

Eat the Scroll: How to Study the Bible Effectively

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.” (Revelation 10:8-11)

I. WHAT YOU NEED

- A. Pick a book of the Bible to study
- B. Buy or download a commentary (preferably 3) on that book
- C. Highlighters
- D. A laptop (or a designated notebook if you don't have a laptop)
- E. To understand that prayer and fasting is an essential part of effective Bible study

II. THE GOAL: TEXT AND CONTEXT

- A. The goal when seeking to study the Bible is to think Biblically about the Bible without bringing your ideas to the text. And the safest way to do that is by looking at the text within its context.
- B. An analogy of how I view Bible study is to say that it's like a very dense city with curvy roads (many of which are one way). When you are in the middle of the city for the first time, it seems impossible to find your way around. But, if you can get to a high place that looks down over the city, and if you can see the aerial view with a map in hand, you have confidence to learn your way around.
- C. A good rule is this: study both the text and context at all times. Or to say it another way, don't focus on the details if you don't know the broad "landscape." This is how false doctrine starts.

III. EXAMPLE OF HOW A BOOK IS STUDIED

- A. Here is an example of how I study Bible books:
 - 1. I start broad with a general and basic outline of the book. ***I assign each session a Roman Numeral in a Word document.***
 - 2. Once I have outlined the book into the major sections, I outline those sections into separate units. ***I assign each unit a Capital Letter.***
 - 3. And once I separate the units from the sections I look at the details of the sentences within the unit (language, sentence structure, propositions, commands, etc.). ***I assign each sentence or set of sentences numerical value.***
 - 4. And if the passage is quite detailed and contains many sub-units ***I assign those sub-units Lower Case Letters.***

IV. HOW A PASSAGE WITHIN A BOOK IS STUDIED

- A. The goal of studying a passage, once the context is settled in your mind and heart, is **to ask the appropriate questions**. And to ask the right questions you need to see the text within its context to then approach the structure of the sentence to inquire of the Lord concerning its inner-most natural meaning.
- B. Here is an example of how I would approach a unit within a section within a book, using Romans 8:1-3 as the unit within the section of Romans 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh...

1. After reading aloud a few times I look for **propositions** (truths). The first truth I see is “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.”
2. Almost all Biblical propositions are followed by **clauses** (reasons/grounds). So I would ask “WHY is there no condemnation?” When you see the word “for,” often that is the ground clause that the proposition rests upon.
3. Paul says that there is no condemnation FOR, or BECAUSE, “the law of the spirit of life has set you free...from the law of sin and death.” At this point, I look at that clause and ask, “What does that mean?” Does he elaborate? Or is that all we have to work with?
4. Paul goes on to say “FOR” again. Or, “BECAUSE.” He says, (1) don’t fear condemnation (2) BECAUSE we’ve been set free from the law of sin and death (3) BECAUSE God has done....something; something that the law could not do. Now, I look at the proposition, and I look at the two ground clauses and I ask, is there another proposition that gives more body and explanation to those grounds clauses? In this case, there is.
5. Next we read the ground clause that the other two rest on that led Paul to make his initial statement: “By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” At this point I look at the sentence structure and ask a question for each word.
6. “By sending His own Son” – Who is Paul talking about? The Father. “In the likeness of sinful flesh” – What does this mean? Jesus was born of a virgin with a human frame though being fully God. “...and for sin...” – What does for sin mean? That Christ took on flesh for the purpose that has to do with God doing something that the law could not do and with sin. “He” – Who is He? The Father. “Condemned” – What is that? Punished. Judged. Links us back to verse 1 where Paul used the word initially. “Sin” – Who’s sin? Not Jesus’ but our sin who should fear no condemnation. “In the flesh.” – Who’s flesh? – Not ours but Jesus’.
7. I then take the initial proposition, with the two clauses and the main ground clause and I go for a walk or a pace or a sit and I think it through by praying it back to the Lord and by reciting the logic in my own mind and soul. And I ask the Holy Spirit to change the water (the word) to wine (spiritual understanding). And then I consider it within the greater context of the book of Romans and the major section that it is placed within.