless it sums up and includes all that the scriptures say about it.

We can never build doctrine on one verse. Example: Acts 2:19 mentions blood, fire, vapour and smoke. This could lead to all kinds of mystical speculations and interpretations.

Let scripture interpret scripture. Your doctrinal studies form the backbone of your spiritual conviction and this should be formed only by studying all that the Bible says on a subject.

RULE 12:

The Bible holds no contradiction.

The supposed contradictions in the Bible do not exist. They appear contradictory because the limited mind of man cannot comprehend the unlimited mind of God. Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 55:8-9 and Job 11:7-9.

D. A final warning concerning interpretation

All these rules are given for the benefit of the Bible student. They are not meant to be a limitation or a hindrance but a guideline and a safety net; a constructive tool for studying the mighty mysteries of God.

Though it is true that the anointing of the Spirit will teach us all things (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27) a beginner in personal Bible study is in danger of being led astray by new winds of doctrine. Such new winds can come even during times of personal Bible study.

For this reason we are in need of teachers, ministers and guidelines, Ephesians 4:11-13, until we ourselves mature and begin to understand the whole wonderful picture and are lifted by the Spirit of God, beyond the place of seeing only fragments and parts of God's Word, to seeing the full, whole tapestry of Divine truths.

Bible Study Tools

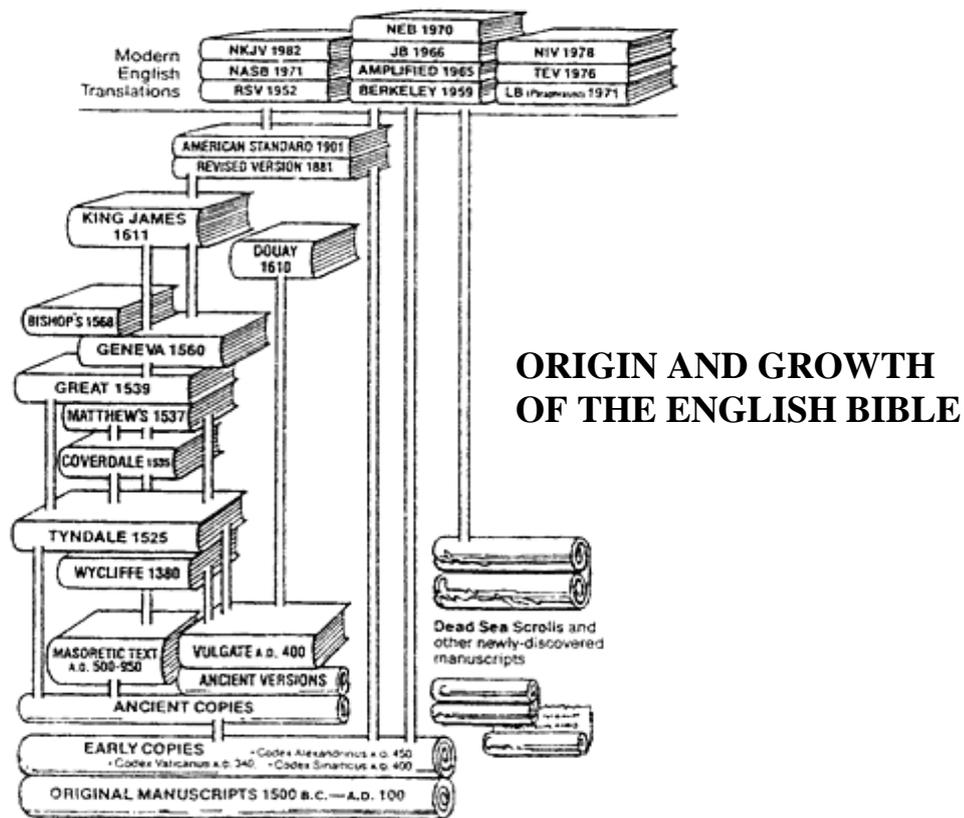
Lesson 4

Although it is not possible to obtain these tools in all countries and languages, let us still mention some of them, because when they can be found, they are extremely helpful.

