

Bible Study for January 26th and 28th

So where do you begin? You begin by observing the text in its context. Choose a book of the Bible and 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. *Identify the Context.* Context is very important to interpreting the Bible. The word *context* means “what which goes with the text.” Context is the words, phrases, or sentences surrounding a particular word, phrase or sentence.
3. *Observe the Obvious.* Look for the obvious facts, details or ideas. When working a jigsaw puzzle, you start with the corners and then with the side pieces because they’re the most obvious! Similarly, we should identify the most obvious parts of the text we are studying.
4. *Deal with the Text Objectively.* Let the text speak for itself. Instead of trying to get something out of the text before you understand what it means, seek to understand the text! Each text has one meaning that will always be the same. On the other hand, each text may have a variety of applications to individuals. But one must first know the objective truth of a passage before seeking to apply it to your life.
5. *Read with a Purpose.* This is accomplished by asking questions of the text. Use the journalist’s “5 W’s and an H” (*who, what, when, where, why and how*). Ask . . .
 - **Who** wrote it? *Who* said it? *Who* are the major characters? *Who* are the people mentioned? To *whom* is the author speaking? About *whom* is he speaking?
 - **What** are the main events? *What* are the major ideas? *What* are the major teachings? *What* are these people like? *What* does he talk about the most? *What* is his purpose in saying that?
 - **When** was it written? *When* did this event take place? *When* will it happen? *When* did he say it? *When* did he do it?
 - **Where** was this done? *Where* was this said? *Where* will it happen?
 - **Why** was there a need for this to be written? *Why* was this mentioned? *Why* should they do such and such?
 - **How** is it done? *How* did it happen? *How* is this truth illustrated?

If you skip these steps and rush into interpretation, your understanding could be colored by your own thoughts and feelings about the topic. Not all texts will answer all the questions, just answer all you can.

Observing the context in the above ways will help protect you from misinterpreting the Scriptures! See 2 Peter 3:16.

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.