

The 10 Bad Ways & The 10 Good Ways to Study Your Bible

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[0 : 00] Good morning church. There we go. You guys did pretty good on that. You did pretty good on that. You don't have a mic. Just in case you're wondering you are new or you're visiting, my name is BK and I have the pleasure of being one of the pastors here at SBC.

In case you did not know, I'm going to bring you quickly up to speed what we've been kind of studying over this summer. We've been looking at some of the basics of Christianity, whether you want to call it the building blocks of faith, spiritual boot camp, Christianity 101, or what you need to know about being a Christian. But today I want to talk about probably the most basic aspect of the Christian life. And that simply is how to read, understand, and apply your Bible.

Well, I get, if you are a part of SBC, you are known as a people of the word.

So let me ask you a question this morning. Hold up your Bibles or your phones or if you believe that this is the word of God. If you believe this is the word of God. If you don't believe it's the word of God, it's okay. It's okay. You might be a little bit skeptical. You might have some questions.

I can help answer those questions, but probably not today. So obviously this is just one sermon in a three-part series. And what I want to provide is not only the message of Jesus Christ, but where all the books of the Bible fit into the story of the gospel, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation, I want you to know, but when we're through, you're going to know where every single book of the Bible fits in. And because of that, you're going to be able to understand why it's there and what it means for you. Now, if you aren't new, you've been here for a while, I don't need to force on you that the Bible is the word of God. In fact, it's because we preach the word of God is probably one of the biggest reasons that you attend SBC. You know that if God says it, then God's word is both infallible without error, and I'd better pay attention. Amen?

[2 : 35] If God has a word for us, it is in his word. And because of this, we have always held that we are to preach the word of God without apology. This isn't what BK says. This isn't what Dave says. This isn't what any of the previous pastors have said. This is what God says. But here's the thing.

Just because we believe that the Bible is God's word, doesn't mean we understand all of it, do we? Doesn't mean we've got all the questions answered. We don't have a complete understanding of every point of teaching that is in there. If I was to take a poll, I'm sure some of you would tell me it's kind of complicated. Sometimes when I read it, I feel overwhelmed. I feel frustrated.

You know, you're going to begin, you know what, I'm going to read this whole Bible in a year, and you know what, you start off strong, right? You get to Genesis, come on, that's pretty easy to read. You hear about the creation of the world, and you learn about Adam, and Noah, and this guy Abraham, and his sons Isaac and Jacob, and of course we know the story of Joseph. Then it flips over to Exodus, and we read about Moses, the great Moses who led his people out of slavery and into the desert.

And then the next thing you're reading about why it's bad to boil your meat in milk, right? And you start like, really, what is this all about, right? I don't get this. Why do I need to learn about food, food, and all these type of things? So, before I go any further, I want to play a game with you.

A little bit of family feud. Ryan, pop it up. I have surveyed 100 Christians here at the church. Come on. Remember? All right, the question is, reasons people give for not reading their Bibles.

[4 : 52] The top five answers are on the board. Let's shout them out. Who's got the top five answers?

No time. What's that, woman in red? No time. No time. Survey says number one answers. I've got no time. All right. What is another reason? Let's fill this out. You guys got it. Don't understand it.

Number four, lack of understanding. All right, who's got? Come on. Three more answers are on the board. In the back. Nick? Fear of misinterpretation. Let's put that under number three. Feeling overwhelmed. All right. Two more. Come on. You guys are hitting three for three. I don't want to give you the big, ah. Too tired. Too tired. Ah. All right. Come on. Let's go. What are some of the, give me a couple more reasons? A couple more reasons. Need glasses. Yeah, need glasses. That's a double X, that one. Go to the optometrist. Okay, I can't X my wife. I'm going to pretend I did not hear that. But it's kind of along those lines. All right, let's give it number two. It's my wife lacking the discipline because we're too distracted with the things of life. Now, what's the last one?

Bingo! Doug Lye. He's been away for three years and he comes back and he hits, and he's hitting a thousand. Way to go, Doug. All right. So those are the five main reasons why people do not read their Bible. Now, I'll be honest with you. The first two I cannot help you with. As I have learned from our youth group, the common vernacular to describe this problem, it's a you problem. Right? You can't make the time and you can't get disciplined. I can't help you with that. That's something that you have to resolve in your heart. That if you do believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and you do believe that the God of all creation has taken his time to give us what he wants us to know about living this life, do we not think it's important to make time or to be disciplined to read this book? Yes or no?

Yeah. So maybe it's just a matter of writing out some priorities, letting go of some things. Maybe it's getting up a half hour earlier. I don't know. But that's between you and the Lord.