A. The Bible

1. Many languages have the Bible in different versions.

It is so important to get hold of the most accurate version for Bible study. The preface in the beginning of the Bible will explain how the Bible was translated.



2. The difference between a translation and a paraphrase.

a) What is a translation?

A translation expresses the exact meaning of the original message following as closely as possible the form of the language of the original text.

b) What is a paraphrase?

It is not an accurate translation, but more like a commentary where man is putting God's Word into his own words, in language that is easier to understand. It is a free translation of the text using other words, sentences and

pictures, but keeping the same overall meaning.

A paraphrase cannot be used for Bible study, but is suitable for easier understanding by children and young Christians.

3. **Your personal Study-Bible.**

- a) It should be like a friend and companion, which follows you everywhere.
- b) Don't be afraid to underline, colour in, write notes, dates and comments, etc., in the margins.

You could use different coloured pens to underline different truths in the Bible.

Red – all about redemption.

Black – all about sin

Blue – all about faith, etc. ... develop your own system of colouring!

B. Study Tools

1. **A Bible Concordance.**

It should preferably be an "exhaustive concordance". That means that every word in the Bible can be found in alphabetic order. The book then shows where in the Bible that particular word can be found.

2. **A Bible dictionary / encyclopaedia / handbook.**

These books explain Bible names, doctrines, places, geography, customs, etc. They contain pictures, drawings and other illustrations. Again, it is in alphabetical order.

3. **A Bible commentary.**

This is another good tool to get insight and understanding of Bible doctrine. A commentary is a theologian's interpretation or opinion of one (or all) of the books of the Bible. It also often explains the background and situation of that particular book or text.

4. **The Holy Spirit.**

Read John 14:26 and 16:13-15

The most important aid in Bible study is the Holy Spirit. Learn to depend on Him and listen to His voice, through the Word and in your spirit. Remember He is the author of the Word and as such the best interpreter.

Make sure to compare your inspiration and findings with other Scriptures (and study aids) to ensure that you are not led astray into false doctrine.

5. Notebook.

A well structured notebook should always be kept in connection with personal Bible study to make notes of the various findings and inspirations. It helps to keep, compare and bring order and system into your study.

C. **Systematic Study and Analysis**

Even without good study tools, great treasures can be dug out of the Word by systematic study and analysis.

Analysis means to examine carefully, to divide into parts, in order to gain a better understanding.

1. So when reading a text, you take each word and examine it carefully, and write down your findings.

Example from Ephesians chapter 1:

- a) The first word is "Paul".

Who is he? What was his background? How did he become a Christian?

- b) "An Apostle of Jesus Christ".

What is an apostle? Look at Paul and see what an apostle's ministry is.

- c) "By the will of God".

Study how Paul was called. Study how other apostles were called. Study how God has a plan for people's lives.

- d) "To the Saints in Ephesus".

How does a person become a "Saint?" Find out where Ephesus is. Look in the book of Acts and find out when Paul first came to Ephesus ... and so forth ... right throughout the chapter.

2. Divide the chapter into sections.

Before examining each word it might be wise to divide the chapter into sections:

Verses 1-2	Greetings.
Verses 3-8	The fullness of our spiritual blessing.
Verses 9-12	God's eternal purpose.
Verses 13-14	The seal and guarantee of the Holy Spirit.
Verses 15-23	Paul's prayer that they would come to know their inheritance and power in Christ.

3. An overall understanding.

- a) By systematic analysis the Bible student gains an overall understanding of Scripture.
- b) He gets to know the main theme of each book. For example:
 - i) Romans : Justification by faith.
 - ii) Galatians : Deliverance from the law.
 - iii) Ephesians : In Christ.
 - iv) Colossians : Christ's person and position.
 - v) Philippians : A deep knowledge of Christ, etc.

4. Compare subjects.

As more knowledge is gained it will become possible to compare different subjects in different books.

Example: Compare what Jesus and Paul say about "marriage", "divorce", "giving", etc.

