

A Disciple and his Bible Study

Howard Deunk – KMI – Feb 2007

I. Review – what is a disciple?

Disciple - (Strong's #3101, mathetes) lit., "a learner" (from manthano, "to learn," from a root math---, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor), hence it denotes "one who follows one's teaching,"

So – What and why does he learn?

What – About Jesus; His character and teaching, with at least one of the ultimate goals being:

Matt 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become **like** his teacher . . .

Lu 6:40 ". . . everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be **like** his teacher.

In this context, we're talking about learning the Scriptures. Did Jesus know the Scriptures?

Lu 2:46-7:

Lu 4:1-14:

Lu 4:16-8:

Lu 6:1-5:

How does one learn? Lots of ways - HAND Illustration. Let's compare and contrast each briefly, specifically in terms of breadth, depth, and retainability . . . which helps answer the question: Why study the Bible?

-hear
-read
-study
-memorize

II. Why study/learn the Bible? (Motivation)

Jn 8:31 Jesus . . . was saying. . . "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

1. It is GOD speaking, & therefore God's Word (love letter) to man (II Tim 3:16). It reveals:

- a. Himself (Gen 1:1, Num 23:19)
- b. Christ (Jn 1:1-4, 5:39, Is 53)
- c. Man
 1. His sin (Rom 3:10-19, 23)
 2. His need (Rom 3:20, 6:23)
- d. God's plan of salvation. (Jn 1:12, Acts 4:12, II Tim 3:15, Rev 3:20)
- e. God's purposes for mankind; to glorify himself, by:
 1. fellowship & worship (Rev 4:11)
 2. bringing others to himself (Jn 15:8,16)
 3. becoming Christ like (Rom 8:29, II Cor 3:18)

2. It shows practical ways of living – psychology, the “how to’s” of everyday living & life, specifically, how to relate to:
 - a. God, others, people (both self and others) – Matt 22:38-40
 - b. Life (situations, and circumstances – I Thess 5:18, Phil 4:6,7; Jas 1:2-4)
 - c. Things (clothes, food, cars, houses, etc.) – Matt 6:19-33; I Jn 2:15,16
3. It is powerful, and will change my life (Heb 4:12), especially if I follow and obey it’s basic life principles (II Tim 3:16, 17) for:

a. Success – Josh 1:8	Restoration – Ps 19:7
b. Warning – Ps 19:11	Purity – Ps 119:9, 11
c. Counsel – Ps 119:24	Liberty and freedom – Ps 119:45
d. Truth – Ps 119:160, Jn 17:7	Peace – Ps 119:165
e. Wisdom and enlightenment – Ps 19:7,8; 119:66, 119:98-100	
4. It’s commanded: II Tim 2:15. II Pet 3:18.

III. How can (NOT “should”!) we study the Bible?

“Technique” vs “Procedure” (Red light illustration)

- a. “Proper” preparation for [effective] Bible study:
 1. Have a cleansed life (I Jn 1:9)
 2. Pray for insight/illumination (Ps 119:12,18,27,35)
 3. Objective: meet w/ God, not [just] His word!
 4. Depend upon the HS (Jn 14:26, I Cor 2:12, Prov 3:5)
 5. Come w/ an open mind (Jn 11:43-53, 12:40 – “my mind is made up, don’t confuse me w/ the facts!”)
 6. And a willingness to obey. (Jn 7:17)

D.L. Moody: “The Scriptures were not given [just] to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives” – Application is key! – Jas 1:22, Jn 15:8 (Gal 5:22,23)

“just” – Ps 119:98; II Pet 1:2-4; 2:20; 3:18; Jn 17:3

- b. Basic life beliefs/assumptions (starting point): In everything in life we operate under a set of basic assumptions. E.g., you flip a light switch, expecting to see the light go on. What are some of the basic assumptions?
 1. Someone has correctly wired the switch w/ the light on the ceiling, so you won’t get electrocuted by flipping the switch.
 2. The building you are in is properly connected to an electrical power grid somewhere.
 3. There is actually power flowing through that grid.
 4. The person responsible had paid their bill, and the power hasn’t been turned off, etc.
- c. Basic Bible assumptions: In studying the Bible we likewise have some basic assumptions:
 1. The Bible is authoritative – i.e., the Word of God. The original manuscripts were inspired by God and absolutely perfect. II Tim 3:16, Jn 10:35 (if not, why study it?)
 2. God is, in fact, attempting to communicate and reveal His truth w/ us (vs hide it in obfuscation and circumlocution), and the Bible, as the literal, inspired, inerrant word of God, is one of the main - if not the primary - means by which He does so.