[7 : 40] But we truly believe that this is God's Word. God's Word has a say in this, and you can go to him with this. But the other reasons I think I can help you with. I think our time in the next three weeks, I think I can help you answer some of these questions. I get that the Bible is pretty overwhelming.

Did you know that there's over 600,000 words in the Bible? It is divided into 66 different books or letters written by over 40 different authors over a time period of 1,600 years. Like just looking at those statistics alone, that's pretty overwhelming, isn't it? Like that's a lot to get into.

Not only that, it's written in two relatively dead languages. The biblical Hebrew and the biblical Greek that is used in here. We don't speak this. Hey, I learned it. I thought I was pretty sharp. I was taking a little bit of first year Hebrew, and I ran into these guys from Israel, and I did not get past shalom with them. I did not understand what was going on. I was like, spell it for me. You know, they don't even use vowels, right? And in biblical Hebrew, there's some tricks in order to understand where the vowels are. Not only that, it's a book. The book of Genesis was written. It talks about events 35 years before, even thousands of years before that book was even written. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, which was written over 2,000 years ago, tells us what's going to occur in the future and into eternity. So we've got a book from the very beginning of us being man and the end of time. It's incredible.

It talks about every race, language, creed, all those things and how they fit in. One of the first verses at seminary that they, quote unquote, force us to memorize is 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17.

Simply says, all scripture is breathed. Doesn't say just the New Testament, just the Gospels. Talks about all scripture. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I believe that in the heart of every Christian here wants to be equipped for every good work of God. Amen? When God calls upon you, you know there's these moments where God's leaning in on you. You want to know. You got to know. What do I do?

[11 : 06] It could be as simple as responding to people at work or to be in a major trial and how do I walk my friend through cancer or through a disastrous lifetime. God actually speaks to the human condition.

So where do we start? So this morning, before I get to giving you, so by starting the sermon, I know I'm committing you guys to the next two Sundays to get the full throttle of everything that's going to be discussed here. But this morning, I want to talk to you about 10 ways not to interpret God's Word. 10 ways we're not supposed to interpret God's Word. And then I'm going to follow that up with 10 rules that you're to follow in order to interpret God's Word correctly. You with me on that? So I'm going to be honest with you. First 10 ways we're going to be embarrassed because I guarantee you we've all done them. We've all thought, hey, I was really biblical. I pulled something great out of there for me. But we're going to find out why later it didn't work. But our goal is that I want you to be able to come to God's Word with confidence. And I want you, after we're done, to be able to look at every book of the Bible and you can see where it fits into God's plan.

So when you're looking at the words understanding, and a lot of people divide up the Bible. There's, you know, the Torah, the first five books, the Pentateuch, and then they talk about the books of the law. Then there's the history books. They're more than that. They're more than just the books of the minor prophets. Like the minor prophets, there's incredible power in these quote-unquote smaller book of the prophets, even when you know when they occur in church history. When you see why that man was writing that letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, how powerful that is. If you just look like, oh, this is just a smaller book of the prophet, no big deal. But when you understand where it fits in to God's grand story of God redeeming man, you're like, wow, there's power here. I can relate that to my life. I can plug into that. So are you with me on this?

All right, you committed? The 10 ways, going to be a little bit embarrassing. You got to say, hey, BK, I think I can handle being embarrassed. And trust me, you're not going to be alone.

I already tested them on Chris Mitchell, and he said he did every single one of them. All right, so everyone's going to be okay. So before we go any further, let me just pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we are, think of it, we're, you're the God of this universe. You have created the sun, the moon, and the stars. All these things to display who you are.

[14 : 17] The babies that cry out. You were the ones that developed the perfect machination between a man and a woman to come together in family and to bear a child. And how this child grows. Those are not accidents of evolution. These are not cells that, quote unquote, crawled out of a primordial swamp or soup and was a fish or a monkey. No, no, no, no, no. You created us as man and woman.

You created us to be worshipers of you. You created us to walk with you. And although these things and natural revelation speak to your glory, your power, and your majesty, you speak to us directly through your son, Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

You use this Holy Spirit to move men to write your words that we should know about you. We can't know all there is to know about you, but we can know you through your word and what you have chosen to reveal about yourself. Father, I ask that after these next three days, we would not be so scared of these 600,000 words written over 66 books over a period of 1,600 years.

I pray that we're going to see that they were written by one author who used 66 hands or 40 different hands in 66 chapters of our lives to mean something, to teach us something, to grow us into the men and women that we are called to be, to be equipped to do your work.

