

Understanding Bible Study

A Systematic Approach to Studying
the Whole Counsel of God

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About the Author

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Leader Guide

Lesson 1

A Firm Foundation

The Bible is one of the greatest works that has ever been produced. People for thousands of years have been captivated by its content and changed by its message. Through the words of the Bible, God has revealed himself to his creation and offered to us the means of relationship with him.

The value of the Bible cannot be overestimated and as a result a proper understanding of the Scriptures is essential. This lesson provides a firm foundation for all readers of the Bible to begin to develop a better understanding of the word of God. First we will discover why reading the Bible is important. Secondly, we will discuss the value of translation. Finally, we will address the basics of the Journey of Understanding.

At the completion of this lesson we should be able to fulfill three specific requirements. We should be able to make a Biblical case for reading the Bible. We should be able to define the methods of translation and identify the method used by a number of popular translations. Then we should be able to describe the process and challenges of interpretation.

Only through laying a firm foundation will be able to move into a more thorough understanding of the text, and by simply laying this foundation we will already have improved our capacity to read and understand the Word of God properly.

Why Should I Read the Bible?

The Bible offers a number of answers to this question. As you examine the following verses complete the following sentence: I should read the Bible because...

John 6:66-6:69: _____

Psalm 19:7-13: _____

Psalm 119:105: _____

Psalm 119:11: _____

2 Timothy 3:14-17: _____

Matthew 4:4: _____

Both the Old and the New Testaments affirm that the Scriptures provide eternal value to those who will read it. The inverse of this also applies. For those who refuse to read the Scriptures, not only will they miss the blessings, they will experience the negative consequences of neglect.

What are some of those consequences? _____

Luke 6:39-42 offers a unique perspective on this subject, what is it? _____

If one truly desires to know God and to live a life that pleases him, then the reading of the Bible is not

an option. This is a requirement for faithful living and proper relationship.

Objective #1

In your own words please offer a Biblical case to answer the question "Why Should I Read the Bible?"

What Version of the Bible Should I Read?

The matter of translation has created a number of different versions of the Bible throughout the English speaking world. The matter of translation is not new. Even before the translation of the King James Bible in 1611, there were numerous English translations that were being used by believers for their study of the Bible. Almost all of the modern English translations offer great value to their readers, but there are differences that need to be recognized between them.

The Scriptures are written in three ancient languages. Those languages are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Each language is very expressive and contains thousands more words than our modern English language offers. As a result, when we read an English translation of the Biblical text we are already reading some other person's interpretation of the Bible. Consequently, we need to know what principles that person is using. In modern translation there are three primary translation methods. These are the formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and free translation.

While no translation of the Bible holds exclusively to these methods, one school of thought reigns in the minds and actions of the translators of the text. Usually, the method of choice is stated in the preface to a modern translation.

Formal equivalence is often referred to as a "word-for-word" translation. The translators often attempt to translate each word of the text with its English equivalence and leave the responsibility of bridging any language gaps to the readers. Dynamic equivalence is a method used to keep the meaning of the original languages while using English language equivalences in the place of a literal translation. Figures of speech, innuendos, and euphemisms are often translated with an English counterpart rather than the literal language. Free translation seeks to convey the ideas of the text without any real concern to the literal interpretation of words and is the methodology of choice for those composing paraphrases of the Bible today.

Look at the following passages and let's see if we can identify which methodology their translators prefer.

Genesis 31:35

2 Samuel 13:14

Amos 8:1-2

The art of translation is as much skill as it is science and understanding the means of translation provides us with insight into the versions that we read. Truthfully, there is no best version among the conservative modern translations. Consequently, there is great value in reading from several versions as you deal with the text. Falling in love with a single

version may blind us to true insights other translators seek to offer us.

Objective #2

Define the three methods of translation and offer one translation that prefers each method.

What is the Journey of Understanding?

Studying the Bible is much more than simply reading words on a page. While the translators of the Scriptures attempt to give us access to the text by writing it in our native language, there is much more to understanding the Bible than simply reading the words. Even with a good translation there is still much to face with the challenge of the language barrier. The Bible is also a small library written by dozens of authors and composed over nearly 2000 years creating a challenge of historical distance. Within its pages are narrative accounts from the beginning of creation, royal records from two kingdoms, prophetic proclamations, letters, and gospels creating a challenge of literary diversity. The craft of Bible study is to take the meaning of the original author and bring it application in our lives today. That is the "Journey of Understanding."

This journey begins with the quest for meaning. That can only be found by understanding the original author. A text can only mean what the original author intended for it to mean. We are not free to create our

own meaning in a text, rather a text means what God intended it to mean. We do not have the right to place our presuppositions upon the text, but rather we must seek to discover what the author meant when he wrote the text.

Look at Exodus 3. What is the meaning of this passage?

What are some dangers that arise from ignoring the original meaning of the text? _____

Once we have identified the meaning of the author we must then journey to the place of discovery. In this place we look to determine what differences and similarities exist between ourselves and the original audience. By focusing upon the differences we discover elements of the passage that do not translate into our context. Certain promises are made to individuals that do not come to us. Certain circumstances are faced by the people of Scripture that cannot transfer to our present situation.

Secondly, by looking for similarities in the text we can discern what does transfer to us today. We must understand that the Scriptures did not come to us from a vacuum, but rather were brought to us out of the lives of people like us. People who had emotions, struggles, hardships, failures, and victories just like we do are the instruments God has used to bring us his word. By discovering the similarities that exist between us and the text, we draw closer to the meaning of the text and it becomes a part of us as well.

Look at Exodus 3. What are some of the differences we have with the people in this narrative? _____

What are some of the similarities we have with the people in this narrative? _____

The final portion of our journey takes us to the island of application. Once we have discovered the author's meaning and discovered how we are different and similar to the audience of the message we are ready to apply the message to our lives. The truths of the Scriptures are not for us to simply learn, but rather they are for us to live out in our everyday lives. The application of the message may take many different forms in our lives, but all application must come directly from the message we have received.

Look at Exodus 3 once again and offer one application for our lives from this text. _____

Objective #3

List and define the three challenges to interpreting the Bible. _____

What are the three locations along the "Journey of Understanding?" _____

With these questions answered, a firm foundation should be laid for further study of the Scriptures. As we prepare to mine the Word of God for the treasures contained within, pray that the Lord will give you wisdom in your search and remember that the goal is to live a life that has been changed by the power of the word.

Lesson 2

Context is King

As we begin to examine the form and function of Bible study, we must begin with the most important element in understanding meaning. That element is context. No matter what has been written in the Bible one must always remember that there was an original author and an original audience that the author was communicating with. The Bible was not written in a vacuum. The Bible was written by real people to real people facing real circumstances in a real place.