3. Therefore it uses normal, plain, clear language that follow the normal, standard rules of literary interpretation, which, when properly applied, will give the correct (or a correct) interpretation. The primary goal of interpretation is to discover what God is saying – and means – in a particular passage (and a big part of that is what the human author meant when he wrote the passage!)
4. While the Bible is all **true**, it's not all **truth**. There are 3 main types of Scripture:
 - i. The words, thoughts, actions, etc. were expressly approved/inspired by God, and are specific expressions of His mind and will. In this case the Bible gives God's truth; e.g., "Thus sayeth the Lord". It is both true that God said it, and that the *content* is true, right, and proper. We should therefore believe it and obey it.
 - ii. The words, thoughts, actions, etc. were expressly not approved by God. E.g., in Gen 3, the serpent tells Eve that God lied, and she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. Is it true the serpent said it? Yes. But is what it said true? NO!
 - iii. The words, thoughts, actions, etc. were **neither** expressly approved **nor** disapproved by God, simply recorded, and must be judged on the [other] general teachings of the Bible. (We must therefore do our homework – cross-reference!)
 - iv. Distinguishing between these three is **crucial!**
- d. Foundational Bible Truths:
 1. The Bible, while composed of 66 individual books composed by some 40 human authors over a span of over 1500 years, is actually is a single book, telling one continuous story of man and his relationship to the one and only true God, as well as God's progressive revelation of Himself to man.
 2. It has one main story – man's need for redemption (sin), and one main character – Jesus, God's provision for that need.
 3. There are numerous divisions therein (remember – context is key!):
 - i. Man's "artificial" ones – chapters & verses, that were NOT there in the original, are not inspired, & may be useful for finding things, but should not be taken as gospel.
 - ii. God's divisions:

2 testaments	3 main groups/types of people
8 covenants	7 dispensations
2 advents	2 resurrections
	law and grace
	salvation & rewards

But – don't I have to be a Hebrew and Greek scholar, and be intimately acquainted w/ the culture, geography, language, and people of the Scriptures, as well as all the current trends in theology (post-modernism, neo-orthodoxy, etc.), order to effectively and properly study the Bible? **NO!!** Biblical interpretation (and it's immediate successor, application) is for everyone! So while these are helpful, they're NOT necessary, and some basic, common sense principles will help greatly.

1. Each passage (general flow):
 - a. Says pretty much only one thing,
 - b. Means only a couple of things, but
 - c. Can have as many applications as there are people in the world.
2. Keeping on track
 - a. Therefore, interpret experience by the Word, not vice versa
 - b. Do not be dogmatic where the Scriptures are not
 - c. Pay Attention! Details count!

GEN 3:15

GAL 3:16

IV. "How To's" of Bible Study.

Martin Luther's philosophy on Bible Study: "First I shake the whole Apple tree [study the Bible as a whole], that the ripest may fall. Then I climb the tree and shake each limb [study of each whole book], and then each branch [study of each chapter as a whole], and then each twig [study the sections, paragraphs and sentences], and then I look under each leaf [individual word study]." This progression is shown in several of the following Bible Study methods (Atch 1).

V. Interpretation.

Three step method – what does it say, mean, and apply. We just went through a bunch of techniques, "how to's", of Bible study. But while all three were involved, we looked primarily at what it said, and to a lesser degree, on what it meant. Let's look a little deeper on the interpretation phase – what does it mean? (Atch 3)

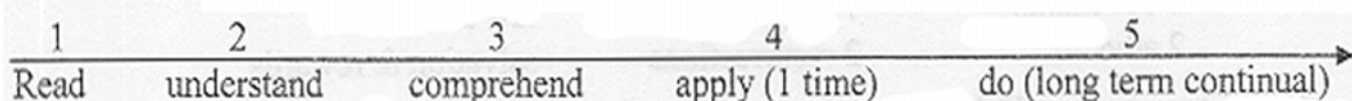
VI. Application.

Again, our three step method – what does it say, mean, and apply. We've done a bunch on the first two – let's look a little deeper on the application phase.

What is application? The answer to the "so what" question; "what should I do about it"? NOT

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| -information/facts, | -concepts | -comprehension, |
| -relevance | -illustrations | -knowledge |

Continuum:



- A. Numbers 1 & 2 - read (general idea – what does it say) & understand (interpret – what does it mean) we've already beat to death.
- B. Comprehend – find the eternal principles, the timeless truths God wants to communicate, is the first real step in personal application.
- C. Apply – but then I must see myself in the story and how those Biblical principles apply to my life, how I can make those timeless truths timely, and see how God wants me to ("one time" application) put it into practice *now*. (e.g., memorize a verse; how does that \square)
- D. Do – then I must design an on-going action plan to put together multiple one – time applications, leading to a long term character change, and make myself accountable!

So – how do I do that? (Atch 4).

V. Record keeping - Write it down!!!

1. Why?
 - a. It clarifies and organizes our thoughts: "Thoughts disentangle themselves passing over the fingertips".
 - b. It's available later on: "The dullest pencil has a better memory than the sharpest mind".
 - c. II Tim 2:2 - it makes it pass-on-able!!
2. How?
 - a. Much can be done on a straightforward sheet of notebook paper:
 - i. 3 columns: what does it say, mean, and apply.
 - ii. Fancier: a line (or more) for each verse, columns for thoughts, questions, answers, observations, etc.
 - iii. Summarizing, paraphrasing, outlining, etc., is also pretty straightforward.
 - b. Some people like charts. We used a simple one in the "application" section, here's a more detailed one, that works particularly well for chapter analysis study.: NOTE: Some people turn this 90° and make it a "horizontal" vs a "vertical" chart.

Sample Bible Study Chart - Book Title																	
Section (Chapter?) One						Section Two				Section Three							
First Sub - Section				Second Sub - Section				3rd S-S	4th S-S	5th S-S	Sixth Sub - Section						
Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section
Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section	Smaller Section

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Understand, Walter Hendrichsen, NavPress

Atch 1 – Some “How To’s” of Bible study

Martin Luther’s philosophy on Bible Study: “First I shake the whole Apple tree [study the Bible as a whole], that the ripest may fall. Then I climb the tree and shake each limb [each book as a whole], and then each branch [each chapter as a whole], and then each twig [study the sections, paragraphs and sentences], and then I look under each leaf [individual word study].” This progression is used in describing the following Bible Study methods.

