



PHILIPPIANS

Week One of Philipians | Workshop Notes | Session One: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN

Think about this: All most every significant question in life is an origin question?

Who am I?

How did I get here?

Why do I exist?

These questions of the heart and mind are universal and timeless. Aristotle, Plato, Paul and your Barista have all pondered these questions. One singular and eternal truth connects all these questions: An eternal transcendent God.

God is the origin source that informs the answer to Who am I? How did I get here? And Why do I exist?

Which leads us to another significant question: Who is God? Is God knowable? If so, what is God like?

Which leads us to another significant question: (*I promise we're getting somewhere!*) How has God revealed Himself to us?

General Revelation: God has revealed Himself generally through humanity, creation and what we see and experience around us.

Special Revelation: God has uniquely revealed Himself to us. Through the person of Jesus Christ. The living embodiment of truth. Also, through written, sacred revelation: The Holy Scriptures.

Why is Bible study so important?

"The heart cannot love what the mind does not know." — Jen Wilkin, *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds*

What is the Bible?

Theologically speaking the Bible is God's written revelation to people. I emphasize the term written because God has revealed himself to people in a number of ways, including in the person of Jesus Christ – also referred to as the incarnation. (God incarnate = God in Human form) One of the primary reasons we say that the Bible is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) is to acknowledge that the Bible came from God, not from man. This means what we read in scripture originated with God and was passed on to man by God himself. (2 Peter 1:21)

Why does this matter?

What we think the Bible to be, will directly influence how we understand, treat and respond to what the Bible says.

A few well indented, but misguided statements about what the Bible is:

“The Bible is ‘God’s instruction book for life’.”

“The Bible is “God’s love letter” to mankind.”

“The Bible is not a collection of moral stories and rules for Christians to follow.”

What is the primary flaw with *primarily* thinking of the Bible in these ways? (Hint: It’s a Western Thing)

The Bible was written *for us*, but it is not *about us*.

The Bible is principally and primarily about God.

The Bible is God’s story of Redemption. There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves mankind and comes to rescue them. At the center of the story is Jesus. The Bible is primarily about God—and this is good news! To learn about ourselves and life is important, but what is more important is to discover God. In God we find our meaning, truth and life. This changes how we read the Bible. This changes how we interpret the Bible. We don’t go to the Bible primarily for self-help, but for God, who is our greatest help.



Week Two of Philippians | Workshop Notes | Session Two: How to Read the Bible Pt. 1

Fluency Definition (Meriam Webster):

- 1) capable of flowing – i.e. capable of moving with ease and grace
- 2) capable of using a language easily and accurately
- 3) having or showing mastery of a subject or skill

Introductory Question: What is an example of something you have great fluency in?
(Ex: at Home, Work, Recreational, etc.)

A Parable of Fluency...

FLASHBACK TO WEEK ONE:

The Bible as an Instruction Book for Life | YES, the Bible is full of Wisdom, but if this becomes the primary lens we read the Bible through, then the Bible becomes all about me.

God’s Love letter to Humanity | Does the Bible reveal that He loves people? Absolutely. But is the primary message of the Bible? No, it is one color of a multi-colored story.

The Bible is a moral code for Christians | he Bible’s moral lessons guide the behavior and ethics of Christians. Does the Bible speak powerfully to morality and ethics? Yes, but as a thread of a larger tapestry.

Principle: The authority of the Scripture in your own discipleship and in the disciple-making of others is connected to your **fluency** of the Gospel and the Scripture.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

ONE STORY / ONE NARRATIVE

The story of God Reconciling, Redeeming and Renewing people and the Cosmos by through the means of grace, for His glory.



ACTS In The Story: Creation → Fall → Redemption → Restoration

MANY CHAPTERS / PARTS

Within the story of God, there are many chapters, or systems that create an order for human flourishing by the means of grace.





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Week Three of Philipians | Workshop Notes | Session Three: How to Read the Bible Pt. 2

Understanding the Bible requires understanding that different human authors wrote the Bible in unique literary styles.

A few basic facts about the Bible...

The English word “Bible” comes from the Greek word – biblos, which means “book.” The Bible, which is often referred to as a book, is actually a collection of books. It may be even more accurate to say a collection of sacred or holy texts because of the different literary portions of the Bible (poetry, letters, history records, gospels etc.)

The Bible is made up of 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament “books” equaling 66 in total.

The Bible was written in three languages. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with small portions being written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek – the common language of the first century.

The Bible was written down over a period of almost 1,500 years on 3 different continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) by more than 40 different human authors.

The human authors were diverse in background, age and demographics. Authors included Kings, peasants, physicians, fisherman, poets and scholars.

One Story with different literary expressions.

Imagine walking into a bookstore. (unfortunately, this may take extra work since they are a dying feature in our digital society) Each aisle of the bookstore contains a different genre of literature. History, poetry, sciences, fiction, self-help and so forth. Each section is literature, but with unique expressions that inform how you read it. For instance, you wouldn’t read poetry the same way you read a science textbook. It’s helpful to think of approaching different sections of the Bible this way. That is to say, with a unique lens depending on the type of literature. Style matters.