What is Going On?

When studying the Bible we must first discover what the historical context of a passage is. Historical context explains the background of the book and deals with matters such as authorship, audience, and occasion. The author is the writer of the text. The audience receives the message that was written. The occasion is the event or events that led up to the author writing the text. This information is essential to determining the purpose of the author. Unless we understand what the circumstances of the text were, we will fail to discern what the accurate meaning of the author is.

Discovering the historical context requires us to look in the right places. Some biblical books offer us its context in the writing explicitly, some infer their context within the text, and some require outside sources to unveil the historical context of the work.

What books offer us their context explicitly? _____

What books offer us an inferred context? _____

What books require outside sources? _____

While most of the biblical books offer some contextual direction, the use of outside sources offers a wealth of scholarship and information to our study. However, there are tons of resources out there. What are the tools that offer the best help and where can they be found?

The following is a list of resources that anyone can use to help build their understanding of context. These are in order from most basic to most complex. A listing of resources is available in Appendix A.

1. Websites: A number of resources have come available in the last several years on websites that have practical value. Simply searching for the book of the Bible you are studying can provide you with a number of valued resources for your efforts. However, you must make sure your source is credible. Look in numerous places to build a consistent understanding.

2. Study Bibles: These usually offer an introduction and overview of the Biblical book in a concise manner.

3. Single Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: These tend to offer more information than the study Bible, but far less than some of the more lengthy and expensive resources

4. Background Works and Surveys: These books offer information about the culture and the circumstances of a time period or biblical book.

5. Single Volume Bible Commentary: While offering comments on the entire Bible, these volumes also provide a good simple historical context.

6. Multi-Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: These offer much larger amounts of information for providing context than single volume efforts.

7. Single Volume Commentaries: These commentaries focus on one book of the Bible. The author is usually a leading scholar in the field for that book, and the work on historical context is often top notch.

8. Software: The value of software is in the volume of material. Some very good material is available at relatively low prices. In most software packages a collection of these other sources are available.

By using additional sources, the base of information is broadened. This wide base of information allows the student to answer the question "What is going on?" when reading the text. The answer to that question is the historical context.

What is the Purpose?

Once the historical context has been established, we are ready to ask "What is the purpose?" When we search for meaning, understanding the author's purpose is essential to finding accurately interpreting the text. While the occasion allows us to see what is going on that causes the author to write, the purpose helps us understand the author's reaction to the

occasion. Usually, the purpose is expressed in the text. This purpose often becomes clear based on the historical context of the book.

Let's look at several books, discover their historical context, and state the author's purpose.

1. Genesis: _____

2. Ruth: _____

3. Hosea: _____

4. Matthew: _____

5. Colossians: _____

By developing an understanding of the historical context, we unlock the purpose of the author for his writing. In discovering the purpose, we open the gates for finding the meaning of the text.

What is the genre?

As we have stated before the Bible is not a book. Rather it is a small library. This means that there are a number of different literary styles that must be recognized in our study. Each style is a genre with characteristics that are unique. The final contextual issue that must be address is the literary context. In the next lesson we will identify the literary genres, offer some guidelines for interpretation, and group the books that belong in those genres together.

Lesson 3

Context is King Part 2

In the last lesson we learned that context is king when it comes to interpreting the Bible. We discovered the necessity for discovering the historical context and the purpose. The focus of this lesson is on the literary contexts within the Bible. At the conclusion of this lesson you should be able to identify the different types of literature found within the Bible, understand some guidelines for interpreting the different literary genres within the scriptures, and group the Biblical books into literary categories and Biblical divisions.

Easing In

The Bible is comprised of **four** main forms of literature. As you read the Bible you are introduced to narratives, poetry, prophecy, and epistles. Within the confines of these forms there are some distinct differences, but the wide net cast by these four forms of literature catches all of the biblical material for us. Let us then define the forms and examine some of the categories that exist within them.

Narrative:

Narratives share information. The information that a narrative shares can be an account, story, report, or record but in all cases information is shared from the narrator with his audience. Proper interpretation of a narrative requires us to have a clear understanding of the author's purpose. From this purpose, one finds the

reason for the author's sharing of the narrative with his audience.

Within the genre of narrative there are several categories that are found within the Scriptures. These include historical accounts of events, records, and parables. Each is a form of narrative.

A **historical account** of events shares what happened at a certain place at a certain time. This may be an event occurring within a family, an account of a battle, or an account of daily life. However, the historical account is not included within the Scriptures for trivia. Rather the account is included because it furthers the author's purpose. A historical account properly interpreted will allow the reader to further grasp the purpose of the author.

List some of the Historical Accounts found in the Scriptures:

A **record** is information that offers statistical information. These include genealogies, censuses, and military groupings. These records further our understanding of the author's purpose by their inclusion in the text. They illustrate elements of God's sovereignty, providence, and faithfulness. They also better our understanding of the culture and society.

Where are some of these records found in the Scriptures?

A **parable** is a story that conveys a message. This was the favored form of communication by Jesus, and many of the parables of Scripture are found within the Gospels. However, there are a number of parables found within the Old Testament as well. These parables are offered to bring a great truth down to a basic level for understanding.

List some of the parables that are found in the Old and New Testaments:

Looking at the Bible a large number of its books fall into this category. Genesis through Esther are narratives in the Old Testament. Parts of the Major Prophets and Jonah also find themselves included in the narrative collection as well. In the New Testament, the Gospels and Acts make up the narrative library.

Poetry:

Poetic Literature uses expressive language to convey revealed truth. When reading poetry much of the material serves to emphasize truth that other forms of literature have revealed. Through the use of figurative language and verbal imagery the poets often

illustrate how these truths are played out in our lives. Poetry may convey a story, share experience, or present evidence for the truth it is conveying. Within the Scriptures we find three forms of poetry. We find standard poetry, psalms, and proverbs. Let us look at each of these as we discover more about their work in the text.

Standard poetry is poetry used in the form of a story, shared experience, or presented evidence to convey a truth. These poems are either an entire book or section of a book that fulfill the purpose of the author. The longest poem in the Scriptures is Job. However, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon also are lengthy poems that cover entire books. The poem itself is the purpose of the author and the truths revealed are designed to be evident to the reader.

A **psalm** is a poem that is meant to be sung. Much of the Psalms in the Scripture are designed to be sung during corporate public worship. Consequently, they tend to sing about God, what he has done, and what he is presently doing. When included in a narrative work, the psalm is always tied to the purpose of the author for the narrative. The psalm does not stand on its own and must be interpreted in light of the rest of the narrative. In the book of Psalms, each Psalm stands on its own. This particular book was used as the hymnbook of the Temple and so the Psalms are grouped together, but they are separate entities focusing on praising God and educating worshipers.