Guidelines:

- techniques, not procedures – can’t do all (at same time)
- pick and choose what fits you and your situation.
- objective: **not** “results”! End doesn’t justify the means, it is the means!

1st two are complementary ways to study a whole book – preferably in this order.

- I. **Book Background Method:** Study the background: history, politics, culture, language, geography, and science of a particular book. How did they influence/affect what happened, what was said, and how people thought and responded to it? Use reference books to increase your understanding (and application) of the Word
 - a. This is important because:
 - i. In order to fully understand what anyone is saying, you must understand where they are coming from (language, culture, history, etc.), in or out of Scripture. E.g., when John the Baptist declared, “Behold, the Lamb of God”, w/o a knowledge of Passover and the Passover Lamb, you lose much (most?) of the meaning.
 - ii. One of the primary rules of interpretation states that since the Bible was written in the midst of history, it can only be fully understood in the midst of that history.
 - iii. Serious Bible students *always* interpret what they read in the light of the geographical, historical, political, and cultural context/background. We must interpret Scripture in the light of what it meant then, not now.
 - iv. Archeology has shed immense light on what we read; therefore, recent research tools/publications are extremely helpful in understanding Biblical background.
 - b. This requires some background reference tools: history, geography, culture, etc.
 - c. Steps in doing this study:
 - i. Select a book of the Bible.
 - ii. Using your reference tools (Atch 2), obtain/research insights from:
 1. geography (i.e., Paul’s missionary journeys), and list/record them. What are the prominent cities & countries discussed and involved?
 2. history. What’s the chronology of Scripture? In which period of biblical history does this passage fit in? What major events are occurring in world history?
 3. culture. How do the following affect the passage?

Clothing	music	professions	manners & customs
Family Life	art	Language	literature & poetry
weapons	Architecture	religious ceremonies	Local false religions
 4. politics. Who/what was the government? Who ruled the area? E.g., does the fact that Israel was a Roman territory at the time of Christ affect anything? What about the surrounding nations: Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Persia, etc.?
 - iii. Summarize your research *in writing*. Two questions might help:
 1. How does this background data help me to understand the passage better?
 2. What influences did any of these factors have on the passage or subject?

II. **Book Survey Method:** Survey an entire book by reading it through several times (5+) to get a "big picture" general overview of its contents, preferably **after** studying the background.

a. This is important because it:

- i. Provides an "overview" of the entire book. The Bible is 66 "books" combined under one cover; each is unique and special, and has an important message for us today. This helps encapsulate that message, and understand the Bible in the way it was written – in individual books.
- ii. Allows us to relate each book to both the whole as well as the other parts.
- iii. Reveals the proper emphasis of each point in the book, and helps keep things balanced, precluding over- or under-emphasis on any given point. NOTE: Many [most?] cults have arisen when someone overemphasizes a single point or doctrine to the detriment of the whole. ("Out of context" This gives the context!) Jas 4:2

b. Steps in doing this study:

- i. Read the book through in one sitting, ignoring the chapter divisions, preferably fairly rapidly, and in a modern translation. Do so repeatedly, and prayerfully, in several different translations, **without** referring to notes or commentaries.
- ii. As you read through the second or third and subsequent times, do so w/ pen in hand, recording, for example:
 1. What are your first impressions? Why was it written? What "feel" do you get from reading it?
 2. What kind of book is it? What style? Poetry? Prophecy? Figurative? A letter?
 3. What are some of the most significant words the author uses? Which one are repeated or emphasized the most?
 4. What seems to be the key verse(s)? What ideas or phrases are repeated the most? What seems to be the writer's key statement?
 5. What's the emotional tone - happy? Sad? Worried? Excited? (Phil, Rom 12)
 6. What are the main themes? What's the writer saying? His main emphasis?
 7. What's the structure of the book? The obvious divisions? The organization? Around people? Events? Places? Ideas? E.g., Paul's letters tend to be in 2 parts: 1st ½ - doctrine, 2nd ½ – application thereof.
 8. Who are the principle people in the book? Who's mentioned the most, and what parts do they play?

iii. Make a horizontal chart demarking the major sections, as follows:

1. Initially, divide the book into major divisions, then increasingly minor ones. NOTE: These **may**, but **need not**, follow chapter divisions. Continue on all the way down to paragraphs.
2. Then title each. NOTE: Jensen (Independent Bible Study, Moody) suggests titles of between 1-4 picturesque words taken directly from the text, that have not already been used, and help tell you where you are in the book. NOTE: Subtitles should, when possible, relate to the superior titles above them.
3. Benefits include being able to summarize the main ideas and contents at a glance, discover and record relationships between main ideas and sections, and helps to become aware of repetition of ideas and concepts.
- iv. Outline the book, using the chart data, going from major to minor, and using the paragraphs for clues. **Afterwards**, you **may** want to compare w/ other's outlines.

