

### THE CHALLENGE

We read the Bible as SECONDARY recipients.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.  
(Romans 15:4)

Our aim should be to ask: “What does the Bible MEAN?” not “What does the Bible MEAN TO ME?”

### OUR PURPOSE

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.  
(Acts 17:11)

The ultimate goal of this is LOVE for God as He has revealed Himself in the scriptures.

- Worship without Knowledge is IDOLATRY
- Knowledge without Worship is ORTHODOXY

### OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of 66 different books, written by about 40 different authors, over the course of about 1500 years.

These books are comprised of several different genres:

- Law
- History
- Prophecy
- Wisdom/Poetic Literature
- Gospel/Narrative
- Epistles/Letters
- Apocalyptic

The Bible is divided into two parts:

1. The Old Testament - 39 books
2. The New Testament - 27 books

### THEOLOGY OF SCRIPTURE

1. INSPIRATION - The words of scripture are the very words of God. Therefore, all of scripture is authoritative over us - To disbelieve or disobey the scripture is to disbelieve and disobey God. The Holy Spirit, using men, wrote down the scriptures for us.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness  
(2 Timothy 3:16)

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.  
(2 Peter 1:20-21)

2. INERRANCY - The scriptures are without any errors in the original manuscripts. Because the Scriptures are the very words of God, and because God Himself can never produce error, the scriptures themselves are without error.

...God, who never lies...  
(Titus 1:2)

...it is impossible for God to lie...  
(Hebrews 6:18)

3. NECESSITY - The scriptures are necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining a life of godliness, and knowing God's will.

For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?  
(Romans 11:34)

4. SUFFICIENCY - The scriptures contain all that God intended for his people to have concerning salvation, faith, and obedience.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence  
(2 Peter 1:3)

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.  
(Deuteronomy 29:29)

5. CLARITY - The scriptures are written in such a way that it can be understood by all who read it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and a willingness to obey it.

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.  
(1 Corinthians 2:10)

However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.  
(John 16:13)

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## A PATTERN FOR READING THE BIBLE

### 1. PRAY

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.  
(1 Corinthians 2:10-12)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.  
(1 Corinthians 2:14)

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.  
(Psalm 119:18)

2. OBSERVE - BIG QUESTION: What does it SAY?

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Who's the author (who is speaking)?
- Who's the audience (who is listening)?
- When and where was this written?
- What is this passage saying about God?
- What is it saying about people and their need for God?
- What does it say about sin?
- How does it point to Jesus (Old Testament)?
- What does it say about Jesus (New Testament)?
- Does it instruct me about how I should live? How?

### 3. INTERPRET - BIG QUESTION: What does it MEAN?

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Why did the author write this?
- What is the main point the author is trying to communicate to the original audience?
- What need/occasion is the author addressing?
- What do we learn about God?
- What do we learn about believers & unbelievers?
- What do we learn about relating to God?
- What do we learn about relating to others?
- What do we learn about culture?

### 4. APPLY - BIG QUESTION: What does it MEAN FOR ME?

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

(James 1:22-25)

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What does God want me to understand?
- What does God want me to believe?
- What does God want me to desire?
- What does God want me to do?

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## PRACTICAL TOOLS

**Key Tool:** Reading the Bible as ONE BIG story

The Old Testament: Promises MADE

The New Testament: Promises FULFILLED

4 Themes:

MESSIAH

KINGDOM

COVENANT

SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

## Additional Tools

### AUTHORIAL Intent

- What was the author's purpose and aim in writing this?
- What problem is being addressed?
- Are there repeated themes, or a single aim holding things together?

### GENRE

- What genre is this passage in?

### TONE/FEEL

- How is the author pressing the main point of this passage? (ex. Joy, urgency, anguish, warning...)

### CONTEXT

- What immediately surrounds the verse/passage? (Verse - Chapter - Book - Whole Bible)

### STRUCTURE

- How has the author structured the passage?
- How do these sections fit together?

### CONJUNCTIONS

- What are the linking words? (ex. For, Therefore, If, Then, So That...)

### REPETITION

- What word or phrase is the author repeating? This is likely an important point.

### QUOTATIONS/ALLUSIONS

- Is the author quoting or alluding to another passage of scripture?
- What does the quoted/alluded passage mean?

### Unique SALVATION History

- What about the passage is important for the way God unfolds his plan of salvation in history?
- What's unrepeatably by us but worthy of worshipping God for or needing further explanation?

### CHRIST

- How is Jesus foreshadowed/type?
- What particular attribute of Christ does that Type depict?
- How is Jesus remembered or described?

### TRANSLATIONS

- How is this passage communicated in other translations?
- Are there footnotes?
- Are there cross-references?

### APPLICATION - SO WHAT?

- Who is being addressed (audience)? (Non-believers? Believers? Parents? Children? Husbands? Wives? The Church? Leaders?....)
- Do I need to stop doing something?
- Do I need to start doing something?

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## WHAT NOW?

1. Start reading
  - a. Have a plan for reading
  - b. Commit to a rhythm
2. From time to time read with others in community
3. Read in preparation for Sunday gatherings