What are some of your favorite Psalms and what truths do they emphasize?

A **proverb** is a simple saying that expresses a general rule. One must be careful in interpreting proverbs because they are not promises. Rather, these are declarations of the general process of living. Proverbs are a form of figurative language and often are popular expressions of thought. When found within a narrative they express the truth or idea that the author is trying to convey. The book of Proverbs is a collection of these sayings. Each saying stands alone and should be understood that way. While there are some longer poetic works within the Proverbs, the vast majority are simple one and two verse sayings that do not attach to the ideas that follow.

What are some of your favorite proverbs from Scripture and what general processes do they offer?

In the Bible the books of Job-Song of Solomon are considered to be poetry. Many of the prophets use poetry in their writings as well. However, as we look at the prophets we will see that their genre is guarded not so much by form as by function.

Prophecy:

Prophecy is not about telling the **future**. Rather prophecy served to reveal God's will and activity to

others. Prophecy, in the Scriptures, serves as a warning to its hearers and its readers. These warnings usually offered a charge, a judgment, a plea for repentance, and a punishment.

Prophecy is much like poetry in its language usage. Prophecy uses a great deal of figurative language and non-literal phrases in its communication. Thus one must be careful not to bog themselves down with the **details** of a prophecy and seek to grasp the purpose of the author in his words.

Identify the meaning of the author from the following text:

Deuteronomy 8:7-9

Jeremiah 9:13-16

As these two passages illustrate, many of the prophet's words cannot be taken in a literal fashion. Rather we must read and understand the big picture of what God is saying and doing in the words of the prophets. This is not difficult so long as we avoid missing the forest because we are looking at the trees.

Isaiah to Malachi and the book of Revelation are the books of prophecy within the Bible. However, prophecy is evident in much of the narrative and poetic portions of the Scripture as well. When we see prophecy within these sections remember that the prophecy is their according to the author's purpose.

Do not attempt to pull that prophecy and interpret it outside of the intent of the author for its inclusion.

Epistles:

An epistle is a **letter**. These letters were written to specific people in specific places, at a specific time, facing a specific circumstance. Thus, the epistles offer us instruction for dealing with daily circumstances. These help us to understand how to put the truth of God into everyday use. This occurs through the revelation of eternal principles.

Within epistles we find instructions for specific churches facing specific circumstances. When we understand the historical background, we are then able to take the specific commands for that church and discover the eternal principle that rest behind it. Once again it is important not to allow the specific details to lead you into the wrong conclusion. We live in a different society facing different problems than those who received the original letters. Thus we must be careful not to make a specific command an eternal principle.

Let's look at a couple of passages, identify the specific command that is given, and then share the eternal truth for us today.

1 Corinthians 8

Specific Command: _____

Eternal Principle: _____

Colossians 3:22-4:1

Specific Command: _____

Eternal Principle: _____

The books of Romans-Jude are all epistles within the New Testament. Revelation is an epistle as well, but since so much of it is prophecy it has been collected with the prophetic books, however, both sets of interpretation guidelines apply to Revelation.

The End

Determining context is not the end. This is the beginning. Knowing the historical context, the purpose, and the literary context allows us to determine the proper interpretation and application. In the next lesson we will learn how to examine the text itself as we discern the meaning of the text.

Lesson 4

A Practical Guide for Handling the Text

Once the context has been established for a passage we are ready to begin examining the Word of God for the truth contained within. As with any area of study, a little guidance can go a long way in assisting us. This lesson will offer a guideline for Bible study that can be used with any text in order to find the main idea of the author.

Why is the main idea important? This is the key point the author is making. While there are many different ideas flowing through a text, the main idea is the central line of thought from the author to his readers. If we focus on identifying the author's main ideas, then we will grasp the message God has for us. Rather than seeking for something that has never been found before, let us seek the truth that has been mined from the passage faithfully for centuries and allow God to speak to us through his word.

Step 1: Preparation

As we begin to study the Bible there are some basic steps that are necessary for preparation. The first is to **pray** asking God to give us wisdom and insight into his word. We pray for the Lord to guide our study and our thinking. Pray for the Holy Spirit to instruct us through the Word of God that we may know God more deeply, intimately, and personally. Pray that the text will change our thinking, our feeling, and our activity that we may be further conformed to the image of God's

son. Then trust God to fulfill these things that we have prayed.

Secondly, we need to **read the text**. I encourage the reading of the text in at least two different versions of the Bible. My preaching professor in college taught that we should read the passage in the King James Version first and then read it in three other versions. Regardless of how many versions you read, when studying the Bible, spending time with at least two translations helps you to get a feel for the text.

Step 2: Observe the Text

Once you have read through the passage a couple of times it is time to begin making observations. These observations are simply an investigation of the text. Take time to identify elements of the text that stand out. If the author has made of list of items, then note that. If the author uses an unfamiliar phrase (i.e. a new name for God, a change to a name, etc.) or a distinct phrase in the Scriptures (i.e. Son of Man, glory of the Lord, day of the Lord, etc.) then make a notation of that. Make sure that you identify the pronouns of a passage and who they are referring to. Make a note of the physical locations that are referenced in the passage as well.

Remember that the Biblical writers were not filling up space. They did not simply use words to fill columns but to convey ideas. Anything that stands out in your reading should be noted and examined. Sometimes those items are contextual, other times they are the author's personality, sometimes they matter little, and sometimes they are the key to the author's meaning. Take time to observe the text.

Step 3: Ask Good Questions

Once you have read the text and made your observations, take time to ask some good questions. If something you read caused a thought to pop into your head, then write that down for further investigation. If there is a question in your mind about the author's purpose, reasoning, or meaning within a passage write that question down and look into it.

Once you have a good list of questions begin to discover the answers to them. Sometimes the answers require reading further in the book, sometimes it requires a cross reference to another passage, sometimes it requires a better understanding of the context, and sometimes it requires outside assistance. Some questions can't be answered and that is okay. The vast majority of questions have a discoverable answer that leads to better clarity regarding the passage.

Step 4: Identify Key Words

As you were reading the text, certain words may have stood out to you. They may be theological terms, geographical terms, or contextual terms but they all mean something. Take time to identify these words and discover their meanings.

There is no shortage of resources to help in finding the meanings of these words. Take the time to make sure you understand what these key words mean. We cannot understand the passage apart from understanding its key terms.

