

Midweek Study

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE



The Interpretive Journey

From What it Meant Then to What it Means Now

Reasons Why We Aren't "In" God's Word¹:

- **MOTIVATION** - We don't have the energy or see the necessity of why we should study.
- **PRIORITIES** - We are too busy or lack the time.
- **TECHNIQUE** - We don't know how.
- **PREOCCUPATION** - We just don't get around to it.

Howard Hendricks says, "There are three kinds of Bible students:

- To the first it's like castor oil - bitter and hard to take.
- To the second it's like shredded wheat - dry but nourishing.
- To the third it's like peaches and cream - can't get enough."

Why Study the Bible²:

1. **HEBREWS 5:11-14** - It is the means to develop spiritual maturity and godly wisdom - the ability to see life from God's perspective and react and respond to it with His mind (**Phil. 2:5**).
2. **1 PETER 2:2** - Scripture is the primary means of spiritual growth. Our aim as believers should be to be like Jesus (**Romans 8:28-30**).
3. **2 TIMOTHY 2:15** - The Bible gives the only guidelines to follow for presenting ourselves to God in a manner approved by Him (**Romans 12:1-2**).
4. **2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17** - All Scripture is profitable for:
 - **DOCTRINE** (teaching)
 - **REBUKE** (where you're out of bounds)
 - **CORRECTION** (conforming to the image of Christ)
 - **TRAINING** (righteous living)

The overall purpose - so we may be thoroughly equipped for God's Work (cf. **Eph. 4:11-16**).

Literary Genres in the Bible³:

- **Teaching** - Didactic or discourse material like Jesus' sermons or the epistles.
- **Narratives** - Narration of historical events.
- **Poetry** - Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and others.

¹ Taken from "Hermeneutics" seminary course class notes by Dr. Daniel Akin. www.danielakin.com.

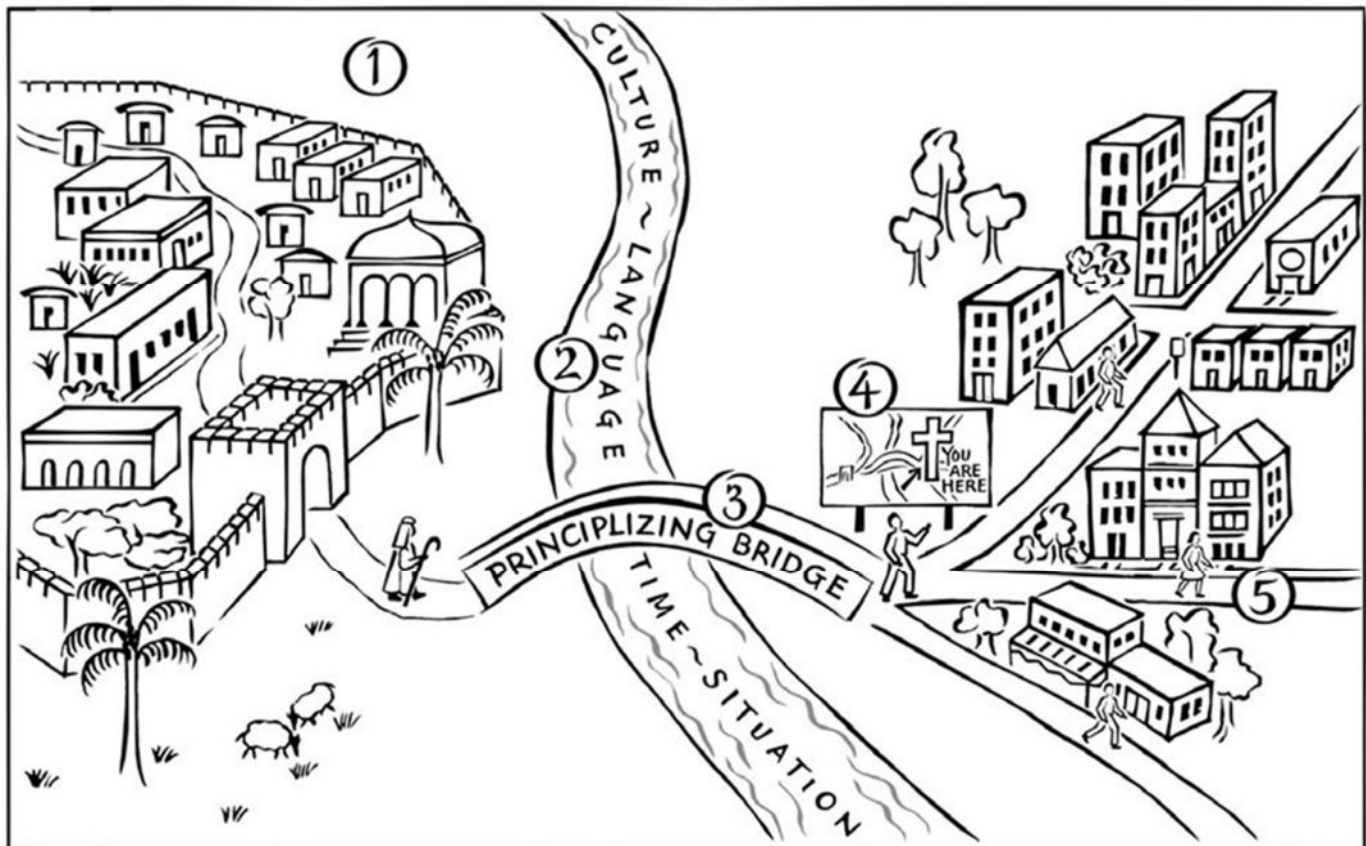
² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

- **Parables** - Primarily in the parables of Christ.
- **Miracles** - Primarily found in three periods of Biblical history (Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, the Lord and the apostles).
- **Wisdom** – Proverbs that are general principles that are generally how things work in the world. “[I]ndividual proverbs reflect nuggets of wisdom and not universal truths. To interpret the proverbs as absolute promises from God is to misunderstand the intent of the author. Proverbs gives guidance for life, addressing situations that are normally true.”⁴ [Example: **Proverbs 10:4**]
- **Prophetic** - Futuristic books like sections of Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and also the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament.
- **Apocalyptic** - Prophetic imagery depicting end-time events.

The Challenge: Bridging the “Then” to the “Now”⁵

1. **Grasp the Text in Their Town:** *What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*
2. **Measure the Width of the River to Cross:** *What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*
3. **Cross the Principlizing Bridge:** *What is the theological principle in this text?*
 - This is perhaps the most challenging step, be very careful how you construct your bridge. Your task is not to create meaning, but to discover the meaning intended by the author.
4. **Consult the Biblical Map:** *How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?*
5. **Grasp the Text in Our Town:** *How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?*



Each of us will grasp and apply the same theological principle in slightly different ways, depending on our current life situation and where we are in our relationship with God. Remember, the meaning is always the same, application is usually different.

⁴ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 427.

⁵ Image and material from Duvall and Hays, 39-49.