"Study the Bible, not what others say about the Bible" – R.A. Torrey

NOTE: You can also do similar "big picture" studies on things other than books, such as:

- III. **Topical Method:** Collect, compare, and contrast all the verses you can find on a particular topic, then organize them into an outline that you can share w/ someone else. Then apply it.
- Pick a Biblical subject and trace it through a chapter, book, Testament, or the whole Bible. Use extensive cross-references, and unlimited questioning. (e.g., Thompson chain reference Bible, Rainbow Bible)
 - This is important because:
 - It enables a systematic study of God's Word.
 - It allows a proper perspective and balance re: Biblical Truth- we get the whole counsel of God.
 - We can study topics of particular interest.
 - We can study the great doctrines of the Bible
 - It lends itself to lively discussions (home Bible Studies, SS classes)
 - Often much easier to pass on and share
 - Allows variety in a lifetime of Bible Study.
 - Tips on doing this type of study:
 - Be systematic, not haphazard. List all possible parts of this topic
 - Be thorough. You want the whole counsel of God, not just part thereof.
 - Be exact. Try to get the exact meaning of each reference. Make sure you look at the context!
 - Steps in doing this study:
 - Compile a list of all the words, phrases, events, etc., that you can think of that relate to your topic. Be willing to adjust as you go along (usually, "add").
 - Collect all the Bible references that you could use (concordances, topical Bibles).
 - Consider each reference individually; ask as many questions about each one that you can, and record the answers/observations. Look up and define key words, use interrogative pronouns (who, what, where . . .) and consider the context.
 - Compare, contrast, and collate/group your references into initial categories. Continue to refine them as you study.
 - Condense your partially completed study into a workable outline, arranging your main categories from the previous step into a logical pattern, using the natural divisions the references fall into.
 - Conclude your study.
 - Summarize your findings into a brief, cohesive paragraph.
 - This should be relatively complete, coherent, and sharable.
 - Be personal and practical, w/ written, specific, measurable application(s).
- IV. **Thematic Method:** Select a Bible theme, ask several questions about that theme, and then study all the references you can find on that theme, attempting to answer your questions.
- Similar to a topical study, but shorter; you want to discover what you can about a specific theme with a set of specific, prepared questions that you ask each verse/passage you study. There may be many themes in a topic, and you ask fewer questions. You limit the questions, because you may have many verses.
 - Advantages to this method:
 - You don't need many reference tools
 - It's shorter. You can do it if/when you don't have time for a longer study.
 - A good way to preview a topic preparatory to a full-fledged topical study
 - Good for a SS class or a "Timothy"; short enough to share in one session.

c. Tips on doing this type of study:

- i. Don't use too many questions, sometimes only one – e.g., what are the traits of a fool in Proverbs?
- ii. Many times you won't find the answer to every question in the same verse. That's ok – leave a blank in your record and press on.
- iii. If you can't find any answers, revise your questions. Ask the right ones!
- iv. If you want to know "everything" God says about a certain subject, use an exhaustive concordance! Then look up every word related to your theme!
- v. Use the "investigative" pronouns: who, what, where, when, why, and how?

d. Steps in doing this study:

- i. Select a theme; better, a short and simple one
- ii. List all the verses you want to study (need not be exhaustive, but a representative cross-section helps) – which ones seem to be the most important. Remember to consider synonyms and parallel passages when looking up verses.
- iii. Decide on which questions to ask – usually, not more than five. (Think pronouns, above) They should fit the topic – what do you want to know about it? What does God say about it?
- iv. Ask the same questions of each reference/verse/passage.
- v. Draw some conclusions, and use them to
- vi. Write own an application (or two, or three . . .) –practical, possible, measurable.

V. **Biographical Method:** Select a Bible character and research all the references to them, recording strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, character qualities, etc. Then apply it to your life.

- a. Objective: become thoroughly acquainted w/ a biblical character and discover what made them tick. **Why** were they a spiritual success or failure?
- b. PEOPLE are important to God. The Bible is a book of people, and God's relationship with and revelation to them. To understand the Bible, you **must** get to know the prominent people therein.

c. Tips on doing this type of study:

- i. Initially, select a person you can do a simple study on (only a few references)
- ii. The secret to a good study is to "live" in and with that person for a while (i.e., while doing the study). "Walk a mile in their moccasins (sandals)".
- iii. Be careful not to confuse diff people w/ the same name. E.g., there are 30 diff Zechariahs in the Bible.
- iv. Because the Bible was written by close to 40 authors over 1500 years in three or four languages, sometimes the same person has more than one name – "Robert", "Rob", "Bob", "Bobby"; or Simon, Peter, son of Jonah, etc.
- v. Stay away from books **about** these people (commentaries, etc.) – go to the Word itself, especially first. When you're ALL DONE, **then** check if you want to.

d. Steps in doing this study:

- i. Select the person you want to study (easy one if your first time). Pick one you're interested in, and/or has (a) character trait you're interested in.
- ii. Make a list of all the references about that person (exhaustive concordance). Caution: Different people w/ the same name (30 Zechariahs), same person w/ different names! Look for things like their birth, major life events, accomplishments, what others (and God!) said about them, etc. Don't forget background material – their culture, time, location, etc. E.g., Paul's journeys in Acts (where?).

- iii. Write down first impression (1st reading), as well as observations, new data, problems, additional questions, etc.
- iv. Make a chronological outline/listing (2nd reading), to help put things into perspective. E.g., Moses had 3-40 year periods in his life. How did they change him over time? Why? Did God grow him, or Satan seduce him? Etc.
- v. Get additional insights into the person (3rd reading) – ask additional questions!
- vi. Identify specific character qualities (4th reading) – what are some of this person's specific character qualities that I want to emulate (or avoid)?
- vii. How are some other Bible truths illustrated in this person's life (5th reading)?
- viii. Summarize the main lesson(s), preferably in a few sentences.
- ix. Write out (a) personal application(s): what do I see in this person's life to emulate or avoid? Do I see anything of myself in his life? Strengths? Weaknesses? What can I do to improve in any of these areas?
- x. Make it transferable/pass-on-able (II Tim 2:2). (If I can't share it intelligibly w/ another, have I really learned it? The best way to learn something is to teach it!) E.g., make an outline of what you've learned. Divide it into natural time sequences, or cause-and-effect lessons.