How great is it that you, a perfect God, would use such an infinite people like ourselves, but we are truly the apple of your eye. You have created us. You loved us in your great love.

[16 : 30] You brought us from death to life. And you call us to something great. You call us to declare your kingdom.

So, Father, we thank you for this, and I pray just through this, that everything doesn't happen so quick, but understandable, and that we will be able to build a foundation on what is to come with today's sermon.

So we ask you these things, your most holy and precious name. Amen. Amen. All right. So, the first way, number one way that people interpret the Bible incorrectly is called proof texting.

It is called proof texting. And in case you're wondering, if you want to listen more, I can put some of these notes on our website. So when you're looking up the verse, you can have all these.

An example would be Matthew 7 and 1. Has anybody ever been in a situation where you're talking or you're discussing, and it's getting kind of heated, and you say, hey, judge not.

[17 : 34] Right? You always go to Matthew 7. If you're having a theological discussion, oh boy, that's the big trump card, right? But it's actually the joker card they're playing. It is not a trump card.

It's a joker card. Because judge not that you be judged. The verse is frequently cited. But to understand it, when we read in context, Jesus is addressing what's called hypocritical judgment.

Basically, it's judging others while ignoring one's fault. Jesus isn't prohibiting all forms of judgment, but rather instructing believers to first examine their own lives before correcting others.

Amen? Tell me there's no more power than that, right? Hey, let me talk about your smoking there, Mark. Hang on. You know, you know. So you've got to watch yourself.

You can't be doing the same thing that you're trying to correct that other person on. That's not what this text is talking about. It says, first take the plank out of your own eye.

[18 : 37] But we often do this. We take this one verse. We ignore everything else around this. And we make it a rule for life. And for you guys who've been here for a while, you know that doesn't fit in.

And we're going to explain why in a little bit. So that's the first one. Number two. It's called allegorizing everything. What that means is you're trying to find an allegory.

Like you're trying to add an understanding to the text that the text doesn't do. And in fact, a lot of the early church fathers, the biggest mistakes that they made when interpreting Scripture is they were always trying to add this deeper meaning.

I'll just give you one off the top. Revelations 3.20. It says, I guarantee you, anybody, and I'm going to be rocking a few boats, a lot of people think this is a verse that Jesus is knocking on your door for salvation.

It isn't. That isn't. That isn't what's going on here. They're actually talking to churches. They're talking to a group. But this verse is often allegorized as a picture of Jesus knocking on the door of our hearts.

[19 : 58] But the context, it is a message to a church, which was the church of Laodicea, about repenting and restoring fellowship with Jesus Christ.

You with me on that? Now, that's probably a big shocker. A lot of people really get over that one. Third, I'm going to go over the don'ts a little bit quicker because obviously do's are more important.

The third way we interpret scripture wrong is we moralize it. Example, Matthew 19. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Rich people are bad. God's making it difficult for them to go to heaven.

In fact, he doesn't want it. You ever hear that? That's a distinguishing characteristic, right? They can't go through this eye of the needle. Now, Jesus Christ is talking about certain elements of wealth, but he's missing the broader context about what happens when you rely on your wealth from your salvation.

[21 : 18] The same principle applies when I rely on my family background for salvation. The same principle applies when I rely on my moral works for salvation.

You with me? All those groups have hard enough time getting through that eye of the needle. And if you actually want to know the context, they're actually talking about a specific gate that you entered into Jerusalem with.

So that's one of the mistakes we moralize. Another example. Who's heard of the story of David and Goliath? Let's be Davids. Let's all be courageous people, right?

And stand in front of that horrible bad boss that I have or that horrible non-Christian uncle that shows up at Thanksgiving meal and bullies everybody.

It's not what it's talking about. The story of David and Goliath is a story, although David does have, exempts his courage, but his courage is in God.

[22 : 27] Amen? That it's actually God is the deliverer of Israel in that time, and David is that instrument. You with me on that?

It's not meant to be moralized and for us to become great overcomers. A fourth way we mistakenly do things is we over-spiritualize.

We over-spiritualize. All right? We're praying for something, and we know that two or three are gathered together. God's hearing our prayers more than just the two people over there.

We've got four people. All right? Do you ever guys hear that? Totally flies in the face of the verse that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Right? No, what it's actually talking about in Matthew 18 is church discipline.

It's about coming together as the leaders of the church being one accord in an understanding of a church discipline. It doesn't mean that two or three people are gathered together.

[23 : 29] And I've even heard, hey, man, we had church yesterday. What do you mean you had church? Well, we had two families over at our house, and we prayed together. So God was with us in our house, and we had church.

