

## How to Get the Most Out of Reading the Bible

*Imagine someone you know loves you very much gives you a gift. And you know that they always give awesome and amazing gifts. Imagine your excitement and anticipation as you cannot wait to discover this gift and the joy and value it will bring to you.*

*As you open the gift, it is unlike anything you have received before; you know it is special but you do not yet know what to do with it or how it works.*

*At first, you will spend time simply EXPLORING the gift. You'll notice what is obvious (shape, color, parts, etc.). Then you'll begin to INTERPRET what it all means as you learn the gift's purpose. As this process continues, you will start to see how the gift CONNECTS and relates to your life. Finally, you will see clearly how to APPLY the gift, how to use the gift, how to enjoy the gift according to the gift's purpose.*

Our God has given us a gift in the Bible. Here are 4 steps to get the most out of this amazing gift.

### **1) EXPLORE what the biblical text says** (*opening the gift and seeing what is obvious*)

- a) What is obvious? Ask the who/what/where/when questions? What is going on?
- b) Look for what is stressed and emphasized. Is there a purpose statement? What gets repeated? What topics get a lot of space?
- c) What is compared and contrasted? Are there metaphors? Images?
- d) Note the transitions.

### **2) INTERPRET what the biblical text means** (*understanding the gift's intended purpose*)

- a) Context is the key (Note: a good study Bible is helpful with this step)
  - i) Historical-cultural context of when & where the text was written: who was the audience?
  - ii) Literary context: the genre (poetry; history; parable; letter; exaggeration; prophecy; etc.) and the grammar of the text
  - iii) Theological context: where does this passage fit in God's unfolding revelation? In God's story? Where/how does the text point to Christ? To God's mission?
- b) The goal is to discover what the inspired author said to the text's original audience  
⇒ What is the main idea the author was communicating?  
(It might be helpful to think of how you could say in your own words what the text means. Note: the text only has one meaning!)

### **3) CONNECT what the biblical means to the timeless and shared human condition**

*(discovering how the gift relates to me and my life)*

- a) How does the text relate to all people? What is the parallel contemporary condition that might be shared with the original audience?
  - A common temptation? An incorrect view of God? A need for grace?
  - A shared fear? A shared hope?

b) Discover the timeless truth, insight, and principle to connect what the text means with how the text relates to us today.

**4) APPLY how the biblical text connects to our lives** (*using the gift as the giver intended*)

a) Application is about alignment and transformation

--Aligning our lives with God's will

--Transforming our lives according to God's love and truth

b) Ask 4 questions to help determine the application:

1) *Who am I to be or become?*

→ This relates to us becoming more and more like Jesus.

2) *How should I think?*

→ This relates to us thinking Christianly and having a biblical worldview.

3) *What should I do?*

--Is there a sin to confess?

--Is there a promise to claim?

--Is there a sin to avoid?

--Is there a prayer to pray?

--Is there a command to obey?

--Is there a truth to internalize?

--Is there a joy to delight in?

--Is there a new way of relating to others to adopt?

--Is there an area in which I need to be bold?

4) *How and where should I go as God's witness and ambassador?*

→ The Bible is a missionary text revealing God's mission to the world.

--Who do I need to teach this to?

--Who do I need to show this to?

--How will this change my witness?

--Where do I need to live sent with this message?