Step 5: Identify the Main Idea

This is the final step in the process. Once you have read the text, observed the text, asked questions

from the text, and defined the key words of the text we must state the main idea. This is the central point of the author to his readers in this text.

The main idea should be defined in **one sentence**. Beyond that the main idea does not change. Once this is defined correctly, you can write in into your Bible next to this text and have it forever.

Step 6: Making Application

Application answers the question, "What should I do now?" Once we have identified the main idea of the passage, what difference should that make in our lives. We do not learn simply to obtain new truth. We learn so that we can draw closer to Jesus Christ. If the goal of the believer's life is to walk worthy of their calling in Christ and to be conformed to the image of God's son, then what we learn should change us. Application is taking the main idea and transferring it to life change.

Once we have the main idea there is a basic **question** that should be **answered**. Should I start or stop doing something based on this idea? In his letter to the Colossians, Paul instructs the Colossians to put off certain things and to put on certain things because of his teachings of Christ. That is the heart of application. We must identify what changes should be made because of what the word of God says. We cannot stop with simply the main idea, we must finish with an application of God's word to our life.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Like any journey there are always some pitfalls to avoid. On this journey three specific pitfalls must be avoided if we are to arrive at our destination.

The first pitfall to avoid is **rushing**. This is not Bible reading. This is Bible study. Most people do not have time to do this every day. Rather take time each day to work on part of this until you have nailed down the passage.

The second pitfall is poor **parameters**. Do not allow the chapter and verse numbers to be your only guide in determining the passage of study. The narrative of Joseph takes up multiple chapters, but it was written as one account. Find the natural breaks in the text and use those as your boundaries. Otherwise you may define a main idea for the author that only exists because the account has not been completely examined.

The third pitfall is slavery to **presuppositions**. We all approach the text with ideas and thoughts on the front end. That is okay as long as we are willing to be open to the Lord in his instruction. When we refuse to learn from our study and simply seek to prove ourselves right we short circuit the process. Much of what you think and believe will likely be accurate, but it is essential not to let being right drive you in your conclusion.

Practice Makes Perfect

Use the sample form to work through in Appendix B then compare your work to my study of the same text in Appendix C

Lesson 5

Teaching Others

One of the great values of a strong Bible study is the ability to share what you have learned with others. A strong Bible study in private leads us to offering strong Bible lesson in public. This lesson will guide us through the development of a Bible lesson based on the work we completed in the last lesson on Colossians 1:3-12. As you work through this passage you may check your work through the guide in Appendix E

What am I aiming at?

The first step to creating a strong Bible lesson is creating an **objective**. An objective is a statement that defines the **purpose** and **goal** of the lesson. This statement answers the questions "What do I want my learners to understand, and what do I want my learners to do with what I have taught them?" The objective offers us a target to aim at with our lesson. Our work should ultimately lead our students to a place that fulfills our objective.

Looking back at Colossians 1:3-12, create two objectives for lessons that can be written based on this text.

The Lesson Itself

Once an objective has been determined we can begin constructing our lesson. The method of instruction

that I have personally found most helpful for lesson creation was created by Dr. Larry Richards. In his book *Creative Bible Teaching*, Dr. Richards offers a four part Lesson Plan that anyone can use to teach others. This method is referred to as Hook, Book, Look, and Took. Let us work our way through these four parts as we seek to create a Bible lesson together.

Hook:

The first step in our Bible lesson is to **engage** our learners. This is the hook method of our lesson. To hook our learners we use an age appropriate **activity** or **question** to draw them into the study. Remember the hook must tie back to the objective. We are not running a magic show where we want to distract, but rather we are guiding learners down a path that leads where we want them to go.

Looking at our objective and our passage, what are some hooks that can be used to begin our lesson?

Book:

The second step in our lesson development is to bring our learners into **contact** with the text. We **transition** from our activity directly into the passage that is being studied. Transitions take work and so one must be careful to make sure their transitional statements bring their students from the activity into the text.

This can be accomplished by offering some contextual background to the passage as a transition. One may use a **question** or a **statement** to bring the transition to pass but the transition must take place. Some examples of transitional statements begin with ...

1. You know this reminds me of a time when ...
2. Did you know that _____ experienced something like this when he/she ...
3. The Bible deals with a situation very similar to this when ...

The goal of the transition statement is to allow you to take your learners into the text by offering them some background and instruction to further your objective. As we look at our objective and hook from Colossians 1:3-12 what is a good transitional sentence that we can use.

What contextual information would you share with your learners to help them understand the passage you are about to read to them?

Look:

One we have hooked our learners and brought them into the book, our third step is to **teach** them from the

passage. This is called the look stage and it focuses on the study of the passage. This step answers the questions "What does this say and what does this mean?" Here is where we use the **preparation** we have made to communicate the **main idea** of the text. This is more than simply sharing the main idea with the learners, but helping them learn the main idea by taking them on the journey of understanding themselves.

We help them by sharing key observations, key words, and key questions that enable them to read, interpret, and understand the text themselves.

Looking at your objective and the main idea of the passage what information would you share with your learners to help them in their journey of understanding?

Took:

The final step in the learning process helps learners apply what they have learned. This is the took stage. This application comes from taking the main idea and determining how that should be **lived out**. This fulfills the second portion of the objective by providing specific direction to what you desire your learners to do as a result of what this passage teaches. Ultimately this step helps learners answer the question "How does this apply to my life?" This

can be accomplished through questions, activities, discussion, or direct statements.

Looking back at Colossians 1:3-12, list a several ideas to help the learners apply what they learned from this text.

Appendix D contains a lesson preparation guide that walks through each of these steps. Using your work in this lesson, copy that form and fill in the blanks. You will then have a completed lesson from Colossians 1:3-12 that you can share with others.

Conclusion:

You have done it. You have completed the work to become a world-class Bible student. You have taken the journey of understanding, you have learned the value of context, and you have developed a method for studying the Scriptures. You even have developed a method for teaching what you have learned to others. I pray that you will use what you have learned to grow closer to God through his word and to help others as they grow closer as well.

Learner Guide

Lesson 1

A Firm Foundation

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At the completion of this lesson we should be able to fulfill three specific requirements. We should be able to make a Biblical case for reading the Bible. We should be able to define the methods of translation and identify the method used by a number of popular translations. Then we should be able to describe the process and challenges of interpretation.

Only through laying a firm foundation will be able to move into a more thorough understanding of the text, and by simply laying this foundation we will already have improved our capacity to read and understand the Word of God properly.

Why Should I Read the Bible?

The Bible offers a number of answers to this question. As you examine the following verses complete the following sentence: I should read the Bible because...

