

The Bible is Unique and How to Study the Bible

Notes by Franklin

Unique - One and only; single; sole. Different from all others; having nothing equal.

I. Unique in Continuity

- A. Written over a **1,500 year** span.
- B. Sixty-six books written by **over 40** authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars.
- C. Written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
- D. Subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects with **harmony and continuity** from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: God's redemption of man.
- E. 2 Peter 1:21 It is a book of ONENESS or UNITY and therefore a miracle. For 40+ authors with such varied backgrounds to write on so many subjects, over a period of approximately 1500 years, in **absolute harmony** is a mathematical impossibility. So how do we account for the Bible? The only adequate explanation is: *"no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."*

II. Unique In Its Circulation

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history.

III. Unique In Its Translation

The Bible has been translated and retranslated and paraphrased more than any other book in existence.

IV. Unique In Its Survival

- A. Through **Time** - The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more **manuscript evidence** than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.
- B. Through **Persecution** - The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies as no other book. Many have tried to burn it, ban it and outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to present day Communist dominated countries.
- C. Through **Criticism** - No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized and vilified.

V. Unique In Its Teachings

- A. Prophecy - Islam cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.
(also see the notes: Prophecy & Probability)
- B. History - It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without any other writing even beginning to come close.
- C. Personalities - The Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. Other religious biographies try to cover up, overlook or ignore the failings and mistakes of their exalted ones.
- D. Man could not write the Bible if he wanted to, but if he could, he would not reveal the mistakes and evil of its honored ones.

VI. Conclusion

The Bible is definitely unique. There is no book in all of literature like it. A person looking for truth would certainly consider a book that has the above qualifications.

The Bible is as high above all others books as the heavens are above the earth. Someone has said of the Bible: "Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be right."

VII. The Bible Is The Inspired Word Of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Upon this statement of fact, evangelical Christianity stands. By "inspiration" we mean that the Holy Spirit exerted His supernatural influence upon the writers of the Bible.

The writings were inspired - not necessarily the writers, for the Bible nowhere claims to have been written by inspired men.

Psalm 119:160 John 17:17

A. **2 Peter 1:21** The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible. Jesus told His disciples that He would leave many things unrevealed, and that the Holy Spirit would come and choose certain persons and through them reveal His perfect will unto man; and that the Holy Spirit would be the believer's teacher. **John 16:12-15**

B. Man is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to write the Bible.

Romans 15:4 I Corinthians 10:11

C. The Results is: THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD. Therefore, the Bible is free from error and absolutely trustworthy.

**Psalm 12:6; 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:35
I Peter 1:23-25**

VIII. The Bible Is A Difficult Book. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

Because it came from the infinite to the finite. From the unlimited, all powerful God, to limited man. Therefore, you cannot understand the Bible as you would understand the writings of some great scholar. You can study the great philosophers with the natural mind, and by diligent application, grasp their profound meanings. If the Bible could be understood by natural man, it would be a natural book, and could not be the Word of God. Since, the Bible is from God, and therefore spiritual, before you can receive its teachings, you must be born of the Spirit (John 3:6). Always approach the Bible praying that the Spirit will be your teacher and will guide you to a better understanding of His Holy Word, or it will remain a difficult, closed book (John 16:12-15).

How can we know the true meaning of the Bible?

1. Be a child of God: John 3:3,5
2. Be filled with the Holy Spirit:
Ephesians 5:18 John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13

3. Be teachable: Ephesians 4:11-16
4. Be a spiritual man not a natural man: I Corinthians 2:14-16
5. Be diligent 2 Timothy 2:15