After the "big picture" start narrowing the focus; first to the chapters:

- VI. **Chapter Summary Method:** (Like an intro to the chapter; short version of the next) - Read a chapter through at least five (5) times and then write a summary of it (key thoughts, themes, etc.)
- a. Why is this a good type of study?
 - i. Easy to learn and doesn't take much time
 - ii. Doesn't require any outside helps
 - iii. Good for relatively rapid survey of the Scriptures
 - b. Read through the chapter
 - i. Several times w/o stopping, in a Bible w/o notes, subdivisions, titles, etc.
 - ii. Read in diff translations each time, both "study" versions & paraphrases
 - iii. Read aloud quietly to yourself
 - c. Steps to this method
 - i. Caption: give the chapter a title
 - ii. Contents: describe, summarize, paraphrase, outline, or list the major points
 - iii. Chief people: identify the main characters: who are they? Why are they there? What is their main contribution? Why are they important? NOTE: Pronouns (he, she, they) from a previous chapter also need to be identified.
 - iv. Choice verse: choose a verse that best summarizes the chapter.
 - v. Crucial word(s): Write down the key word(s) from the chapter.
 - vi. Challenges: Are there questions, problems, difficulties that need further study? (Starting point for topical, word, or verse analysis studies)
 - vii. Cross-references: What else does God say about this? Get the *whole* counsel of God on an issue/topic.
 - viii. Christ seen: All of Scripture points us to Jesus (Lu 24:27). Be alert for anything that illuminates the character and/or attributes of God (all 3 persons!)
 - ix. Central lesson(s): Write down the major principles, lessons, and insights gleaned from this passage. Why is it in the Bible?
 - x. Conclusion: Put it all together. Apply it. Answer the question: "So what?" What am I going to do about it?

VII. **Chapter Analysis Method:** Master the contents of a chapter by taking an in-depth look at each verse in that chapter, taking each apart word by word, observing every detail.

a. This is important because:

- i. Having just gotten (last type) a pretty good grasp of the entire book, this allows an in-depth analysis of the specific content therein.
- ii. Dawson Trotman (founder of the Nav's) considered this method to be the major means a Christian takes in the Word.

b. Steps in doing this study:

i. Do a chapter summary (above). Some possibilities:

1. Paraphrase, outline, and/or
2. summarize (like a paraphrase, but using less than 30% of the original number of words)
3. Rewrite the entire chapter w/o the modifying clauses and phrases; use just the subjects, verbs, and objects)

ii. List your observations: what does it **say**? It's easy to miss things - Why?

1. We rush through too quickly
2. We don't write down what we see.
3. We give up too soon. We need to continue to ask questions: 6 W's, etc.

iii. What does it **mean**? Ask interpretative questions (again, 6 W's

1. What is the meaning, significance, implication of . . . ?
2. List difficulties. What do I have problems with? Why? How can I determine the correct meaning of the text?
3. Check the **context**!
4. Define the words and phrases used.
5. Study the grammar and structure
6. Compare several different translations
7. Study the background (see VIII above)
8. Compare (cross-reference) other Scriptures
9. As a **last resort**, consult study notes and commentaries.

iv. Correlation. Cross-references and parallel passages

1. Internal – check w/in the same book
2. Other writings by the same author
3. Other books in the same era (testament, time period)
4. All of Scripture.
5. Types of correlation:
 - a. “pure” – passages that say almost the same thing
 - b. “illustrative” – passages that illustrate the topic
 - c. Contrasting – passages that say “other” things (sometimes “almost” the opposite). While these may appear contradictory, often it's just from a different perspective, a different context, etc. This is MOST important if you want to get the whole counsel of God!

v. List possible applications. Brainstorm. List as many as possible – you are **not** going to do them all!

vi. Write down conclusions. Summarize and conclude your study.

vii. Then pick out **one** application. Make it personal, practical, possible, measurable. (Why that one? Sometimes the one we'd least like to do is the one that would help us the most! – see “how to's” of application).

After narrowing the focus to the chapters, go to the verses, then the individual words:

VIII. Verse-by-Verse Method: Select one passage of Scripture and examine it in detail: ask questions, cross-reference, do word studies, and finally, paraphrase each verse. Write out an application for each verse after analyzing it.

- a. A "short version" of the chapter analysis (above), if you're short on time, and/or
- b. As part of a deeper topical study (above).
- c. Five steps in doing this study:
 - i. Write out a personal paraphrase, preferably after reading the verse several times in several different "traditional" (vs "modern", like Living or the Message) translations. Try to condense vs expand; i.e., summarize.
 - ii. List some observations and questions, and then answer them.
 - iii. Find some cross-references for each verse (perhaps even several, since many verses deal w/ more than one topic within the text of that verse).
 - iv. Record your insights from that verse.
 - v. Write out a personal application: specific, possible, measurable.

IX. Word Study Method: Study the important words of the Bible via a microscopic look at the origin, definition(s), occurrences, and uses of a particular word, especially with respect to context, to understand as precisely as possible what the Biblical writer originally meant by the word(s) he used.