John 6:66-6:69: _____

Psalm 19:7-13: _____

Psalm 119:105: _____

Psalm 119:11: _____

2 Timothy 3:14-17: _____

Matthew 4:4: _____

Both the Old and the New Testaments affirm that the Scriptures provide eternal value to those who will read it. The inverse of this also applies. For those who refuse to read the Scriptures, not only will they miss the blessings, they will experience the negative consequences of neglect.

What are some of those consequences? _____

Luke 6:39-42 offers a unique perspective on this subject, what is it? _____

If one truly desires to know God and to live a life that pleases him, then the reading of the Bible is not

read. Truthfully, there is no best version among the conservative modern translations. Consequently, there is great value in reading from several versions as you deal with the text. Falling in love with a single version may blind us to true insights other translators seek to offer us.

Objective #2

Define the three methods of translation and offer one translation that prefers each method.

What is the Journey of Understanding?

Notes:

Look at Exodus 3. What is the meaning of this passage?

What are some dangers that arise from ignoring the original meaning of the text? _____

Notes:

Look at Exodus 3. What are some of the differences we have with the people in this narrative? _____

What are some of the similarities we have with the people in this narrative? _____

Notes:

Look at Exodus 3 once again and offer one application for our lives from this text. _____

Objective #3

List and define the three challenges to interpreting the Bible. _____

What are the three locations along the "Journey of Understanding?" _____

With these questions answered, a firm foundation should be laid for further study of the Scriptures. As we prepare to mine the Word of God for the treasures contained within, pray that the Lord will give you wisdom in your search and remember that the goal is to live a life that has been changed by the power of the word.

Lesson 2

Context is King

As we begin to examine the form and function of Bible study, we must begin with the most important element in understanding meaning. That element is context. No matter what has been written in the Bible one must always remember that there was an original author and an original audience that the author was communicating with. The Bible was not written in a vacuum. The Bible was written by real people to real people facing real circumstances in a real place.

What is Going On?

Discovering the historical context requires us to look in the right places. Some biblical books offer us its context in the writing explicitly, some infer their context within the text, and some require outside sources to unveil the historical context of the work.

What books offer us their context explicitly? _____

What books offer us an inferred context? _____

What books require outside sources? _____

The following is a list of resources that anyone can use to help build their understanding of context. These are in order from most basic to most complex. A listing of resources is available in Appendix A.

1. Websites: A number of resources have come available in the last several years on websites that have practical value. Simply searching for the book of the Bible you are studying can provide you with a number of valued resources for your efforts. However, you must make sure your source is credible. Look in numerous places to build a consistent understanding.

2. Study Bibles: These usually offer an introduction and overview of the Biblical book in a concise manner.

3. Single Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: These tend to offer more information than the study Bible, but far less than some of the more lengthy and expensive resources

4. Background Works and Surveys: These books offer information about the culture and the circumstances of a time period or biblical book.

5. Single Volume Bible Commentary: While offering comments on the entire Bible, these volumes also provide a good simple historical context.

6. Multi-Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: These offer much larger amounts of information for providing context than single volume efforts.

7. Single Volume Commentaries: These commentaries focus on one book of the Bible. The author is usually a leading scholar in the field for that book, and the work on historical context is often top notch.

8. Software: The value of software is in the volume of material. Some very good material is available at relatively low prices. In most software

packages a collection of these other sources are available.

What is the Purpose?

Let's look at several books, discover their historical context, and state the author's purpose.

1. Genesis: _____

2. Ruth: _____

3. Hosea: _____

4. Matthew: _____

5. Colossians: _____

What is the genre?

As we have stated before the Bible is not a book. Rather it is a small library. This means that there are a number of different literary styles that must be recognized in our study. Each style is a genre with characteristics that are unique. The final contextual issue that must be address is the literary context. In the next lesson we will identify the literary genres, group the books that belong in those genres together, and offer some guidelines for interpretation.

Lesson 3

Context is King Part 2

In the last lesson we learned that context is king when it comes to interpreting the Bible. We discovered the necessity for discovering the historical context and the purpose. The focus of this lesson is on the literary contexts within the Bible. At the conclusion of this lesson you should be able to identify the different types of literature found within the Bible, understand some guidelines for interpreting the different literary genres within the scriptures, and group the Biblical books into literary categories and Biblical divisions.

Easing In

The Bible is comprised of _____ main forms of literature. As you read the Bible you are introduced to narratives, poetry, prophecy, and epistles. Within the confines of these forms there are some distinct differences, but the wide net cast by these four forms of literature catches all of the biblical material for us. Let us then define the forms and examine some of the categories that exist within them.

Narratives share information. The information that a narrative shares can be an account, story, report, or record but in all cases information is shared from the narrator with his audience. Proper interpretation of a narrative requires us to have a clear understanding of the author's purpose. From this purpose, one finds the

reason for the author's sharing of the narrative with his audience.

Within the genre of narrative there are several categories that are found within the Scriptures. These include historical accounts of events, records, and parables. Each is a form of narrative.

A _____ of events shares what happened at a certain place at a certain time. This may be an event occurring within a family, an account of a battle, or an account of daily life. However, the historical account is not included within the Scriptures for trivia. Rather the account is included because it furthers the author's purpose. A historical account properly interpreted will allow the reader to further grasp the purpose of the author.

List some of the Historical Accounts found in the Scriptures:

A _____ is information that offers statistical information. These include genealogies, censuses, and military groupings. These records further our understanding of the author's purpose by their inclusion in the text. They illustrate elements of God's sovereignty, providence, and faithfulness. They also better our understanding of the culture and society.

Where are some of these records found in the Scriptures?

A _____ is a story that conveys a message. This was the favored form of communication by Jesus, and many of the parables of Scripture are found within the Gospels. However, there are a number of parables found within the Old Testament as well. These parables are offered to bring a great truth down to a basic level for understanding.

List some of the parables that are found in the Old and New Testaments:

Looking at the Bible a large number of its books fall into this category. Genesis through Esther are narratives in the Old Testament. Parts of the Major Prophets and Jonah also find themselves included in the narrative collection as well. In the New Testament, the Gospels and Acts make up the narrative library.

Poetic Literature uses expressive language to convey revealed truth. When reading poetry much of the material serves to emphasize truth that other forms of literature have revealed. Through the use of

figurative language and verbal imagery the poets often illustrate how these truths are played out in our lives. Poetry may convey a story, share experience, or present evidence for the truth it is conveying. Within the Scriptures we find three forms of poetry. We find standard poetry, psalms, and proverbs. Let us look at each of these as we discover more about their work in the text.