Example: Compare the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23, with the love chapter 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Example: Compare what Daniel, Jesus and Paul say about the Lord's return. Daniel 7:7-14, Matthew 24:29-42, 1 Corinthians 15:50-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, etc.

In each case, write down all the details so that you get a full understanding of the subject.

We will study more about this in the next lesson.

The Bible as a Whole and a One-Word Study

Lesson 5

A. Introduction

Although the Bible is the greatest, most powerful book in the world – inspired by God Himself – many Christians find it boring and uninspiring, considering it a burden to have to read it constantly.

What is the reason for this?

1. **The attitude of the person reading.**

Read Luke 8:4-15

There is nothing wrong with the "seed". The problems are found in the "soil", which is either too hard, too preoccupied with other things, too shallow, etc.

2. **Lack of discipline and effort.**

Read Psalm 119:127 and 162

Remember treasures are only found by those who will dig for them.

3. **Lack of variety.**

If the person has only one particular way of studying the Bible, it becomes mechanical and boring and lacks a sense of adventure and progress.

4. **Lack of structure.**

Just reading here and there: Some people treat Bible reading in the same way as shopping in a big supermarket – walking all over and picking up something here and something there. Just looking for the precious thoughts and blessed promises.

Do not just look for what you want from God. First look for what He wants you to have.

In the following teaching we will discover different ways to study the Bible. All the different ways should be used and developed. To enjoy the Bible you must enjoy your relationship with God – enthusiasm through appreciation.

B. The Bible as a Whole

1. **From cover to cover.**

a) **The whole Bible.**

The whole Bible is God's Word; therefore the whole Bible should be studied. In order to get an overall view every Christian should read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation every couple of years.

b) How?

Read the Old and New Testament side by side. In that way, by reading 3 chapters in the Old Testament and 3 chapters in the New Testament, you will get through the Old Testament about once in a year and through the New Testament 3 times in a year.

The great man of God, George Muller, read through his Bible 200 times in the last 25 years of his life – that is about 25 chapters a day.

2. **Be careful to let the Word speak.**

a) Notebook:

Even for general reading always have a notebook at hand. Jot down particular impressions – promises – warnings – commands – something to be studied more in-depth later on, etc.

b) Put your own "personal mark" on your Bible.

Use colours. Underline. Link scriptures by drawing lines across the page. Make notes in the margins – special remarks, dates, scriptures, thoughts, etc.

But please let this method not be your only way of Bible study.

C. One book at a time

1. **All books.**

Don't just study your favourite books, but all the books in the Bible, one by one.

2. **First get a general outline and overview of the book.**

- a) Read an introduction to the book and its writer.
- b) Find out the main theme and message of the book.
- c) Write down an outline of the book.

When anybody mentions Galatians, for example, the student should be able to give the theme, outline and general message without hesitation.

3. **Now read the book right through.**

- a) Read it through several times (in different translations). You can even read it in a paraphrased version to get the flow and overall understanding.
- b) Mark it. Use your pen to underline. Link similar words and phrases together.

Example: In Philippians you find the word "joy" in 1:4, 1:25, 2:2, 2:29, 4:1,

and "rejoice" 1:18 (twice), 2:17, 2:18, 3:1, 4:4 (twice), 4:10.

Put in your own comments – such as "Triumph over adverse circumstances" – in the margin of your bible. Remember Paul wrote this letter in prison.

- c) Now go to the Bible handbooks and commentaries to broaden your understanding. Find out where the book was written.
- d) Write your own outline and commentary in your notebook.
- e) Apply what you have learnt.

D. One-Word Study

NB. A one-word study can only be done if it is possible to get hold of a good Greek and Hebrew concordance.

1. With the Strong's concordance single important words can be studied right down to their "root meaning" in Greek and Hebrew.

- a) Example: In John 14:16 the Spirit is called "another" comforter. In Greek there are two possible words which could be used here:
 - i) meaning "just another one of any kind".
 - ii) meaning "another one of the exact same kind".

Which one did Jesus use here regarding the Holy Spirit? Jesus used the second one. So the Holy Spirit is another comforter, just like Jesus – identical to Him.