No, you didn't have church. You had really good fellowship. Right? But you're going to hear these things. So you have three. Four is over-spiritualizing.

This is the fifth one. It's the, I enter me into every section of Scripture. Right? We've read this.

Sometimes people, and I know I've had a walk with someone, he comes up to me and he says, man, I do not, I can't figure out how to do this verse because I can't relate to that situation.

And I'm like, who taught you to read that? And he was like, well, you know, earlier in my faith, someone said that I'm to enter myself. Well, are you Jesus Christ? Well, no.

[24 : 33] Are you without sin? No. Why would you think that verse would be about you? You can't do that. Like, that's silly. So, I'm going to step on a few toes here.

All right? One of the most misabused verses, Jeremiah 29 and 11. Right? For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Who's memorized that? Come on. Who's written it down somewhere?

Right? You know? Yeah, we've been there. That is actually not for us. That is a time when Israel was in captivity for 70 years.

So, Babylon had come in, and the prophet Jeremiah was giving them hope that they are going to prosper in Persia during those 70 years of captivity, and they will go home to Israel.

[25 : 43] So, you see that. Every church. All right. Okay. Not every church. But I see people always doing it. The other one that makes me cringe is there's a verse in Habakkuk, and it says, you will never believe what great works that God is going to do in your presence.

And the works are actually all judgments. Like, he's raining destruction on you. So, they cut off that verse. Can't wait. No, you don't want that day to come. Because it's going to be destruction.

So, anyway. So, the fifth mistake we make is we personalize that scripture. The other one, and you guys all know this, is Philippians 4.13. Man, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, right?

You talk to any Olympic athlete or any superstar athlete, hey, man, I knew I could win that gold medal because Christ can do all things who strengthen me. That's not the point of the passage that Paul is making.

It's not about my personal achievements or my challenges. Paul is speaking about finding contentment in all circumstances through Christ's strength.

[26 : 55] It's even in the hardship. It's even when I finish dead last at the Olympics. Right? Christ is still there. He's holding me. Did you guys see that poor race about the Ethiopian?

I think it was the Ethiopian woman who, she was a marathon runner, and they had to put someone in the finals, and they put her from that country, and she lost. Like, they almost lapped her in a 100-meter race.

Like, you had to feel bad. But she could have held to that verse all she wants. She was not getting victory in that situation. Here's another one. It's called the eisegesis.

And what that means is, it's reading our point of view into the text. So the example that I gave about when two or three are gathered there in my name, I am among you.

That's an example, another example, what's called eisegesis. I start with a premise that, I don't know, God loves everybody who loves dogs.

[28 : 01] And then I go searching through all the verses of the Bible to prove that point. Now, I know I'm being kind of funny with the dogs, but they mostly do it for theological reasons.

If you've met someone who is really hard on Arminianism, or hard on Calvinism, they create these hobby horse theological principles, and then they see every single verse talking about their point of theology.

Often that verse has nothing to do with their point of theology. And that's why it takes skillful crafting to understand what exactly is being taught there.

So that's just reading your point. Here's one. Literalism in the wrong places. So I'm talking to a guy just a couple of weeks ago, and he made this comment to me that he asked me my opinion on a verse, and I gave him that verse, and he says, Oh, that's great, because this other guy, he agrees with what you said, and he raises people from the dead.

And I'm like, well, what? He goes, this guy, so he was happy that I agreed with this guy, but this guy was kind of more authoritative, because he raises people from the dead.

[29 : 16] And I just simply asked him, Well, where do you read that we're supposed to be raising people from the dead? And he couldn't come back with the exact verse, but we're supposed to be like the apostles.

Well, did Scripture say that we're supposed to do all things at the apostles? Because the biggest thing the apostles had was to teach everything that Jesus taught. Amen? And as we go, go and baptize and disciple people in the faith.

So he says, no, I just read it the way it says. So then I just took him to Mark 9.43, and I asked him, do you have both of your hands? And he goes, why?

Well, Mark 9.43 says, if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. You can't tell me you haven't committed any sin with your hand. So it's that idea that I'm going to take everything literally.

No, you don't take everything literally. You need to understand that he's making a point there. It's called hyperbole. He's exaggerating.

[30 : 22] That is, if your eye causes you to sin or to lust, cut it off. It's not what he's talking about. He's using an exaggeration that that's how serious that sin is.

Number eight, and it's kind of on this point, is when we do not understand the genre. And we're going to get to this in a second. But this basically means, it's like in the book of Acts.

Some books are simply telling us a story. That's it. What happened? But people will insert themselves in like he did.

