

A ROADMAP to Rich Bible Study  
*Decide and Prioritize then Mine for Meaning*

1. Decide which questions need to be answered then prioritize them.
  - a. Prayerfully and thoughtfully review your questions.
  - b. Which questions must be answered in order to understand the meaning? For example...
    - i. What words must be defined?
    - ii. What grammatical relationships must be determined?
    - iii. What historical background must be studied?
    - iv. What theological concepts must be explored?
    - v. What connections to context must be discovered?
  - c. Examples from 1 John 1:1 and 2:1-2 and 2:15 and Ephesians 1:4/5; Romans 12:1; 2 John 1:1 .
  - d. Given the time you have for study, prioritize the questions to be answered.
2. Revisiting the concept of context.

*“Each statement must be understood according to its natural meaning in the literary context in which it occurs.”<sup>1</sup>*

  - a. While making observations is critical, this work must never be divorced from context.
    - i. Remember that your passage fits within a paragraph.
    - ii. Remember that your paragraph fits within a letter or book.
    - iii. Remember that your letter or book fits within the whole of God’s counsel.
  - b. You must seek to understand the historical context of the book or letter.<sup>2</sup>
    - i. By whom and to whom was it written?
    - ii. When was it written?
    - iii. Why was it written?
    - iv. What cultural factors influence the meaning (e.g. Deut. 22:8; Matt. 5:41; “households”, etc.)?
  - c. You must work to understand the literary context of the book or letter.
    - i. What is the book or letter’s purpose or controlling theme(s)? (e.g. 1 John 5:13 or Romans 1:16-17, etc.)
    - ii. What is the basic outline or structure of the book or letter?
    - iii. What parallel passages within the book or letter deal with the same or similar subjects? (e.g. Eph. 1:9, 3:3 and 4, 9, 5:32, 6:19 or James 1:5, 3:13, 15, 17, etc.)
  - d. You must work to connect your passage within the context of this author’s writings. (e.g. 1 John 2:2 with John 11:51-52 or Ephesians 5:18-21 with Colossians 3:16.)
  - e. You must work to connect your passage with the context of the whole Bible. (e.g. Hebrews 8:7-13 with Jeremiah 31:31-34 or 1 Cor. 10 with Exodus 19+ or “The day of the Lord” or “the son of man”, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, William W. Klein, Craig L. Bomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., p. 217. Much of what follows is influenced or dependent upon this resource.

<sup>2</sup> See resources listed.

3. Mine the text and context for meaning.

Important Note: *the plain meaning is the preferred meaning.*

- a. See above for help in mining the context.
- b. Word studies.
- c. Grammatical studies (remember the language of your text!!).
- d. Temporal and thematic connectors (e.g. “therefore”, “after”, “when”, “if”, “nevertheless”, etc.).
- e. Diagramming (techniques and helps).
- f. Cross-referencing within the book or letter and beyond.

4. Resources for Study:

- a. *Living by the Book* by William Hendricks
- b. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Klein, Bomberg, and Hubbard, Jr.
- c. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* by Duvall and Hays.
- d. *Survey of the Bible* by William Hendriksen
- e. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo.
- f. *A Survey of the New Testament* by Robert Gundry.
- g. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by E. J. Young.
- h. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by Longman and Dillard.
- i. *Old Testament Survey* by Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush.
- j. *MacArthur Study Bible*.
- k. *ESV Study Bible*.