- b) Example: In most languages there is only one word for "love", but in the Greek there are three different meanings for the word "love".

It is good to be able to see which one is used in each place where "love" is mentioned. And so by studying the individual words we will receive a much deeper and fuller understanding.

Remember, every single word in the Bible is inspired by God, not merely the thought. So study them, and you will find great treasure!

2. How to conduct a Word Study:

- a) Have the proper tools available.

Strong's Concordance

Vine's Dictionary

Or any other good Greek/Hebrew Concordance

An accurate version of the Bible (such as NIV, NASB, KJV)

- b) Choose the word to study.
- i) It could be one of the important Biblical words like – "blood", "faith", "cross", "God", etc.
 - ii) It could also be the "key word" in an important Scripture passage.
 - iii) It could be the "key word" of a particular book of the Bible. (Romans = Justification; Philippians = Rejoice, etc.)
- c) The study procedure.
- i) With the help of your tools, define the meaning of your chosen word.
 - ii) Find out how this word is used throughout the Scriptures.
 - iii) Write the results in three columns:
 - In column one: the scripture reference.
 - In column two: the actual phrase from scripture, with important details from the context.
 - In column three: explain what you understand the word to mean in that particular passage. Meditate on, and interpret the verse there.

Example: the word "mending" is studied.

Find all the places where this word is used and fill in the three columns.

Reference:	Scripture passage:	Your current interpretation of that scripture:
Matthew 4:21	James and John " <u>mending</u> " their nets – Jesus calls them	Making complete by bringing each string back in its place, thus restoring it back to usefulness.
...		
...		

- iv) When the list is completed, look at the third column and see if the word studied falls into different categories of meaning. If so, a different heading should be given to each category.
- vi) Summarise:
Write your full understanding of the particular word you have studied.

Character Studies and Topical Studies

Lesson 6

Character Study:

A. Introduction

1. An in-depth study of any of the approximately 2930 individual characters referred to in the Bible.
2. It is a good, life-orientated means of Bible study. It is personal and meaningful.
3. Sometimes Old Testament character studies reveal circumstances contrary to New Testament doctrine. (Do not reason that because Old Testament characters had more than one wife, we can do the same.)

B. The Importance of Character Study

1. We can draw great blessing, understanding and direction for our own lives from people who walked in close fellowship with God. We can also find serious warnings by studying other characters.

The New Testament writers often refer to Old Testament characters as examples of either blessing or warning. John 3:14; Romans 4:1; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Hebrews 11.

2. The focus of character study is to improve and develop our own relationship with God.

C. How to do a Character Study

1. The choice of a character.

Some are mentioned only once or twice in Scripture, others hundreds of times. Some are very positive, some are very negative, but we can learn from them all.

Choose the one you feel drawn to, or if you study a particular book, choose the main character from that book.

2. Be aware of two possible errors when doing character studies.

- a) Do not confuse persons who share the same name: There are 30 called Zechariah, 15 called Jonathan, 8 called Judas, 7 called Mary and 5 called James in the Bible.
- b) Be careful to identify various names that refer to the same person, such as: Peter = Simon = Cephas; Saul = Paul.

3. Ask questions about the character and let the Scriptures answer them.

- a) What is the meaning of the person's name?
The meaning of a name in the Bible often represents something about that person's character.
- b) What was his ancestral background?
- c) What was his environment like? What was the political, religious and cultural situation of his day?
- d) What great events took place in his lifetime?
- e) Who were his friends and associates? A person can be known by the friends he keeps.
- f) What were his character traits? (Both the positive and the negative.)
- g) What failures and successes did he have?
- h) What influence did he have on those around him?
- i) What was his relationship with God like?
- j) What lesson can be drawn from his life?

D. God's dealings with the individuals reveals some of God's own nature

- 1. Look at God's mercy and forgiveness when somebody repented. Remember David's adultery, Peter's denial, etc.
- 2. His patience and longsuffering with their weaknesses and failures.
- 3. His faithfulness to His promises and covenants.
- 4. His judgement and wrath against people who refuse to repent, etc.