The Four Main Categories of Bible Literature:

Narrative (History, stories, biography etc.)

The purpose of the narrative style is to tell a story. The stories will have different flavors and writing styles because they have different authors writing with different personalities and in distinct eras. (i.e. Moses versus Luke)

Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Daniel, Jonah (and in smaller sections throughout most of the prophets), Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts.

Poetry (Poems, songs and sonnets)

Emotion and imagination are on display in the poetic sections of the Bible. Metaphors and figurative language are common and purposeful. Be cautious in taking poetic sections literally or necessarily affirming everything you read. For example, just because David is expressing himself in a particular way doesn't imply that it's a righteous expression. It may just be *human*.

Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Lamentations

Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, human expression)

It is just like it sounds. Literature that is wise and principled. But the wisdom literature is not to be interpreted as promises.

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and some part of James.

Prose (Sermons, letters and discourse)

One of the reasons these are some of the most read portions of scripture is because they are generally the easiest to interpret and apply. When the Apostle Paul writes, "Be kind one to another..." one need not spend a lot of time dissecting what he meant. He meant to be kind.

Luke, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.

All Scripture is important. All Scripture is true, but not all Scripture is meant to be read in the same way. Different kinds of literature have different expectations. You wouldn't read *The Raven* and angrily reply, "No, the Raven did NOT say that!" You understand that certain literary devices, like personification, are widely used in poetry. In the same way that you would read Edgar Allan Poe differently than you read Jeff Shaara, you should expect different things from a Psalm than from Acts.¹

¹ <https://blog.faithlife.com/blog/2013/05/4-kinds-of-biblical-lit/>



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Week Four of Philippians | Workshop Notes | Practical tips to consider *before* you read the Bible.

This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. – Joshua 1:8

Getting Started

Practical Preparation

- When will you read? Do you have a consistent time?
- Where will you read? Do you have a consistent place?
- What will you read? Do you have a plan?
- What do you need? Do you have a Bible, journal, pen and highlighter?

Spiritual Preparation

- Pray for the Spirit to open your mind to understand the riches of God's Word.
- Pray for the Spirit to open your eyes to see the beautiful wonders of Christ and the glories of the Gospel.
- Pray that God would unite your heart to fear His name, knowing that your desires are ever divided.
- Pray that God would satisfy you with His steadfast and unfailing love.

Choosing what to read

There isn't anything random about the Bible, so we shouldn't use our magic 8-balls in determining what to read. We want to read intentionally and thoughtfully. Here are a few considerations:

- Read the entire Bible in a year, which involves 3-4 chapters a day (there are 1,189 chapters in the Bible).
- Read the entire Bible in three years, reading about one chapter a day.
- Study through one book of the Bible at a time, alternating between the OT and NT.
- You might consider reading through Proverbs and the Psalms in addition to your Bible study for the practical and worshipful aspects of daily living.

What do I (Brad) do? It varies year to year, but I tend to work slowly and methodically through an Old Testament and New Testament Book of the Bible. I frequently interchange the Psalms and Proverbs. IN 2020 I've methodically worked through Proverbs, Psalms, Daniel, 1st & 2nd Timothy. I'm currently working though the Gospel of Matthew.

Tools to help you as your read

A wide-margin Bible or journaling Bible. These are Bibles that are easy to highlight, take notes in and refer to in the future. (Bonus: passing them onto your kids)

A Study Bible. (Note: Do not use the study Bible to do your reading from, but as a resource.) A Study Bible can help you understand the historical, grammatical and cultural context of the Bible. Recommended options: The ESV Study Bible, The CSB Study Bible, Faith Life Study Bible (free online or by App). Avoid study Bibles that are heavy on application, instead look for study Bibles that are primarily observing and explaining the text.

Online Resources.

- <http://blueletterbible.org/> (commentaries and lexical tools (Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)
- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/>
- <https://bible.faithlife.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/> (App with Bible reading plans)



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Week Five of Philippians | Workshop Notes | Observation - What do you see?

Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. – 2 Timothy 2:15

A Question to Avoid

What does this mean to *me*? Inevitably in well-intentioned Bible study, the question will arise in a small group or be posed in personal Bible study encouraging you to decipher what the Bible means to *you*. Though well-intentioned, this question is problematic.

Imagine a situation in which you have drafted a well-written e-mail to your boss about scheduling vacation time. In this communication, you explain what days you need off work and when you plan to return. Additionally, you inform your boss that you have assigned your co-worker Susan important client information and responsibilities while you are away.

Now, imagine 2,000 years have passed. For some reason, your e-mail communication has been preserved and students are studying it and trying to best understand what your work e-mail *meant*.

Suppose the teacher says to the class, “What does this ancient e-mail mean to *you*?” How likely are the students to best understand and interpret the meaning of your e-mail?

