

Bible Study for January 21st

If you're just beginning to study the Bible in depth, it is usually best to start with a small book like Philippians. Now you're ready to do an overview of the entire book. After choosing your book, here's how to begin:

1. *Begin with Prayer.* Without the help of the Holy Spirit you cannot benefit from your study of the Bible. Therefore, start by asking his help and continue with an attitude of prayer.

2. *Read and Re-read the Book.* Reading the book over and over again will make you much more familiar with it. After reading the book through several times, the main message of the book will become more obvious to you.

3. *Identify the Type of Literature.* The type of literature determines the way a text is interpreted. As you read through the book you're studying ask:

- Is it **Historical**? Ex. *Genesis, Judges, Acts*. Historical books describe what happened and are not necessarily teaching us what we should do.
- Is it **Biographical**? Ex. *Ruth, Esther, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*.
- Is it **Poetic**? Ex. *Psalms*. Do you read a love letter and an instruction manual the same way?
- Is it **Proverbial**? Ex. *Proverbs*. Wisdom literature consists of concise statements of wisdom which are generally true.
- Is it **Prophetic**? Ex. *Revelation*. Prophetic literature often uses poetic language to describe future events.
- Is it an **Epistle** (Letter)? The letters of the New Testament (Everything from *Romans - Jude*) contain most of the doctrine (teaching) for the church.
- Is it a **Combination**? Ex. *Daniel*. Some books contain different types of literature. Each type of literature must be interpreted according to its own rules

4. *Let the Text Speak for Itself.* Be objective before subjective. In other words, learn what the text means before trying to apply it personally.

5. *Use the 5 W's and an H.* See next week's lesson on Observation: Context.

6. *Discover Facts About People and Events.* People and events are usually the most obvious and easiest to identify. If you're reading an Epistle, look for facts about the author, recipients and anyone else mentioned in the letter. If you're reading a historical book, look for descriptions of the person or event being described. Look for synonyms for people and events. As you identify people and events, ask the 5 W's. Ex. *Who* is the author, recipients, etc? *What* does he say about himself or them? *What* are his circumstances? *Where* is he? (Record any references to his location and locate on a map.) *Why* is he there? *When* is he writing? Also, ask *Why* is he writing, are they doing this, is he saying this? Finally, ask *What* does he talk about the most, are the people to do or not do? As you do the above, the theme of the book and the Holy Spirit's purpose in inspiring the book will begin to become clear to you!

Weekly Bible studies meet each Tuesday (except following a holiday) and Thursday in Capitol Annex Room 436 from 11:30 am till noon. Same study both days to allow flexibility for committee schedules.