- a. This is important because:
 - i. Many of the great doctrines of the Bible revolve around a single word: grace, atonement, faith. To understand these truths, we must study the words used.
 - ii. Correct interpretation of Biblical truth depends upon correct understanding of the words used to express those truths.
 - iii. The Scriptures were not written in English. And while the originals are perfect and flawless (Ps 12:5, Prov 30:5), translations aren't always.
 - iv. There are twice as many words in the original as in most English translations – e.g., *seven* different Greek words are all translated servant (not counting the Hebrew!) – what are all the different flavors and nuances?
 - v. We must study not only the English meanings of the words, but the original. Therefore, to do this study properly,
 - vi. Requires some tools: English and Bible dictionaries and/or encyclopedias, word study books, topical bibles, study bibles, and an exhaustive concordance.
 - vii. It enables a systematic study of God's Word.
- b. Tips on doing this type of study:
 - i. Sometimes several different words in the original are all translated by one English word. Which one of these words are you studying? E.g., "flesh".
 - ii. Sometimes the same Greek/Hebrew word is translated several different ways into English. Don't miss any, just because they're translated differently. Suggestions:
 1. List all the different ways the word is translated, how many times it's translated each way, and give examples of each
 2. Explore and record how these different meanings may be related.
 3. Is the writer using the word in only a single sense, or in multiple ways?
 - iii. Sometimes one word becomes a whole phrase in English, and vice versa. Be sure to explore these occurrences.

c. Steps in doing this study:

- i. Select a word about which you have questions
- ii. Look it up in an English dictionary and write out the English definition.
- iii. Then compare different translations for additional insights.
- iv. Look up and define the original Greek/Hebrew word. Also - what are its roots/origins? (Greek dictionaries, etc. - Vincent's, Vine's, etc. (see "tools") -are most helpful here, as are Amplified or Expanded Bibles.
- v. Using an exhaustive concordance, determine:
 1. How many times in the Bible does it occur?
 2. Where? (which books and authors used it?)
 3. Where does it occur most? First?
 4. How is it used in the Bible (look up each occurrence).
 - a. How is it used elsewhere?
 - b. Does it have more than one usage/definition?
 - c. What is the context? Are there any illustrations that help define it?
- vi. How is the word used in Bible times in secular writings *outside of* Scripture? (Review Bible handbooks, encyclopedias, etc. to determine this)
- vii. Write out a specific, attainable, measurable application

Then, having torn the passage/book little by little to shreds, put it all back together again:

X. **Book Synthesis Method:** Summarize the contents and main themes of a book after you have read it through several (5+) times, preferably in different translations, and then outline it. Best done after doing the aforementioned studies on that book. NOTE: Gk "Syn" means "put" and "the" means "together"; hence, synthesis means "putting together", as contrasted to "analysis", which means "to take apart".

- a. This is important because it concludes and wraps up the previous several studies, allowing you to put everything together.
- b. Steps in doing this study:
 - i. Reread the book, in one sitting, rapidly, repeatedly, and prayerfully, in several modern translations, w/o referring to study notes or commentaries.
 - ii. Write out a detailed, final outline, drawing from your previous studies, charts, outlines, etc.
 - iii. Write down descriptive book (and chapter/section) titles.
 - iv. Review your previous concluding thoughts (previous studies) and create a summary of your insights. Again, no commentaries – *your* thoughts only!
 - v. Write out a personal application. Review your previous ones (how are you doing?) and make specific plans to finish/conclude/apply them.
 - vi. Share the results.
 1. Is this in sharable form? If not, make it so.
 2. Share one on one w/ your Timothy
 3. Share w/ your small group Bible Study group.

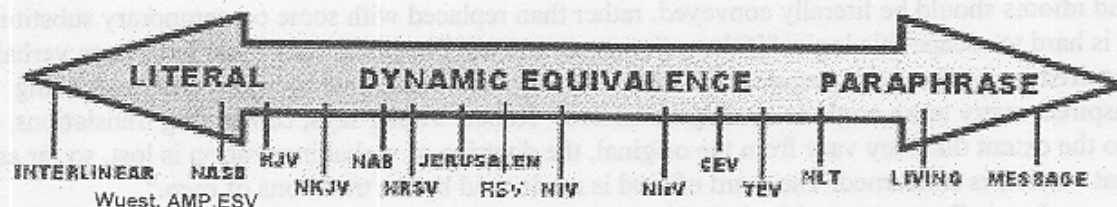
Finally, since the “big picture” is application, resulting in a transformed life, here are 2 that help.