Well, Peter raised someone from the dead. So that must mean I have the power to raise people from the dead. So when that guy asked me the question, I said, I'll be honest with you.

If I'm in heaven and someone raises me from the dead, I'm killing you. I'm killing you. You just robbed me from being in the presence of my Lord Jesus Christ. And you're bringing me back to this cesspool of sin?

[31 : 21] That's nuts. Well, maybe I'm taking him out of heaven. So then you mean you're circumventing God's righteous judgment, or I'm sorry, in hell.

So we need to understand what that text is. And we're going to talk about this. Certain books are written just a story. We're not supposed to insert ourselves. We don't do the things that are in there.

There's lessons. And most of the lessons, nine times out of ten, are, look how great God is. Look at how he sovereignly moved even the kings that ruled over Israel to go and build the temple and the walls.

Right? That's the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was the great kings that ruled over everything that said, hey, it's time you go home and do that.

Not only that, I'm going to protect you. I'm going to give you letters of law. It's amazing that God used other people that weren't believers. The ninth way that the people wrongly do this, and I call this scripture twisting, is they have a theological agenda.

[32 : 34] So there is neither Jew nor Greek. This is Galatians 3.28. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male or female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ. And people think that that's erasing all distinctions between men and women.

And today, if you're part of the big woke crowd that's going out, this is it. There's no difference between men and women. There's differences between men and women. Amen? I praise the Lord that there's difference between men and women.

Right? But they're going to use this to say, well, no. The context is salvation. There's no primary and secondary when it comes to the importance of God.

And fourth, the Bible, or the tenth reason is the Bible is not a magic book. How many people hear, oh, Lord, I need a word.

I need a word. Oh, wow. What's this word? Then Judas went and hanged himself. You know, it's like you think you could just magically turn to that page that somehow God has driven you to that passage.

[33 : 46] Listen, there's more than enough people who've heard testimonies where God superintended them to do that in their immaturity to find a verse that truly spoke to the heart.

But to say that that's how we're going to study the Bible and God's word, it's absolutely ridiculous. So, who scored zero out of ten on that one?

Anybody? I think we've all made those mistakes, right? We've all wanted to read in our points of view. Lord, we were downcast.

We were sorrow. Let me just talk about this. Oh, Saul fights Israel's enemies. Oh, Lord, you're to fight my enemies too.

Now I know I'm going to win. Right? We just do those things. So, now I'm going to give you the top ten golden rules for interpreting your scriptures. Top ten golden rules, you can call them.

[34 : 48] So, the first rule is called following the grammatical, literal, historical interpretation of scripture. What that means is, when we look at our Bibles, we consider what the words say.

We understand the grammar. We understand where in history. What is the historical relevance? What is going on around that situation?

So, this means we seek to understand what the text is actually saying. Here's one, Genesis 1.1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. It is a literal interpretation that tells us that God created the physical universe at a specific point in time.

There was a beginning. There is nothing in the text to suggest anything else. The historical context supports the belief in a creator God who is foundational to our biblical worldview.

[36 : 01] So, when you're debating, you're having a conversation with someone who has another faith, it always comes down to where did our ideas come from? Where do our thoughts come from?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The reason we have a Bible is because the creator God gave us this Bible.

So, when people say, no, no, I want you to debate God without using your Bible. That's not fair. It's got nothing to do with it being fair. It's got to do with it being right. There's no other book which asserts this.

Everything is just a theory. Alright? So, we want to read stuff literally. And we're going to talk about what that means. Does it mean chop off my hand? No, it doesn't.

That's literalistic. Number two. Understand the context. Understand the context. The example that I gave you with Philippians 4.113.

[37 : 02] For I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Right? The context, like I said, it's about enduring all circumstances. Whether we have need or no need through Christ who gives us strength.

It's not strength to win the Stanley Cup. It's not the strength to win gear works, mountain biking races at Whistler. However, it's got nothing to do with those things.

It's got to do with our personal walk and our personal battle. Whatever that situation is. The third golden rule is called Scripture interprets Scripture.

And this is why we don't use that first mistake that people made called proof texting. We believe that God wrote this book.

And the message is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. So if you find some verse that is not coordinating with another verse that you're reading, there's a problem.

[38 : 13] So what you need to do is you need to find another scripture. You never let unclear verses interpret clear verses.

Nor do you have what's called controlling verses. You find a verse the way you like it, and everything else goes through that verse.