E. A character study of Christ

Read Hebrews 1:2-3

- 1. This is the most wonderful, powerful study, where we really learn who God is.
- 2. The four gospels show us Christ from four different viewpoints.

Matthew : As the King.
Mark : As the servant.
Luke : As the Son of man.
John : As the Son of God.

3. The whole New Testament gives us a glorious revelation of Christ, His character and personality, His relationship with His Father, etc.
4. The Old Testament reveals Christ in symbols and types and prophetic words.

Topical Study:

A. Introduction

1. Topical study is a study of all that the Bible says about any given subject.
2. Topical study yields the building blocks by which you build your understanding of the doctrinal subjects of the Bible.
3. Doctrine can only be established when all that the Bible says about the subject has been fully examined and understood.

B. The importance of Topical Study

Although the Bible consists of 66 books, it is in fact one book with one Author, the Holy Spirit.

It has unity of thought and purpose. There are no contradictions in the Bible, but progressive and growing revelation of truths from beginning to end. It starts like a small stream in Genesis and as it runs through the Bible it grows to a wonderful river of understanding and revelation.

Topical study is to follow that "river" on any given subject on an exciting journey, and at the end to understand what God is saying about it.

C. How to do a topical study

1. Choose the right topic to study.

- a) The list of Biblical topics is nearly endless and includes subjects like: God, Christ, Creation, Angels, Man, Sin, Satan, Salvation, Holy Spirit, New birth, Forgiveness, Justification, Sanctification, Second coming of Christ, Eternal life, Judgement, Eternity, etc.
- b) Start with shorter topics like: Dancing, Angels, the Lord's Table; but work your way through all the major doctrines of the Bible.
- c) Make a topical study of anything you need a Biblical answer to.

2. Study aids.

- a) A concordance is a very important tool. You find the word you are looking for listed alphabetically and all Scripture passages from Genesis to Revelation where this word is used.

- b) If no concordance is available then 'skim' through the Bible book by book, and find out what it says on the subject.

3. Categories of the same topic must be noted.

Example: If the topic is "Ark" you will find 53 references in the Bible. But beware! There are three very different kinds of "Arks":

- a) The basket baby Moses was hidden in. Exodus 2:3.
- b) The boat Noah built. Genesis 6:14.
- c) The Ark in the Most Holy Place. Exodus 37:1.

4. The five steps in Topical Study.

- a) Step one: Choose the topic. Example: take the topic "Seeking the Lord".
- b) Step two: Ask all the questions you can about the topic.

Who seeks? **When** do we seek? **Where** do we seek? **How** do we seek? **Why** do we seek?

Or make the questions more comprehensive:

What does it mean to seek the Lord? What does God promise those who seek Him? What does seeking the Lord involve? etc.

Let the Scriptures answer all your questions.

- c) Step three: Prepare study charts. Each of your questions should be written at the top of a blank piece of paper (a page in a notebook).
- d) Step four: Fill in your charts. By following your topic through the Bible you should be able to answer all the questions and fill in your charts.
- e) Step five: Make a summary and a conclusion. After the questions have been answered and the charts filled out, the pages in the notebook can be used to compile a full summary of the topic. Do your summary thoroughly. It helps you reach a final conclusion, otherwise you remain indecisive. Decide carefully, seeking God in everything. Label it and put it on your bookshelf for future use.

5. Look up related words too.

Example: If your topic is "Divine healing" words like: "affliction", "disease", "infirmity", "sickness" and "deliverance" should be looked up too.

Place Study and Gospel harmony

Lesson 7

Place Study:

A. Definition

The study of any place mentioned in Scripture. This may include mountains, valleys, planes, seas, lakes, rivers, forests, grassland, deserts, nations, provinces and cities, etc.

B. The importance of Place Study

The Bible is an historical account of God's intervention in human history. God's revelation involves countries, towns, mountains, rivers and lakes, etc.

Some of the places also have a prophetic, doctrinal or future relevance; such as Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, Mount of Olives, etc.