IX. The Bible Has Special Power

- A. The Bible has **dividing power** as a sword. It will separate man from sin or sin will separate man from the Bible. Psalm 119:9-11; Isaiah 59:2 Hebrews 4:12 Ephesians 6:17
- B. The Bible has **reflecting power** as a mirror. In the Bible, we see ourselves as God sees us:
Before "new birth" - as sinners: Romans 3:23; 7:7+; Galatians 3:22
After "new birth" - as Righteous: 2 Corinthians 5:21
- C. The Bible has **cleansing power** as water. David prayed that God would "wash him from iniquity" and "cleanse him from sin."
Ephesians 5:26 Psalm 51:2 Psalm 119:9 I John 1:9
- D. The Bible has **reproductive power** as seed. 1 Peter 1:23
We are children of God because we have been born into the family of God by the incorruptible seed of God. This is the new birth.
John 3:1-7 Luke 8:11-15 (exp. Raja in Sri Lanka - "Come to Me")
- E. The Bible has **nourishing power** as food. 1 Peter 2:2 The Bible is spiritual food for the soul. No Christian can remain strong in the Lord and not study the Word of God. Job 23:12; Romans 15:4
- F. The Bible has the **power to Bless and Prosper** the lives of those who study and obey it. Joshua 1:8 Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-11
Deuteronomy 28:1,2,9,12; 30:8-11 Proverbs 8:32-36

X. The Bible Commands The Believer To Study The Scriptures. 2 Timothy 2:15

Acts 17:11 As you study the Bible, you will discover that it IS the Word of God. You must also keep in mind that the Word of God contains the "words" of men also.

As you study the Bible ask yourself these questions:

- A. Who is speaking: God, an angel, man or satan?
- B. Who is being spoken to: Israel, gentiles, believers, to men or to a man?
- C. How can this Scripture be applied to my own life?

As you study the Bible you will come to Love God's Word:

A. David

1. Psalm 119:9-16 Thy Word have I treasured in my heart that I may not sin against Thee.
2. 119:33-40 Make this your prayer.
3. 119:97-104 O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day
4. 119:127 Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.
5. 119:140 Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loves it.
6. 19:7-11 The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul

B. Job

1. Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

C. Jeremiah

1. 15:16 Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.

XI. How To Study Your Bible Ezra 7:10

A. OBSERVATION - What Does It Say?

To practice use Colossians 3

1. Begin with Prayer
2. Read and Re-read the passage.
Like you read a love letter.
3. Discover the Author's Purpose. i.e. John 20:30-31

- a) The Main Subjects Covered
- b) The Problems Dealt With
- c) The Exhortations Given
- d) Repetition of Key Words and Phrases
- e) Questions being asked
- f) Comparison or Contrast
- g) Causes, effects
- h) Result of obedience

4. Always Ask Questions

- a) Who: wrote it? spoke it, to whom, about whom?
- b) What: are the Main Events? Major Doctrines?
is the purpose? is he talking about?
- c) When: did it take place? will it happen?
- d) Where: did it happen? will it happen?
- e) Why: was it written? did this happen?
- f) How: did this happen? did he do it?

5. Look For And List God's:

- a) Attributes What can I learn about God
- b) Doctrines What is the teaching?
- c) Promises
- d) Commands
- e) Warnings
- f) Principles (example) sowing and reaping

6. Marking Your Bible - Colors to use

- a) Golden God's Promises
- b) Green The Holy Spirit
- c) Purple Kingdom of God
- d) Yellow Important verse or words
- e) Blue Deity of Christ
- f) Red The Blood
- g) Pencil write in margin, circle key words, make a chain reference

7. Determine the best Theme or Title for each Chapter. select a key verse

8. Determine the best Theme of Title for the whole book.

B. **INTERPRETATION** - What Does It Mean?

1. Insights:

- a) Scripture will never contradict scripture. Let the Word interpret itself. Do not take a passage out of context.
- b) Always interpret scripture literally. Do not change its meaning.
- c) Is there a cultural, social, or religious custom to be considered?