Here's two examples of scripture interpreting scripture. Romans 3.28 and James 2.24. So Paul writes in Romans 3.28, For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

What he's saying is, we come to Christ by faith in Jesus Christ. Amen? But then we have this book written by James who says that a person is justified by works.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. So all of a sudden you start asking these questions. Wait, is there works that are in there?

[39 : 19] But what James is actually saying, because if you have true faith, it will produce works. You with me? But we're talking theologians had battled that for a long time.

If you're familiar with Martin Luther, he struggled. He didn't want the book of James in the Bible, actually. He thought it should have been taken out, because the way he read it is he was reading it that it talked about you needed to work for your salvation.

And he had already been in the Catholic Church, and he knew that didn't work, and that the only way salvation could be had was through faith in Jesus Christ. So that theological message is always going to be consistent.

You with me on that? I remember quite young, and I've used this example before, and I didn't look it up, but it's the passage where it says, to be saved and be baptized.

So people were reading that you had to be baptized in order to be saved, and there's a verse that says that, but when you look at every other verse that talks about baptism, it says otherwise.

[40 : 26] So we interpret. No, what the writer's talking about is there is a commandment. Be saved and be baptized. Baptized is the natural order of someone who's saved.

It's obedience to the commands of God. All right, you with me on that one? All right, the next one, four. It's consider the genre.

This is the difference when I was talking about you take something literal, and you take something literalistic. I was going to say, how many people read the paper?

Nobody. But back in the day, you'd get a paper. Well, we got the Squamish chief, right? But I knew you'd always turn to the second part of the paper, because that was sports, because that's the only thing I really cared about.

Right? So I'd be reading, and I'd be, hey, man, the Toronto Blue Jays beat out the Detroit Tigers. Yay! Like, did I really think that it was a bunch of birds beat up tigers?

[41 : 27] Like, man, those were well-trained Blue Jays, right? They must have poked its eyes out first. But I knew, right? I knew the genre of the writing was different, just like an obituary is different than the main news.

Right? There's different parts to a newspaper, just as there's different parts to the Bible. My wife the other day, she was, the other day, I guess it was a couple years ago, but she was reading a book about a dog who could talk and his observations of life from a dog's perspective.

When we read that, nobody believes it's real. Like, it's a funny story. It's satire, right? We know this, but some people get a little silly when they attack the Bible.

They take these literalistic sayings, well, you've got to be chopping off. No, it's hyperbole. So when we read our Bibles, here's one. Revelations 13.1.

Revelation 13.1. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea with ten horns, seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns, and blasphemous names on its heads.

[42 : 40] All right? We know that's written in apocalyptic, prophetic literature. What that means is it doesn't mean that it's literally going to happen.

But we do know that there's going to be some powerful movements that are going to come out. And whether some people want to say ten horns is ten countries of Europe with seven heads, there's all these different signs.

But the apocalyptic literature is characterized by its symbolic language. There's visions and imagery that are meant to convey deep spiritual truths.

That's what it is. We just know something big and powerful is going to happen. You with me on that? The problem is when I start to say, well, that's actually ten Apache helicopters with the new fire and forget missile system and Gatling guns on the bottom.

That's when hush up, BK. Right? That's not true. That's what it's talking about. But we know something mighty is about to happen. So our Bibles, there's narrative.

[43 : 54] That's what Exodus is all about. There's a story, Kings and Chronicles. It's just a story of what happened in that day. We have the book of the law.

Moses wrote. It talks about the laws. We also have poetry. We need to understand poetry. It says when the mountains are clapping, do we really believe that the mountains are getting together and clapping?

Of course not. We read that because we understand it's poetic in its language. There's wisdom literature. Like I said, there's prophecy, apocalyptic.

Of course, we have the gospels, which is narrative. We have the epistles, which are teachings. And not only that, do you guys know that genealogies are very specific?

They just don't tell us who begat who. But there's actually specific instructions, even in the amount of people. It's conveying generations.

[44 : 53] Basically, it's the writer's way of letting us know how much time passed. Do you guys know that kind of stuff? Like we don't think about it. We just get, and so-and-so begat so-and-so. And so-and-so begat so-and-so.

And so dies my desire to read the Bible in a whole year. Right? Because you don't understand it. But when you do, okay, there's something here to this.

And of course, there's parables. What does Jesus mean by these parables? So we have that. Here's the fifth rule. Always taking consideration the historical and cultural context.

Now, for some of you who were here during the time when I preached through the life of Jesus, did that not help us understand the life of Christ better when we understood? I'm going to give you a verse.

It says, Matthew 5, 41. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. All right. You know, okay, I'll go two miles.