Studying these places will give a deeper understanding of the living environment of the people in the Bible. When you read the Bible events your understanding will be greatly enhanced.

Example: If you know what Mount Sinai looks like, you could imagine Moses sitting in a cleft receiving the Ten Commandments, etc.

C. How to do a Place Study

1. How should I choose what place to study?

Your choice should simply arise out of your daily Bible reading or study. As soon as you come across "a place", find out anything you can about it.

2. The procedure to follow:

- a) List the different Scriptures where you find that particular place. (A concordance would be of great help here.)
- b) Find out the meaning of the name of the place. Most places have been given their name for a specific reason, so the meaning can be significant. (Again, beware of confusing two places with the same name. Identify other names for the same place.)
- c) Use a map to find out what kind of place it is (city, mountain, river, nation etc.) and find out the exact location and the distance from other places you know.
- d) Find out anything you can about the place from all the references in Scripture. (A Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopaedia would help you greatly.)

3. **Look out for the following information:**

- a) **Geographical significance:** anything about location, climate, vegetation, height above sea level, etc.
- b) **Historical significance:** find out the role that the place played in the events of history by following the different Bible references.
- c) **Symbolic significance:** find out if the place represents anything, as we see in Galatians 4:24 about Mount Sinai.
- d) **Prophetic significance:** find out if there are any prophecies concerning that place, and determine whether they have been or are still to be fulfilled.

Place study makes the Bible stories come alive even more.

Example: Luke 10:30, "A man went 'down' from Jerusalem to Jericho". Place study shows that Jericho is nearly 3000 feet below Jerusalem; in fact, some hundred feet below sea level.

Example: John 4:4, "Jesus had to go through Samaria". Geographically the easiest and most direct way from Jerusalem to Galilee is to go through Samaria. But because of the conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans, a Jewish traveller usually chose to go the long way around Samaria along the coast or along the Jordan valley. But Jesus was led by the Spirit.

Example: 1 Kings 19, study on the map the long flight of the terrified Elijah from Carmel to the wilderness and Mt. Horeb.

Gospel Harmony:

A. Definition

In this study you compare the different happenings and stories in the four different gospels.

As mentioned before, the four gospels reveal a different aspect of Christ:

Matthew	:	Jesus as the King.
Mark	:	Jesus as the Servant.
Luke	:	Jesus as the Son of Man.
John	:	Jesus as the Son of God.

Therefore the different gospel writers have different emphasis. Some describe events in great detail and leave other things out that another writer finds important. Remember Scripture is all guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

B. The importance of this study

1. It gives us a full and glorious revelation of Jesus Christ.

2. **It gives us a greater understanding of the stories which are repeated more than once.**

Example: By taking all the accounts of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus and comparing them and joining the pictures together, you get a much clearer insight.

C. How to do this study

1. **Take a sheet of paper and draw seven columns.**

Example “Baptism of Jesus”:

Happening	Matt	Mark	Luke	John	Other	Remarks
Baptism of Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22		Colossians 2:12	The dove and the voice

2. **On another piece of paper write:**

- a) “The baptism of Jesus”.

Then write down all the findings from your comparison. Include what the Holy Spirit might say to you from these Scriptures.

- b) You can even re-write the full story of each happening for yourself and fill in all the details from the different gospels, and so get a fuller overall picture.

Typology and the Study of the Blood

Lesson 8

Typology:

A. Definition

1. Here you study Old Testament persons, happenings, even buildings, which are God-given types (foreshadowing) of the wonderful things accomplished in Christ / the New Testament.
2. Salvation was planned before the World began. **Read Romans 16:25-27.** Therefore God loved to give us hints and shadows of His plans right from the beginning.
3. Some of these types are very clear; some are more hidden. Jesus even pointed out one of the more difficult ones when He said: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". Matthew 12:40.

Or Paul in Galatians 4:21-31, where he uses the story of Abraham's two sons as a type of the old and the new covenant.

B. The purpose of such a study

It is an amazing thing to see and to be part of God's eternal plan. This study helps to explain many of the New Testament events, and it makes the Old Testament stories more rich and powerful.

