

STEWARDED THE WORD: ESSENTIALS FOR GROUP LEADERS

The Problem of Shallowness

“We must be careful not to distort or water down the message of the Word of God in an attempt to be relevant or overly simplistic.” (Gary Newton, *Heart-Deep Teaching*)

When you study the Bible, are you looking for a mirror to reflect your opinions, or a window to see God’s truth?

3 KEYS TO LEADING A DEEPER BIBLE STUDY

1. Lead from your heart and not just your head.

- God’s Word is most effectively communicated from the overflow of what God is doing in our lives.
- The Bible is God’s personal Word to the leader before it is lesson material for the next meeting.

2. Aim at the heart of the group member.

- The depth of teaching is measured not simply by the amount of biblical knowledge imparted; it is measured by how deeply the truth of the biblical text penetrates the heart.
- Aim not at their heads, but at their hearts. “Teaching that impacts is not head-to-head but heart-to-heart.” (Howard Hendricks)
- Implication: Know your members. Do life together, don’t just study the Bible together.

3. Explore the biblical text in its context.

- “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text” (D. A. Carson).

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us ...

- the study of the Bible is work; it takes diligence;
- working in the Word is not about winning the approval of others; rather, it is God who is assesses how we handle His Word;
- what success looks like in the study of the Word: to handle it correctly.

3 FOUNDATIONAL STEPS OF BIBLE STUDY

Hermeneutics: the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the Bible

The goal of hermeneutics: to understand what the biblical writer said and not allow our own opinions to cloud the meaning of what he wrote.

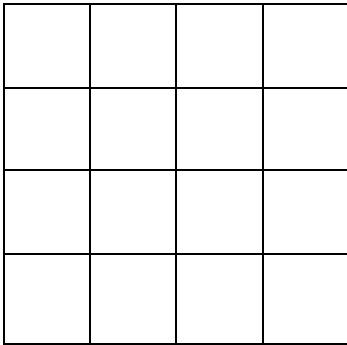
Can a Bible passage mean one thing to you and something different to me? Who determines the meaning?

Nehemiah 8

- Listening (vv. 2-3)
- Understanding (vv. 7-8)
- Responding (vv. 9-12)

1. OBSERVE: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

How many squares do you see?



Steps Involved in Observation

a. Get the Big Picture (context).

b. Focus on the details.

(1) Who? What? Where? When? Why? So What?

(2) Additional things to look for:

- repeated words and ideas
- contrasts
- comparisons
- figures of speech
- cause-and-effect relationships
- conjunctions and connecting words
- lists

2. INTERPRET: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We are looking for what the original writer intended to communicate to the audience in his historical/cultural context, as well as to future generations in other historical/cultural contexts.

a. General Guidelines of interpretation

- (1) Always interpret a passage in the light of the context.
 - Literary
 - Historical
 - Cultural
- (2) Interpret a passage according to the writer's intended meaning.
- (3) Know what type of literature you're dealing with.
- (4) Study the meaning of words.
- (5) Use Scripture to interpret Scripture.

3. APPLY: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Interpretation builds on observation and is foundational to application.

a. Definition of application

$R + R = A$ (relevance + response = application)

b. The difficulty of application

In application, we are attempting to take the truth of the eternal God—given in a particular time, place, and situation—and apply it to people who live in a different time, place, and situation.

c. The goal of application

The ultimate goal of Bible study is not to do something to the Bible, but to allow the Bible to do something to us.

d. Four aspects of application

- (1) What should I do? What is my **duty**? What does the Bible teach us to do?
- (2) Who should I be? How can I become the person or have the **character** that lets me do what is right? How can I become more like Christ? How must I change if I am to be holy?
- (3) To what causes should we devote our lives? What **goals** should we pursue? What am I supposed to accomplish in life?
- (4) How can we distinguish truth from error? How can we gain **discernment**?

e. Mistakes to avoid in application

- (1) Patternizing
- (2) Normalizing
- (3) Proof-texting
- (4) Promising the unpromised

f. General guidelines of application

- (1) Application must come from the proper understanding of the passage.
- (2) Application should be God-centered.
- (3) Application must be based on timeless principles.

g. Three-step method of application

- (1) Understand the original situation.
- (2) Identify the timeless principles.
- (3) Find appropriate applications that embody those principles.