[45 : 57] You know what? Someone asked me to borrow my car. I'm going to give them both of my cars. Right? They want two cups of sugar. Ah, I'm going to give them four cups of sugar. That's not what it's actually talking about.

Let me just tell you what it's talking about. Back then, during the Holy, or the Holy, the Roman Empire, if a Roman soldier needed you to carry something along the road, they could make you carry something for a mile.

Didn't matter what it was. I need you to carry this water buffalo for me for the next mile. They could call you and conscript you for that mile. So what he's saying is, this is your enemy.

Right? And don't forget, you're in Israel, and there's nobody you hate more than Romans, who are over control of your country.

So it's basically saying, even for the person that you absolutely hate, calls you to rightfully do something that you have to do, even in your anger and your frustration, you know what?

[47 : 05] Do it for me. Do two miles. You get that? So just understanding that historical culture, it makes that verse come alive.

It's not, yeah, my grandma asked me for a cup of sugar. I'll give her two. No, no, no, no. It's finding my neighbor across the way who's going away, and he's asking me to cut his lawn.

You know what? I'm not going to cut his lawn. I'm going to clip his hedges, and I'm going to water his fish pond. Like, you know what I mean? You're just going out and showing an inordinate amount of love. Number six, and this is a big one.

What does the author want to say? So when it comes to my preaching, the first thing that I ask is, who is the original author? What is he trying to say, and who is he trying to say it to?

If I can get that right, I can get the sermon right. You with me on that? I can't say that Moses did this, that he saved the Jews from Israel, so that I can save the Canadians from Trudeau.

[48 : 15] He did not say that. Right? You can't make up stuff. That's not the point of the passage. John 20, 31 says, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Someone says, you know what? I can walk on the water because Jesus said I could. No, that's not the point of that passage. John's telling you right here, the Gospels are written so that you may believe.

Seven, it's called progressive revelation. This is a big one. I don't want to confuse you, but if we look at Hebrews 1, 1 and 2, it says, Now for some of you guys, I know we're thinking about these things.

I know Josh is, and I know some other things. If you guys have heard of the word dispensations, there are these time periods in Scripture where God revealed his will.

So the first dispensation is creation. God created Adam and Eve, and they lived in the garden in peace. And then came death. So God dealt with Adam and Eve very differently before sin entered the world.

[49 : 46] Do you get that? Then there's a different dispensation. All of a sudden, sin enters the world. So there's a change in what's going on. But God gives a promise in Genesis 3.15 that God will raise someone that's going to crush the head of the serpent.

When you read that, if you were a first-year Jew reading that, during that time, you would not understand it's Jesus Christ. Amen? But because time has gone on, we now know that that's what it was.

It's called proto-evangelicalism. That it was to let us know. So they only had, and they're only responsible, so when Noah's trusting God, he's not saying, hey, I believe in Jesus Christ.

He doesn't know who Jesus Christ is. But he does know at the end that God's going to redeem him because God said he was going to redeem him. Are you with me on that? And then it continues on.

Abraham is another break. So you have these different breaks. So these verses mean more because we understand more.

[50 : 59] So part of my role is to understand what it would have meant to those people. Now, what does it mean now that we have the New Testament? That leads me into the eighth point, which is called theological harmony.

So here's the point. I think I used the example Isaiah 7:14, right? Simply says, therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. What do you think the people at that time thought that meant?

They actually believed it was a sign to King Ahaz about the birth of a child who will be a sign of God's presence with his people. But it didn't.

It was a prophecy about Jesus Christ that he was the one born to a virgin. You with me on that one? So sometimes there's these statements in Scripture.

[52 : 00] We have to, how would that mean? Here's another one. In Isaiah 5:1, it said, out of Egypt I will call my son. So a lot of people thought Isaiah is talking about calling Israel out of Egypt.

That wasn't what it is. If you guys know the story of Jesus, when the King Herod was chasing him, Joseph took Jesus to Egypt and hung out in Jesus.

It was another prophecy that Jesus, his son, would come out of Egypt. You with me on that? So even though we take things in their time, there's specific rules that help us understand that there's not a contradiction, but sometimes the new reinterprets the old.

But it doesn't mean in everything, but it means in the places that they talk about. Number nine, I'm going to give you two quick ways. When it comes to spiritual, this is called spiritual application.

Here's the verse, Ephesians 4:29. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as good for building up. What is that corrupting talk? I don't know.

[53 : 06] You tell me. Like when you're reading that, what is God telling you in that moment? He's talking about talk that doesn't build up. What it looks like in the first century, very different than today.

Could be gossip, social media, how we spread untruths, say things that we're not too sure of.