_____ is poetry used in the form of a story, shared experience, or presented evidence to convey a truth. These poems are either an entire book or section of a book that fulfill the purpose of the author. The longest poem in the Scriptures is Job. However, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon also are lengthy poems that cover entire books. The poem itself is the purpose of the author and the truths revealed are designed to be evident to the reader.

A _____ is a poem that is meant to be sung. Much of the Psalms in the Scripture are designed to be sung during corporate public worship. Consequently, they tend to sing about God, what he has done, and what he is presently doing. When included in a narrative work, the psalm is always tied to the purpose of the author for the narrative. The psalm does not stand on its own and must be interpreted in light of the rest of the narrative. In the book of Psalms, each Psalm stands on its own. This particular book was used as the hymnbook of the Temple and so the Psalms are grouped together, but they are separate entities focusing on praising God and educating worshipers.

What are some of your favorite Psalms and what truths do they emphasize?

A _____ is a simple saying that expresses a general rule. One must be careful in interpreting proverbs because they are not promises. Rather, these are declarations of the general process of living. Proverbs are a form of figurative language and often are popular expressions of thought. When found within a narrative they express the truth or idea that the author is trying to convey. The book of Proverbs is a collection of these sayings. Each saying stands alone and should be understood that way. While there are some longer poetic works within the Proverbs, the vast majority are simple one and two verse sayings that do not attach to the ideas that follow.

What are some of your favorite proverbs from Scripture and what general processes do they offer?

In the Bible the books of Job-Song of Solomon are considered to be poetry. Many of the prophets use poetry in their writings as well. However, as we look at the prophets we will see that their genre is guarded not so much by form as by function.

Prophecy is not about telling the _____ .
Rather prophecy served to reveal God's will and activity to others. Prophecy, in the Scriptures, serves as a warning to its hearers and its readers. These warnings usually offered a charge, a judgment, a plea for repentance, and a punishment.

Prophecy is much like poetry in its language usage. Prophecy uses a great deal of figurative language and non-literal phrases in its communication. Thus one must be careful not to bog themselves down with the _____ of a prophecy and seek to grasp the purpose of the author in his words.

Identify the meaning of the author from the following text:

Deuteronomy 8:7-9

Jeremiah 9:13-16

As these two passages reveal, many of the prophet's words cannot be taken in a literal fashion. Rather we must read and understand the big picture of what God is saying and doing in the words of the prophets. This is not difficult so long as we avoid missing the forest because we are looking at the trees.

Isaiah to Malachi and the book of Revelation are the books of prophecy within the Bible. However, prophecy is evident in much of the narrative and poetic portions of the Scripture as well. When we see prophecy within these sections remember that the

prophecy is their according to the author's purpose. Do not attempt to pull that prophecy and interpret it outside of the intent of the author for its inclusion.

An epistle is a _____. These letters were written to specific people in specific places, at a specific time, facing a specific circumstance. Thus, the epistles offer us instruction for dealing with daily circumstances. These help us to understand how to put the truth of God into everyday use. This occurs through the revelation of eternal principles.

Within epistles we find instructions for specific churches facing specific circumstances. When we understand the historical background, we are then able to take the specific commands for that church and discover the eternal principle that rest behind it. Once again it is important not to allow the specific details to lead you into the wrong conclusion. We live in a different society facing different problems than those who received the original letters. Thus we must be careful not to make a specific command an eternal principle.

Let's look at a couple of passages, identify the specific command that is given, and then share the eternal truth for us today.

1 Corinthians 8

Specific Command: _____

Eternal Principle: _____

Colossians 3:22-4:1

Specific Command: _____

Eternal Principle: _____

The books of Romans-Jude are all epistles within the New Testament. Revelation is an epistle as well, but since so much of it is prophecy it has been collected with the prophetic books, however, both sets of interpretation guidelines apply to Revelation.

The End

Determining context is not the end. This is the beginning. Knowing the historical context, the purpose, and the literary context allows us to determine the proper interpretation and application. In the next lesson we will learn how to examine the text itself as we discern the meaning of the text.

Lesson 4

A Practical Guide for Handling the Text

Once the context has been established for a passage we are ready to begin examining the Word of God for the truth contained within. As with any area of study, a little guidance can go a long way in assisting us. This lesson will offer a guideline for Bible study that can be used with any text in order to find the main idea of the author.

Why is the main idea important? This is the key point the author is making. While there are many different ideas flowing through a text, the main idea is the central line of thought from the author to his readers. If we focus on identifying the author's main ideas, then we will grasp the message God has for us. Rather than seeking for something that has never been found before, let us seek the truth that has been mined from the passage faithfully for centuries and allow God to speak to us through his word.

Step 1: _____

As we begin to study the Bible there are some basic steps that are necessary for preparation. The first is to _____ asking God to give us wisdom and insight into his word. We pray for the Lord to guide our study and our thinking. Pray for the Holy Spirit to instruct us through the Word of God that we may know God more deeply, intimately, and personally. Pray that the text will change our thinking, our feeling, and our activity that we may be further conformed to the image

of God's son. Then trust God to fulfill these things that we have prayed.

Secondly, we need to _____.
I encourage the reading of the text in at least two different versions of the Bible. My preaching professor in college taught that we should read the passage in the King James Version first and then read it in three other versions. Regardless of how many versions you read, when studying the Bible, spending time with at least two translations helps you to get a feel for the text.

Step 2: _____

Once you have read through the passage a couple of times it is time to begin making observations. These observations are simply an investigation of the text. Take time to identify elements of the text that stand out. If the author has made of list of items, then note that. If the author uses an unfamiliar phrase (i.e. a new name for God, a change to a name, etc.) or a distinct phrase in the Scriptures (i.e. Son of Man, glory of the Lord, day of the Lord, etc.) then make a notation of that. Make sure that you identify the pronouns of a passage and who they are referring to. Make a note of the physical locations that are referenced in the passage as well.

Step 3: _____

Once you have read the text and made your observations, take time to ask some good questions. If something you read caused a thought to pop into your head, then write that down for further investigation. If there is a question in your mind about the author's

purpose, reasoning, or meaning within a passage write that question down and look into it.

Step 4: _____

As you were reading the text, certain words may have stood out to you. They may be theological terms, geographical terms, or contextual terms but they all mean something. Take time to identify these words and discover their meanings.

Step 5: _____

This is the final step in the process. Once you have read the text, observed the text, asked questions from the text, and defined the key words of the text we must state the main idea. This is the central point of the author to his readers in this text.

The main idea should be defined in _____ . Beyond that the main idea does not change. Once this is defined correctly, you can write in into your Bible next to this text and have it forever.

