



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## How To Study The Bible: Part I

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Bob Lewis / 267-278-1992 / Bob.Lewis@capitolcom.org

Turn on the TV, surf the religious channels and be bombarded with a plethora of teaching confounding, confusing, and contradicting what had been argued and asserted on the previous channel.

Small wonder the viewer can only respond with “**What Is Up?**”

**Surely this isn't the intent of the divine author.**

Hence, our current focus:

### How to study the Bible

Our last few studies focused on Why Study the Bible.

In our interactions, we considered a comment Jesus of Nazareth made to some religious people who challenged his authority since he lacked “credentials”. In response, Jesus said, “...if any man is willing to do, he shall know...” (John 7:17) suggesting commitment precedes knowledge.

This suggests what is known as a Presuppositional stance.

Initially, everyone begins at some “Square One”; a starting point which is demonstrably unprovable.

Subsequent proof will lie in logical consistency of what is taught and the corresponding compatibility with reality.

The starting point I would offer in the context of this study is: **The Bible Is The Word of God, Written.**

**It is a piece of Written literature**

Therefore certain rules apply as one reads and interprets. Is it a piece of Poetry; or narrative; is it Didactic; is it Apocalyptic; etc.? All of which demands certain interpretative responses.

**It is a piece of Divinely inspired literature**

Though it is a piece of written literature, it argues that it is a communication from on high. Therefore, it carries by nature a different authority level in terms of its teachings. Its Imperatives, correctly understood, are not merely suggestions.

**Correct understanding is therefore a significant key.**

In the second epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, he draws Timothy's attention to the need to “...correctly handle the word of truth...” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Sadly, since the days of the ending of the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Christian history untold confusion has often reigned within the believing community and along with the confusion, much shameful conduct, not to mention often times idiot ideas. ☹

### **Some Basic Guidelines**

#### I. The Bible is not written **TO YOU**

Frequently one hears well meaning individuals say that the Bible is God's love letter to them. This sounds spiritual, and may be well meant, but it is grossly misleading. What has been recorded in the scriptures was written **TO** someone(s) specifically, addressing specific concerns, telling specific histories, etc.

#### II. The Bible **IS** written **FOR YOU.**

We see this specifically stated in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:11) and to the church at Rome (Romans 15:4)

III. The Bible is God's specific and historical record of divine revelation and anchored in his covenantal relationships with peoples. This is most notably apparent when one reads Old Covenant requirements and compares them

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with New Covenant statements. Hence, Paul's admonition to Timothy cited earlier (2 Timothy 2:15). (For those attending the study, a handout will be provided illustrating this issue.)

#### IV. Remember: Audience Relevance and Context..

As you read the text, keep in mind Kipling's "Six Honest Serving men":

"I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.  
I send them over land and sea,  
I send them east and west;  
But after they have worked for me,  
I give them all a rest."

God has graciously communicated to mankind via the written page, hence our commitment to our starting point mentioned above. Since He is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), there is but one meaning to his text. (An error in the early history of the church taught multiple meanings in each text and untold confusion reigned for hundreds of years.)

#### V. Finally, we ask three basic questions as we study:

- A. What does it say?
- B. What does it mean? That is, in the time in which it was written.

C. Its applicability is governed by subsequent revelation, if any. (Augustine, an early church leader, penned this comment: "The New Testament is in the Old, concealed. The Old Testament is in the New, revealed")

D. Does it apply today and, if so, how?

#### VI. The word of God has been given for a whole host of purposes, not the least of which is to change the life of the reader.

If you recall the passage in Ezra noted in last week's study it stated that "...Ezra had prepared his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in all Israel statutes and ordinances..."

Personally, I find this especially applicable in this context, i.e. Legislative Hall. As elected representatives you are here to serve, firstly, your constituency. In serving them, as a representative, might it not be best if you serve them in harmony with what they need versus want. Having elected you, it would appear they trust you to do what is best for them and with that charge they look to you to think ahead, to think in terms of what is best in the long-term, etc.

Obviously, a high calling and one demanding, if I might suggest, a reliance on "outside help" or help from on high.