Right? It's just applied very different. And probably the tenth and most important part when it comes to understanding Scripture is that we need to depend on the Holy Spirit.

John 16.13, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you in all the truths. When you start studying, and there's also another point to this, is that when you start studying God's Word and you think you have this new and fresh idea that the Holy Spirit talks to, talk to your pastor.

Because what we do is we look at things in light of church history. Like we believe God has said everything He needs to say, and He ended with this.

[54 : 20] Now there's going to be personal application points, but one of the big reasons why cults get started is they start teaching stuff out, how to hear, claiming that the Spirit was working with them, but it's completely opposite of everything that the church, so what happens is the church through history kind of acts as guardrails, making sure we remain biblical through that time period.

All right. Now, for all of you guys who are saying, wow, I just went to, listen, I'll be honest with you, you guys just learned what it took me four years to learn. Well done. Give yourselves a hand.

Wow, you guys aren't proud of yourselves. That was a lot to take in. But I'm not going to leave you hanging there. I want you to think about these bases, but there's very good helps that are available to you.

One of the most important things that I think you need as a new believer, and if you are a new believer, I will gladly buy you one, it's to have a study Bible. I believe far and away the best study Bible that exists is the John MacArthur Study Bible and the ESV Study Bible.

You want one of those because what they do is they provide the information that they've been sharing with you. They tell you about the context. They tell you about what's happening in history.

[55 : 43] They're telling you about the main characters so you can know, and then there's notes in the verses to help you learn. The other thing I'm a big advocate of is having a handbook, and this is just a basic handbook.

It includes every book of the Bible, and it just tells me all the important questions that need to be answered in that book. It also includes information about where does it speak and how does it speak of God.

So as an example, are you guys familiar with the book of Esther? How many times is God mentioned in the book of Esther? Zero. Well, how can that be, why would that be in the Bible?

This handbook answers that for you. It explains that through God's providence and his blessings that he's made to God's people previously through Abraham, people held through, and God used once again world events to bring about the freedom and care for his people.

So how do we interpret that as a believer? God loves me. God has promised to take care of me. I am one of his own.

[57 : 01] And it's to know in those difficult circumstances, God even works. I was talking to someone the other day, and they were like, well, that person's not a Christian. I don't want to deal with them.

And I'm like, man, that guy's a really good lawyer. Like, he will help you. Just because he's not a Christian does not mean he's not a good lawyer, nor can God not use people who are unbelievers to do his will.

Often they don't know they are. So I've ordered five of these, and I'm going to sell them. I got them at a discount, \$20 each. So if you're interested, you get me \$20. I'll reserve it.

It should be here next week. But it's certainly worth having. And I think if you start off with a really good study Bible, and a Bible handbook, I think your time in God's Word is going to enrich, probably using no hyperbole here, about a million times.

All right. So next week, using some of these foundational elements, I want to take you all the way from Genesis, and we're going to go through all those books in the Bible, and how they fit in to the precious narrative of that first sin that happened with Adam and Eve, to God redeeming us, and how we're to live this life out in his redemption.

[58 : 29] All right. Let's pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, there's just a ton of information here, and I pray that we can even take away just a few truths.

Maybe some of those truths would be how we have been done in the past, and we know that this isn't the way we're to interpret your Word. Pray you'd help us cast those aside and be thoughtful.

We're also going to look at strategies to help us study God's Word. That's simple. Sometimes we don't need to study a whole book. Sometimes we just need a few verses to give us life, to carry us through the day.

And there's helps out there. You have given us many different Christians who provide devotionals over emails, and there's podcasts. There's plenty of tools that are out there, and I pray that God, just for those who don't have the time and are undisciplined, I pray that they would make the time, and that they'd be willing to work to discipline themselves.

All too often we think, all right, I'm going to get into this book, and I'm going to understand all of Habakkuk today. And it's going to take time. Sometimes we just need little morsels, or just look at the big picture in order for those truths to affect our heart.

[59 : 50] God, we know that you have called us to great things because your Word tells us to, and the great things is to magnify your holy name. And this is done by someone who's been a Christian for a week to someone who's been a Christian for 70 years.

It's all the same. And Father, we thank you for the tools and those men and women who've gone before, who've prepared studies. We just even think of BSF, the work that they put in just to help the ladies understand God's truth and to develop habits of how to understand your Word.

I pray that we just don't become like baby birds being fed, but we can learn to feed ourselves in time by trusting the tools that you've given to us to understand your Word, O God.

Pray for your blessing upon these precious saints that are gathered here today. We ask these things in your most holy, precious name. Amen.