C. How to do this study

1. Start with those the New Testament points out.

- a) The people of Israel. **Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.**

Read in Exodus 4 and onward about Israel's deliverance and compare it to our deliverance: By the blood, through the water (baptism), baptised and led by the cloud (the Spirit), walking into God's Promised Land. By studying carefully you can pick up many other wonderful details.

- b) The Tabernacle of Moses. **Read Hebrews 9:1-28.**

From Exodus 24 and onward you read about how carefully Moses had to adhere to every detail of this meeting place with God. Careful study will show the whole plan of salvation in this building and its furniture. (If possible get hold of a study book on the Tabernacle, so that you are not led astray by wrong imaginations.)

2. **Many other types in the Old Testament should be studied.**

- a) Several people in the Old Testament are types of Christ.
For example: Isaac, Joseph, Boaz, David.
(Careful: Not everything about them can be compared to Christ, only certain aspects.)

- b) Other Old Testament books where we find types.

i) The book of Esther:

Read it with the following in mind and you will get a wonderful new picture:

Esther	–	the bride of the King (The Church).
The King	–	with all authority (Christ).
Mordecai	–	the helper, protector, adviser (the Holy Spirit).
Haman	–	the evil ruler (Satan).
Queen Vashti	–	the rejected wife (Israel).

ii) The book of Ruth:

Ruth – the one who seeks redemption.
Boaz – Christ the redeemer.

iii) The Song of Solomon:

This whole book describes the relationship between the bride and the bridegroom, the King. It is a wonderful love story which also describes the glorious love relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church.

iv) A bride for Isaac:

Read Genesis 24:1-67

The story of how Abraham sent the servant who ruled his house to go and find a bride for his son. When he finds Rebekah, he beautifies her with all kinds of gifts to make her ready for her bridegroom.

Read the story in this light:

Abraham – the Father – God

Isaac – the Son – Jesus

The Servant – the beautifier – the Spirit

Rebekah – the Bride – the Church

v) Many other types can be found:

Notice that they all point to Christ and His wonderful work of redemption.

One warning must be given – and that is not to try to dig out of a story

something which is not there.

Prophecy, visions and dreams often use typology. When you hit on something “fresh and new” test it again a few days later. Preachers sometimes get bored in their pursuit of something fresh and really stretch their imagination very far. It is the truth, and only the truth, that glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Study of the Blood:

A. Definition

There is a "red line" of blood running right through Scripture. The Old Testament points forward to the Cross, the New Testament points back to the Cross.

In this study you follow this line right from Genesis to Revelation.

B. The purpose of such a study

1. **Read Hebrews 9:22-28.** The Blood is one of the central themes in Scripture.
2. The Bible mentions the Blood as one of the powerful weapons by which we conquer Satan, Revelation 12:11. So it is important to know as much as possible about this wonderful weapon. This study will enlarge your understanding of the power of the Blood of Christ.

C. How to do such a study

1. Simply start in Genesis and work your way through the Bible by skimming through. Every time you come across something about blood you go deeper. (A concordance would be a great help.)
2. Have a notebook, and write down your findings and meditations as follows:

Example: Genesis 3:21.

Here blood is not actually mentioned, but implied, because you do not take the "skin" of an animal without killing it. This is the first picture (shadow) of the redemption by the Blood of Christ. Blood was shed to cover sinful man.

Example: Exodus 12:1-13, Israel's deliverance.

The plagues before the deliverance could be God's way of underlining that deliverance is only by blood. Frogs, locusts, hailstorms or flies, etc., cannot deliver – only the Blood can.

Example: Leviticus 14:1-7, The cleansing of a leper.

When we study this ritual we find a wonderful type of Christ who died so that we could be set free. Before the living bird could be set free, it had to be dipped in the

blood of the sacrificed bird. Notice that it says: "Set the living bird free in the open field".

D. Conclusion

1. Continue like this throughout and you will end up with your heart and your notebook full of wonderful truths about the Blood.
2. You will get a new understanding of the depth of grace in Scripture: "The precious Blood of Christ".