Step 6: _____

Application answers the question, "What should I do now?" Once we have identified the main idea of the passage, what difference should that make in our lives. We do not learn simply to obtain new truth. We learn so that we can draw closer to Jesus Christ. If the goal of the believer's life is to walk worthy of their calling in Christ and to be conformed to the image of God's son, then what we learn should change us. Application is taking the main idea and transferring it to life change.

Once we have the main idea there is a basic _____ that should be _____. Should I start or stop doing something based on this idea? In his letter to the Colossians, Paul instructs the Colossians to put off certain things and to put on certain things because of his teachings of Christ. That is the heart of application. We must identify what changes should be made because of what the word of God says. We cannot stop with simply the main idea, we must finish with an application of God's word to our life.

Like any journey there are always some pitfalls to avoid. On this journey three specific pitfalls must be avoided if we are to arrive at our destination.

The first pitfall to avoid is _____. This is not Bible reading. This is Bible study. Most people do not have time to do this every day. Rather take time each day to work on part of this until you have nailed down the passage.

The second pitfall is poor _____. Do not allow the chapter and verse numbers to be your only guide in determining the passage of study. The narrative of Joseph takes up multiple chapters, but it was written as one account. Find the natural breaks in the text and use those as your boundaries. Otherwise you may define a main idea for the author that only exists because the account has not been completely examined.

The third pitfall is slavery to _____. We all approach the text with ideas and thoughts on the front end. That is okay as long as we are willing to

be open to the Lord in his instruction. When we refuse to learn from our study and simply seek to prove ourselves right we short circuit the process. Much of what you think and believe will likely be accurate, but it is essential not to let being right drive you in your conclusion.

Practice Makes Perfect

Use the sample form to work through in Appendix B then compare your work to my study of the same text in Appendix C.

Lesson 5

Teaching Others

One of the great values of a strong Bible study is the ability to share what you have learned with others. A strong Bible study in private leads us to offering strong Bible lesson in public. This lesson will guide us through the development of a Bible lesson based on the work we completed in the last lesson on Colossians 1:3-12. As you work through this passage you may check your work through the guide in Appendix E

What am I aiming at?

The first step to creating a strong Bible lesson is creating an _____. An objective is a statement that defines the _____ and _____ of the lesson. This statement answers the questions "What do I want my learners to understand, and what do I want my learners to do with what I have taught them?" The objective offers us a target to aim at with our lesson. Our work should ultimately lead our students to a place that fulfills our objective.

Looking back at Colossians 1:3-12, create two objectives for lessons that can be written based on this text.

The Lesson Itself

Once an objective has been determined we can begin constructing our lesson. The method of instruction that I have personally found most helpful for lesson creation was created by Dr. Larry Richards. In his book *Creative Bible Teaching*, Dr. Richards offers a four part Lesson Plan that anyone can use to teach others. This method is referred to as Hook, Book, Look, and Took. Let us work our way through these four parts as we seek to create a Bible lesson together.

Hook:

The first step in our Bible lesson is to _____ our learners. This is the hook method of our lesson. To hook our learners we use an age appropriate _____ or _____ to draw them into the study. Remember the hook must tie back to the objective. We are not running a magic show where we want to distract, but rather we are guiding learners down a path that leads where we want them to go.

Looking at our objective and our passage, what are some hooks that can be used to begin our lesson?

Book:

The second step in our lesson development is to bring our learners into _____ with the text. We _____ from our activity directly into the passage that is being studied.

Transitions take work and so one must be careful to make sure their transitional statements bring their students from the activity into the text.

This can be accomplished by offering some contextual background to the passage as a transition. One may use a _____ or a _____ to bring the transition to pass but the transition must take place.

Some examples of transitional statements begin with ...

1. You know this reminds me of a time when ...
2. Did you know that _____ experienced something like this when he/she ...
3. The Bible deals with a situation very similar to this when ...

The goal of the transition statement is to allow you to take your learners into the text by offering them some background and instruction to further your objective. As we look at our objective and hook from Colossians 1:3-12 what is a good transitional sentence that we can use.

What contextual information would you share with your learners to help them understand the passage you are about to read to them?

Look:

Once we have hooked our learners and brought them into the book, our third step is to _____ them from the passage. This is called the look stage and it focuses on the study of the passage. This step answers the questions "What does this say and what does this mean?" Here is where we use the _____ we have made to communicate the _____ of the text. This is more than simply sharing the main idea with the learners, but helping them learn the main idea by taking them on the journey of understanding themselves.

We help them by sharing key observations, key words, and key questions that enable them to read, interpret, and understand the text themselves.

Looking at your objective and the main idea of the passage what information would you share with your learners to help them in their journey of understanding?

Took:

The final step in the learning process helps learners apply what they have learned. This is the

took stage. This application comes from taking the main idea and determining how that should be _____
_____. This fulfills the second portion of the objective by providing specific direction to what you desire your learners to do as a result of what this passage teaches. Ultimately this step helps learners answer the question "How does this apply to my life?" This can be accomplished through questions, activities, discussion, or direct statements.

Looking back at Colossians 1:3-12, list a several ideas to help the learners apply what they learned from this text.

Appendix D contains a lesson preparation guide that walks through each of these steps. Using your work in this lesson, copy that form and fill in the blanks. You will then have a completed lesson from Colossians 1:3-12 that you can share with others.

Conclusion:

You have done it. You have completed the work to become a world-class Bible student. You have taken the journey of understanding, you have learned the value of context, and you have developed a method for studying the Scriptures. You even have developed a method for teaching what you have learned to others. I pray that you will use what you have learned to grow closer to God through his word and to help others as they grow closer as well.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A

A Listing of Resources

The following are a number of resources I have found helpful as tools in the work of Bible Study.