- XI. **Character Quality Method:** Pick a character quality you’d like to have and study it.
- This is really a combination of many (most?) of the previous Bible Study Methods.
 - Why is this a good type of study? It’s **vital** to our lives: we are to become *like Christ* in our character (Rom8:29, II Cor 3:18)
 - Requires some tools: English and Bible dictionaries, word study books, topical bibles, study bibles, and concordances are all very helpful in doing this kind of study.
 - To develop a positive biblical character in your life:
 - Only work on one quality at a time
 - Don’t rush it – it takes time!
 - Stick with it! How long? Until you get victory (not perfect!) in that area.
 - Be alert to a negative quality that may actually be a positive one being misused. God can (and often does!) turn negatives into positives. E.g., a legalistic, rigid, and unbending attitude may actually be great self-discipline being misused.
 - Steps to Character Quality method:
 - Select the quality you want to study/work on. Write it down.
 - Determine the opposite (antonym) – there may be more than one (e.g., Faith and fear, faith and doubt, faith and apathy, etc.) Use the aforementioned tools!
 - Do a simple word study. Define your terms (dictionaries, word study books). What does the word come from (etymology) in the Greek/Hebrew?
 - Cross-reference – what are some other ways this term is used? Do other authors use it differently? What additional insights can I gain? Ask some specific questions: What are some benefits and/or negative consequences of this trait, both for myself and others? Are there promises or warnings associated w/ it?
 - Do a brief biographical study: who exemplifies this quality in the Scriptures? Who is lacking it? How is it displayed in different situations? How did it affect their walk w/ God and others? Their Christian/Christ-like growth?
 - Memory verse: Select at least one memory verse that epitomizes this quality in your mind and memorize it.
 - Select a situation or relationship in which God wants you to work on this character quality. Determine ahead of time how you can positively exemplify this quality in that situation/ relationship, and work on it regularly. **APPLY!**
 - Plan a specific project (apply!). E.g., gratefulness. Identify at least 10 people to whom you are grateful for something, and write each a letter thanking them.
 - Write out a personal illustration/testimony, how you have either failed or succeeded. A week or two later, do it again, as you work on your application(s).
- XII. **Devotional Method:** select a short passage and meditate on it until the Holy Spirit shows you a way to apply its truth to your life. **Write down** the application.
- Pray for insight on how to apply the passage
 - Meditate the passage. What’s a *ruminant*?
 - Chew on it: Emphasize different words, visualize the scene, and put yourself in it.
 - Paraphrase, outline, or summarize the passage.
 - Ask questions: Sin to avoid, Promise to claim, Attitude to adopt/change, Command to obey, Example to follow/avoid, Prayer to pray, Error to avoid, Truth to believe, Something to praise God for? (SPACE-PETS)
 - Write out an application.
 - Memorize a key verse from your study.

Atch 2 - "Proper Tools" for Bible Study

1. A good translation of the Bible.
 - a. Reliable translation, w/ helps available for it.
 - b. Use several; Amplified & expanded are good secondary ones.
 - c. Living, Phillips, GN, CEV, Message, etc., are good comparisons.
 - d. "Continuum" of Bible translations:

There are 3 basic ways (+1) the Bible is translated: word for word (a "literal" translation*), one's own words (paraphrase), or meaning for meaning (dynamic equivalence). An absolute word for word is almost impossible: Hebrew, for example, reads from right to left, whereas English is left to right; there are approx 6,000 words in the English Bible, but 8674 Hebrew in OT & 5624 Greek in NT – 14,298 total (more than twice!). Therefore, most translations must blend styles somewhat. Thus, the 4th way – expanded – which includes those Hebrew and Greek nuances usually left out.



Reading level:

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
KJ	NAS	ESV	HCS	NIV	NLT	Message	NCV			
RSV	NRSV		AMP	NKJ						

2. A good concordance (exhaustive best) – Strong's, Young's, etc., available for KJ, NIV, NAS
3. A good Bible dictionary (BD) and/or encyclopedia (BE):

Baker BE	Holman BD	Illustrated BD	New BD
ISBE	Tyndale BD	Zondervan BD	
4. A good English dictionary!! (A large Collegiate edition vs a pocket-sized one!)
5. A topical Bible (e.g. Nave's)
6. A set of Word studies (Vincent, Vine's, Key Word, Expository dictionary, Kregel)
7. A Bible Handbook, or other source of background information:
 - a. *Archeology & Bible History*, Zondervan, or *The Bible and Archeology*, Eerdmans
 - b. *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, Nat'l Geographic
 - c. *Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, Reader's Digest
 - d. *Halley's* or *Unger's Bible Handbook*.
 - e. *Harper's Encyclopedia of the Bible* or *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
 - f. *Oxford History of the Biblical World*, Coogan, Oxford Univ Press
 - g. *Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, Vos, Hendrickson
 - h. *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, Thomas Nelson.
8. A commentary (LAST thing to use!!):

Baker's	Matthew Henry	James-Fausset-Brown
Nelson's	Expositor's	New Bible Commentary
Calvin's	Cornerstone	Holman's
9. Most of these are available online. CAUTION: The internet is a vehicle, not a source. Where are you getting your data? **Google Results: about 22,500,000 for bible study. (0.06 seconds)

*To translate the Bible literally means to translate it "as it is written." A dynamic equivalent, which is a thought-for-thought translation, must **first** discover the meaning of a passage **before** it translates it, therefore it is partly based upon the translators understanding and interpretation. A "The freer a translation becomes," warns Lewis Foster, who helped translate the *New King James Version*, "the more possibility there is for the ideas of the translator to be read into the passage." R.C. Sproul agrees, "The more a translation moves in the direction of paraphrase, the more manifest is the danger of distortion." (either intentional or unintentional – The New World Translation- Jn 1:1). He also notes that a literal translation, "seeks to follow the Greek (or Hebrew) text as closely as possible in a word-by-word pattern. Here strict fidelity to the ancient language is stressed in a verbal way". Thus literal translation supplies the need for objectivity (what God actually inspired in the first place!) vs. subjectivity (Man's – i.e., the translators' – thoughts about what God wrote.

