

RELEVANT

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

SESSION 1: HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Basic Rule of Interpretation

- A text cannot mean what it could not have meant to its original author and audience.

5 Step Process for Understanding the Bible

- ✓ Read carefully and determine meaning for the _____.
- ✓ Consider the _____ between the biblical audience and today.
- ✓ Determine the _____ which are relevant to the biblical audience and today.
- ✓ _____ about what the rest of the Bible says about the principles.
- ✓ _____ the text to today's situation.

1. Reading Carefully

- Look for repetition, contrasts, comparisons, and lists.
- Ask why things are said the way they are.
- Focus on the conjunctions and verbs.
- Read the whole passage or story, and read it more than once.
- Don't just ask 'what?' but 'so what?'

2. Consider the Differences

- For OT texts, consider how the NT qualifies or modifies the principle.
- Ask historical questions like: Who wrote this? To whom was he writing? When was it written? Why was it written?

3. Determine Principles

- Should apply to today's audience and the biblical audience.
- Should come from the text.

4. Think about the Rest of the Bible

- Does the rest of the Bible confirm or adjust the principles identified?

5. Application

- Only _____ meaning with _____ possible applications.

Resources for Historical Cultural Study

- Study Bibles: Bible Handbooks like *Holman Bible Handbook* by David Dockery
- NT and OT Surveys: *The New Testament Its Background and Message* by Thomas Lea and *A Survey of the Old Testament* by Hill and Walton.
- Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: *Holman Bible Dictionary* edited by Trent Butler and *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* edited by Bromiley.
- Commentaries: These are available in one-volume or book-by-book. Two good series of commentaries are the *New American Commentaries* and the *Tyndale Commentaries*.

Example Text - Joshua 1:1-9

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, ²"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴"From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵"No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

⁶"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.