2. Procedure

- a) Ask Questions. Why? What does it mean?
- b) Do any necessary word studies.
- c) Determine what it meant to the original readers – this is the Historical context.
- d) Check other passages that support, amplify, or give understanding.
- e) Read other translations if it is available.
- f) Use a Bible Commentary if one is available
- g) Summarize your conclusions

C. **APPLICATION** - How This Truth Applies To Me Today. James 1:22

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- a) Teaching - Be a disciple, a learner.
- b) Reproof - Exposes or makes plain what is wrong with my thinking and behavior.
- e) Correction - Confess and turn from that which is wrong. Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15
- d) Training in righteousness - How to live.
1 Corinthians 10:11 Romans 15:4

2. Is There:
 - a) A Sin or Wrong to avoid
 - b) A Command to obey
 - c) A Promise to me
 - d) An Example to learn from

3. Read Through Your Bible Every Year
 - a) Read three (3) chapters every day
 - b) On Sunday read five (5) chapters

XII. Biblical Meditation Joshua 1:8 Psalm 1

BIBLE STUDY: For knowledge. First goal is to understand the passage, analyze it. Compare with other passages, Scripture with Scripture. Use commentaries and other aids.

BIBLE MEDITATION: Come to the Word as a child and ask the Lord to feed your spirit, and direct your path. Read it and wait on the Lord to speak to you. Open up your whole life to the passage. He will encourage, guide, direct or rebuke you as need be. You leave having met the Lord and heard from Him. You go into your day to obey and apply. Psalm 119:147-148; 97-99

The Power of Meditation, for good or bad. Philippians 4:8

1. It reconstructs our thought life.
2. Realigns our wills
3. Refocuses our emotions.

Purpose to give Jesus a specific block of quality time each morning before your day begins. Psalm 119:147 Proverb 8:32-36

- A. Empty Yourself
 1. Bring every thought captive
 2. Do not let your former understanding of the passage prevent you from receiving something new.
 3. Do not make it say what you want to hear.

- B. Confess & Forsake any sin: Psalm 139:23-24 ["Search me O Lord"](#)

- C. Reconciled to all Matthew 5:23-24

- D. Be filled with the Holy Spirit Ephesians 5:18
 He is the Author - The Master Teacher John 14:26

- E. Come with faith that He will speak to you. "Our Father...."
 Hebrews 12:25 Isaiah 50:4; 51:1, 4, 7; 55:2-3;
 Habakkuk 2:1 Hebrews 11:6 Romans 10:17
- F. Commitment to Obey - Lordship Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21
 Say: "Lord, speak to your servant, I will obey regardless of what it costs."
- G. Chose the passage
1. Strongly suggest you take a book and meditate on it from beginning to end.
 2. Go systematically from day to day. Very important.
 3. Ask the Holy Spirit where to begin. If He leads to another Scripture for a special lesson or expansion, obtain it and return to your passage.
- H. Bible Study Aids
1. Devotional books are good but should not be used for morning meditation. 2. Learn to hear His voice for that which is specifically and originally yours.
 3. Avoid commentaries for the same reason. Let Him give you your personal 4. commentary. It may not be as scholarly but it will be yours.
- I. Use a version of the Bible that is easy to understand.

XIII. How To Do A Character Study

The Bible contains true accounts of men and women's lives in order that we might learn from them, realize that failure is not final, and that even the strong have weaknesses.

A. PROCEDURE

1. Decide on a particular person whose life you want to study.
2. Make a list of related verses or passages. Use an concordance if available.

3. Read the passages and make notes of the important points.
4. Look for:
 - a) Meaning of name (Moses - to draw out of water)
 - b) Family history
 - c) Training and conversion
 - d) The time he lived in and the periods of his life.
 - e) Failures and accomplishments
 - f) Spiritual life Philippians 3:17; 4:9
 - g) Scriptures to illustrate spiritual principles
 - h) Effect of his life on others. Philippians 3:7+
 - i) His death 2 Timothy 4:7-8

- B. THE EXAMPLE OF STEPHEN (work this out)
 1. List of verses or passages: Acts 6:3 - 8:2; 11:19; 22:20
 2. Meaning of his name: crown, diadem, or victor's wreath.
 3. Personal Application: Did I see myself? Weaknesses? Strengths?

