

Interpreting the Bible

1. Pray

Since this is God's word, then it stands to reason that we need God to help us to understand it. Therefore, we need to see that prayer is a vital part of any bible study.

2. Determine the Author's Intention (Purpose)

a. Getting Acquainted

Read through the whole book several times, noting down such things as

- Dominant ideas
- Flow of thought
- Structure of the book

b. Literary Type

What type of literature is it? Eg. Prophetic, wisdom, parable etc. This might seem to state the obvious, but it is surprising how many people read the bible without noting down the literary type.

c. Structure

What is the overall structure? Clues to structure include:

- Look for patterns
- Repetition of ideas
- Word associations
- Contrasts
- Comparisons
- Digression
- Progression
- Cause and effect arguments
- Ideas that are dropped and then resumed after

d. Meaning

Find out the meaning of words in

- their immediate context
- the context of the book
- the context of the writer
- the context of the day
- the context of its testament
- the context of the whole bible

e. Geography

Note down its geography. It may be important for understanding the text.

f. History

- The author

- The recipients
- The contemporary History

g. Context

How does this verse, paragraph work in the immediate context.

3. Determine other meanings

a. Links

See if the words, ideas, pictures are used elsewhere in the Bible

b. Biblical Context

What place does this passage have in the context of the whole Bible?

4. Determine its significance for me

What does this passage mean for

- me
- the world
- my situation
- other people
- What response should I give?