What is a better question?

Observation | What do you see? What does the Bible say?

Observe the basic facts in the text you are studying.

Mostly Objective Observation: These basic questions will help you discover what is happening in the Bible text you are studying.

Who is...

...the human author?

...the audience?

...being discussed?

...accomplishing the action?

Where is...

- ...the author?
- ...the audience?
- ...the action taking place?

What is...

- ...meaning of this word?
- ...significance of this phrase?
- ...implication of this statement?
- ...overarching theme?

Somewhat Subjective Observation: The answers to these questions help us understand and gain more insight into the passage. They are based on the research you have done by answering the questions above and your study of the passage.

Why did the author...

- ...choose this word?
- ...include this phrase?
- ...use this command?
- ...connect these ideas?
- ...not say ____?

Online Resources.

- The Bible Project Overview Videos:
Old Testament: https://bibleproject.com/explore/#old_testament
New Testament: https://bibleproject.com/explore/#new_testament
On YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVpri7vfPptKUUOaqAAjEtZR4C-bO5Y_XQ
- For definitions, use Blue Letter Bible: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- For introductions and background information about each book of the Bible: The NIV Study Bible Notes: <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/>
- Download the Faithlife Study Bible App: <https://faithlife.com/products/faithlife-study-bible>

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Week Six of Philippians | Workshop Notes | Interpretation - What does it mean?

Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. – 2 Timothy 2:15

Interpretation | What does the Bible mean?

Guidelines: Consider these principles as a “filter” through which you see Scripture.

The Right Starting Place

The Bible is a sacred book. It is a supernatural book. At the same time, it is a book. That is, the Bible is principally literature, inspired by God and written down by man. In other words, don't under spiritualize the Bible or over spiritualize the Bible.

- When reading passages that are literal in nature, interpret the Bible literally.
- When reading passages that are poetic or metaphorical, interpret the through the intention of the literary device.
- The “Golden Rule of Interpretation”: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.
- All possible interpretations of a verse are not equally good.
- Avoid asking “what does this mean *to me*?” Instead ask, “what was this intended to teach, show or explain?”

Helpful Bible Interpretation Tips

1. Consider the context.
2. Compare multiple translations (ESV, NASB, NIV, CSB). And paraphrases like *The Message*.
3. Look up keywords in a lexicon.
4. Check out cross-references to see how this passage relates to others.
5. When stumped, use supplemental resources such as the ESV Study Bible or commentaries for helpful insights and background information.
6. Don't stop until you have considered how this passage fits into the overarching redemptive plan of God – the gospel. How does this passage relate to the person and work of Christ?
7. Discuss insights and questions with your spouse, friend, or small group.
8. Don't Google it. 😊

Online Resources.

- The Bible Project Overview Videos:

Old Testament: https://bibleproject.com/explore/#old_testament

New Testament: https://bibleproject.com/explore/#new_testament

On YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVpri7vfPptKUOaqAAjEtZR4C-b05Y_XQ

- For definitions, use Blue Letter Bible: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- For introductions and background information about each book of the Bible: The NIV Study Bible Notes: <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/>
- Download the Faithlife Study Bible App: <https://faithlife.com/products/faithlife-study-bible>

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Week 7 of Philippians | Workshop Notes | Application - What do I do with it?

Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. – 2 Timothy 2:15

Application | What do I do with it?

Guidelines: Bible study is incomplete until you have thought through how to apply the particular passage to your life. Some passages will be more readily applicable than others, but all Scripture is useful and helpful (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

List out potential applications. To get started, consider these questions:

- Is there an example for you to follow?
- Is there a sin to repent of and/or avoid?
- Is there a promise to trust?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an erroneous view exposed?
- What else is the Lord showing you?

Create a prayerful action plan.

One of the pitfalls to avoid in our Christian lives is the “reader, but not a doer” dilemma. If we read the Bible well, observing the scripture and interpreting it well, but do not obey the Words of God – our Bible study is vain. Consider the words of Joshua 1:8:

This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so **that you may carefully observe everything written in it.** For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. – Joshua 1:8

Choose one or two particular applications and prayerfully consider how you might pursue greater faithfulness in them. Be specific about what you will do (or not do) and whom you will ask (in addition to the Lord) to help you.

Finally, don't read the Bible alone. The scripture was meant to be read and wrestled within community. Personal Bible study is wonderful and necessary, but it is incomplete if it doesn't translate beyond our individual interaction with the scripture. The communal body of Christ is designed to be a place where we work through scripture *together*.

Let the word of Christ ***dwelt richly among you***, in all wisdom ***teaching and admonishing one another*** through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. – Colossians 3:16

Other Resources.

Women of the Word by Jen Wilkin - <https://www.amazon.com/Women-Word-Study-Bible-Hearts/dp/1433541769>

The Bible Project - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/>

Applying Scripture Essay - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/applying-scripture/>