1. Websites:

- a. <http://bible.cc>
- b. www.blueletterbible.org
- c. www.biblestudytools.com
- d. www.biblegateway.com
- e. www.studylight.com

2. Study Bibles:

- a. The HSCB Study Bible
- b. The MacArthur Study Bible
- d. The New Inductive Study Bible
- e. The Hebrew/Greek Key Word Study Bible
- f. The Wiersbe's Transformation Study Bible
- g. The A.W. Tozer Bible
- h. The Matthew Henry Study Bible
- i. The Life Essentials Study Bible

3. Single Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:

- a. The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary
- b. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary
- c. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary

- d. New Bible Dictionary
- e. New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters

4. Background Works and Surveys:

- a. Introducing the New Testament by John Drane
- b. The Illustrated Life of Jesus by. Herschel Hobbs
- c. The New Testament: Its Background and Message by Thomas Lea and David Alan Black
- d. Encountering the New Testament by Walter Elwell and Robert Yarbrough
- e. Encountering the Old Testament by Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer
- f. Old Testament Survey by Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush
- g. Introducing the Old Testament by R.K. Harrison
- h. Exploring the Old and New Testament series published by IVP
- g. The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting
- H. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs
- G. The Illustrated Guide to Biblical History

5. Single Volume Whole Bible Commentary:

- a. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary

- b. The New Bible Commentary
- c. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary:
Single Volume Edition
- d. The Expositor's Bible Commentary-Abridged
- e. The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on
the Whole Bible
- f. The Zondervan Bible Commentary, One-Volume
Illustrated Edition

6. Multi-Volume Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:

- a. The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the
Bible
- b. The Anchor Bible Dictionary
- c. The IVP Bible Dictionary Set
- d. Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible
- e. The International Standard Bible
Encyclopedia
- f. The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible

7. Multi-Volume Commentaries:

The Encountering Series published by Baker
Academic

- a. The Broadman Bible Commentary
- b. The New International Commentary on the New
Testament
- c. The New International Commentary on the Old
Testament
- d. The Word Bible Commentary

e. The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

f. The New American Commentary

g. The IVP Bible Background Commentary

h. The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary

Commentary Sets are seldom written by the same author. Here are a few of my favorite commentators who have written numerous volumes for different sets.

a. F.F. Bruce

b. John Pophill

c. Craig Blomberg

d. D.A. Carson

e. Derek Kidner

f. C. Hassell Bullock

g. Douglas Moo

h. Leon Morris

i. John Stott

j. David Alan Hubbard

k. Gordon J. Wenham

8. Software:

a. The Cadillac of Bible Software is the Logos software program. Nothing else comes close

b. Bible Explorer

c. Wordsearch Bible Software

9. Word Study Resources

a. The Complete Word Study Old Testament and New Testament and Dictionaries (4 volumes)

b. Mounce's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

c. Expository Dictionary of Bible Words

e. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

f. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

g. Nave's Complete Word Study Topical Bible

h. The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis

i. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

10. Handbooks and Companions

a. Willmington's Guide to the Bible

b. Willmington's Bible Handbook

c. The CLC Bible Companion

d. The Holman Bible Handbook

Appendix B
Guide for Bible Study

Text:

Contextual Background:

Textual Observations:

Key Questions:

Key Words:

Main Idea of the Text:

Application:

Appendix C

A Guide for Bible Study

Text: Colossians 1:3-12

Contextual Background:

Colossians was written in response to a doctrinal heresy that had arisen in the church. Paul, while in prison, responds to the report of Epaphras the founder of the church. While the specific teachings of the heresy have remained a mystery, the textual clues lead one to see a blending of Jewish, Pagan, and Christian thought. This regional faith taught a mysticism and asceticism that were essential for one to truly know God. This was in plain contrast to the Gospel, but had found a place within the church. Paul's response to this false teaching is Colossians. Instead of dealing directly with the false teachings within the church, he places the focus on Jesus Christ. Paul address who Christ is, what Christ has done, and what difference that should make in the lives of the Colossians. By focusing upon the Christ of the Church, Paul offers all believers an apologetic against false teachings and false living.

Textual Observations:

This is Paul's prayer for the Colossians
Paul had heard of the Colossians from Epaphras indicating that he had not been to the church himself
Paul emphasizes their previous acceptance of the Gospel and its fruit throughout the world
Paul describes Epaphras with the same phraseology as other missionaries and pastors
Paul tells them his specific requests:
Filled with the knowledge of his will
in all wisdom
and
spiritual understanding
So that they
may walk worthy of the Lord

fully pleasing to him
bearing fruit in every good work
growing in the knowledge of God
Strengthened according to his glorious might
for

Endurance

Patience

Paul gives thanks for their salvation

Key Words:

Walk: To live, to conduct ones life

Worthy: Suitably, in a fit manner

Knowledge: Insight

Will: Desire, decision

Wisdom: Sophia is the Greek and it is the term used
for a personified wisdom.

Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24)

Spiritual Understanding: Comprehending the things
of the Spirit

Endurance: long suffering

Patience: persevere

Key Questions:

Why is this the focus of Paul's prayer? If we are
walking worthy of our Lord in all of his understanding,
then we will not be subject to false teachings and
improper living.

Is this a local instruction or is this a universal
instruction for us? This prayer is local in relation
to the Colossian heresy, but it is universal in that it
insulates us from those things that would draw us away
from the Christ.

How do we walk worthy? We walk worthy by fully
pleasing God, bearing fruit, and growing in the
knowledge of him. We learn this from careful study of
the Word of God and by the intentional living of what
we have learned.

Main Idea of the Text:

A living faith that is accurate and reasoned is

Paul's prayer for the Colossians

Application:

I should spend time each day in prayer to God for wisdom in the study of his word.

Appendix D
A Guide to the Bible Lesson

Text:

Objective:

Hook:

Book:

Look:

Took:

Appendix E

Examples for Lesson on Colossians 1:3-12

Text: Colossians 1:3-12

Objective:

1. My Objective is to help my learners understand that they should walk worthy of Christ by praying for the church.
2. My objective is to help my learners bear fruit by growing in the knowledge of God and to engage in activities that please him.
3. My objective is to help my learners develop a living faith and to live that out in their daily activities.

Hook:

1. Have you ever received a letter or an email that you were nervous about?
2. Have a partner blind-fold students and then lead them through an obstacle course.
3. Has anyone ever prayed for you? How did that make you feel? Ask students to think of time when someone prayed for them and then take a few moments to allow them to share that experience

Book:

1. The Colossian church also received a letter that they were nervous about. Their pastor had gone to visit Paul and when he returned he had a letter written by Paul for them.
2. When you were blind-folded you could not see how to avoid the obstacles that were in the path. You had to rely upon your partner to help you avoid those problems. The Colossian church was on a path with a major obstacle they could not see also. That is why Paul had to write them a letter to help them avoid it.
3. Just like people have prayed for us at different

times in our life, Paul prayed for the Colossians. Our passage this morning tells us what Paul prayed and why that should matter to us today.

Look:

1. Notice that Paul says this is what he has been praying for the Colossians
2. Share and Define the word "Walk"
3. Share and Define the word "Worthy"
4. Why is this the focus of Paul's prayer? What makes this so important?
5. Share the main idea of the passage with the learners

Took:

1. Ask learners "What impact should the main idea of this passage have on your life?"
2. What can we do for our church that Paul did for the Colossians?
3. What are some things that we are doing in our lives that keep us from walking worthy?