XIV. How To Do A Topical Study

A. PURPOSE

To determine what God's Word has to say regarding a specific topic. It gives the total picture on that subject.

B. PROCEDURE

1. Look up every parallel and relative passage on the subject you are studying. Each reference must be understood and analyzed within its context.
 - a) Use a concordance, topical Bible, etc.
 - b) Look up all related words. i.e. Prayer / intercession
 - c) Find passage where topic first mentioned in Bible. Study thoroughly.
 - d) Look up contrasting passages.

2. Assemble Your Data

- a) Study each passage thoroughly, examine it to ascertain the authors intended meaning.
- b) Check the context carefully.
- c) Determine the main truths taught in the passage.
- d) Record your observations and new insights.
- e) Note passages that are clear and those unclear. Do not build a doctrine on the obscure.
- f) Note how often a particular teaching is repeated and give it greater attention.
- g) Never build on inference, tradition or extra-Biblical sources.

3. Organize Material into an outline.

- a) Make sure you have a coherent and complete coverage of the topic.
- b) Make sure you put the emphasis where God puts the emphasis.

4. Apply: Consider how all that you have learned is to have its effect on your life.

XV. Parable - A story which teaches a moral lesson or a truth.

It is not usually factual but remains true to life. It is designed to make one central point. It is not legitimate to ascribe a spiritual meaning and application to each point.

A. Two Purposes:

1. To reveal, clarify, or emphasize a truth in a memorable or convicting way.
2. To hide truth from those who had rejected it.
Matthew 13: 10-17

B. To Correctly Interpret a Parable you Must:

1. Discover why was it told and what prompted it.
2. Look for the intended meaning of the parable.
 - a) Will sometimes be stated.
 - b) If not stated, it will be identified by the application.

- c) The meaning is not to be imposed beyond what is clearly stated or applied to the hearers by the author.
 - d) Identify the one central theme or emphasis.
3. Identify relevant details. Will always reinforce the central theme.
i.e. Jesus Mark 4:13
4. Identify the irrelevant details. All details in a parable do not have significance and to attach meaning that is not relevant to its central emphasis is wrong. i.e. The Prodigal Son is often misused. It was to the Pharisees to show them the heart of the Father in forgiving sinners versus their grumbling like the elder brother. Luke 15:2

Parables that have cultural themes must be interpreted in the light of Biblical culture rather than our culture. i.e. The wise and foolish virgins. Matthew 2:13

Parables should never be the primary basis of establishing doctrine.

XVI. Allegory

A story with an underlying meaning different from the surface meaning of the story itself. i.e. John 10 and 15

- A. Can have more than one central point of emphasis.
- B. Can teach a number of truths.
- C. The details of an allegory may be many and varied relating to more than one theme.
- D. Can have irrelevant details; all the features of an allegory do not have to be identified. Intertwines the story and the meaning.
- E. Application is found within the allegory

A Learning Exercise: Read – Colossians chapter 3

Have students take each verse of the Chapter and answer these questions:

- 1. What do I learn about God? (Attributes)
- 2. What do I learn about Myself? (Doctrines, teachings)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| 3. Is there a promise? | (Promises) |
| 4. Is there a command? | (Command) |
| 5. Is there a warning? | (Warnings) |

only do these 5 during class time

Work on at least the first 4 verses together with teacher asking questions so they understand how to do it. Then let them finish the chapter by themselves. (They learn by doing it)

Give about 45min to 1 hour. Then let them give what they have learned in class in working this lesson by the teacher asking the questions again and letting them give their answers concerning each remaining verse.

They REALLY enjoy this exercise! They may not have enough time to finish on paper but they will finish in class with you.

Emphasize that they can lead a home group study, do private study, or even a class study with asking these questions. It is amazing what they learn just asking these 5 questions.

Continue on with the rest of the notes after finishing this exercise.

XVII. Bibliography

Master Outlines by Porter Barrington as found in the Christian Life New Testament, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

Taken from: How To Study Your Bible Precept Upon Precept.