The words themselves are important. "The Holy Spirit who inspired the words of Scripture," states D.A. Carson, "equally inspired the syntax and the idioms." Therefore the syntax and idioms should be literally conveyed, rather than replaced with some contemporary substitute. It is hard to escape this logic: "If these Scriptures are truly inspired, they must have been verbally inspired; and, if verbally inspired, the tense of every verb must have been inspired; and, being inspired, every tense ought to be duly translated." Robert Young says, concerning translations, that "to the extent that they vary from the original, the doctrine of verbal inspiration is lost, so far as that version is concerned. The word of God is made void by the traditions of men."

Lewis Foster notes, "the individual who has high regard for the inspiration of Scripture is interested even in the smallest detail of God's inspired Word. In fact, he is anxious to duplicate each detail as far as possible in his translation work so that the person who cannot treat the original itself will have as close a facsimile as possible to work with." Unfortunately, "Many translators seem to have had in their minds just what ought to have been said, and they often disregard the Greek tenses to sustain their antecedent assumptions." Those who depend upon a translation to study God's word should want an accurate one.

The general consensus of conservative commentators is that the literal meaning is the basis for interpretation. They continually refer to the literal meaning as that which ultimately holds final authority. To disregard the literal meaning would incur the charge of liberalism or cultism. Nearly all Evangelical scholars, commentators, and educated preachers appeal to the literal meaning. Why? Because they recognize that the literal meaning is the only truly authoritative base for any interpretation they may make. And why is it authoritative? Because it best represents God's words – Scripture – w/o subjective bias of theology, culture, ideology, or other extra Biblical influences.

"Even difficult expressions are to be translated accordingly, or the product becomes a commentary instead of a translation. Some readability may be sacrificed in avoiding paraphrasing, yet accuracy always should take precedence over readability. But for many translators readability is the most important rule of translation. J.B. Phillips, in the introduction to his paraphrase, makes readability the "essential" principle of translation, calling it the "fundamental test." "This passion of mine for communication," notes Phillips, "has led me sometimes into paraphrase, and sometimes to interpolate clarifying remarks which are certainly not in the Greek." He said that he had inserted "many extra words which do not occur in the Greek text at all, " and admits that there can be "a manipulation of the words of New Testament Scripture to fit some private point of view."

Take a case in everyday life: can you imagine a legal document being paraphrased for a court of law? All legal documents, if they are translated, **must** be translated literally, word-for-word. If every single word is important in a legal document, how much more important is every single word in the constitution of the kingdom of God? Every word is sacred, every word important, every word breathed out by God.

Comparison of Various Translations

(AMP) The Amplified Bible: an "expanded" or "amplified" translation, put out by a committee of conservative scholars by the Lockman Foundation, not meant for general reading, but as a study aid to those who would seek a deeper understanding of the original. The AMP "assists the English reader to comprehend what was readily understood as a matter of course by the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek" reader. "Amplification . . . reveals the clarifying shades of meaning fully conveyed in the [original] texts." Dr. Billy Graham called it "the best study [Bible] on the market. It is a magnificent translation. I use it continually".

(CEV) Contemporary English Version: a completely new translation published by the American Bible Society in 1995. Originally intended as a children's translation, it uses a very simple, contemporary style, and is therefore highly readable, for both adults and children. It strives to preserve the meaning of the original in natural English expressions and is even more successful at this than was its predecessor, the GNT. 100 translation experts led by Dr. Barclay Newman contributed to the CEV. It tackles most translation difficulties, including Greek genitives and similar problems, which are often left undertranslated in versions which focus more on the original forms. In 1996 the CEV won the coveted Crystal Award from the Plain English Campaign in the United Kingdom. It is independent of traditional translations and freer of "biblical" terms. This is an especially good translation for people who speak English as a second language.

(ESV) English Standard Version: a recent version, produced by theologically conservative scholars, which slightly updates the RSV. The ESV is promoted as "... a new, essentially literal Bible translation that combines word-for-word precision and accuracy with literary excellence, beauty, and readability." It follows the tradition of the KJ, ASV, and RSV. Published in 2001 by Crossway, it was developed by a translation team of more than 100 scholars, with the goal of being very accurate (word for word), and yet very readable.

(GW) God's Word: another relatively new translation produced by God's Word to the Nations. Not as idiomatic as the CEV, but still quite readable for both adults and children. GW is more dynamic and readable than the NIV.

(GNT) Good News Translation: [formerly called TEV (Today's English Version), Good News for Modern Man, or GNB (Good News Bible)]: originally translated in 1976 by Robert G. Bratcher with six other scholars of the American Bible Society (ABS) for speakers of English as a second language but found by many native English speakers to be a very readable and helpful translation. The GNT is characterized, on the whole, by natural English. Its ABS successor is the CEV. It is a very free, though very accurate, translation that avoids the use of traditional biblical vocabulary and communicates especially well with youth and the unchurched.

(HCSB) Holman Christian Standard Bible: is another new word-for-word translation by nearly 100 scholars on an interdenominational translation team that strives to be both literally accurate and readable. It is not as literal as the ESV or NASB, but is more so than the NIV; it attempts to be more readable than the NASB.

(ISV) International Standard Version: A new translation by American seminary professors on its Committee On Translation and Contributing Scholars. Highlights careful attention to Greek verb "tenses" (aspect) and translation of these to English. Some Biblical poetry is translated as English rhyming poetry. Promoted by its producers as "the most readable and accurate English translation of the Bible ever produced". The New Testament has been printed and is available for purchase. The entire New Testament and those books of the Old Testament completed in preview form are available for download.

(JBP) New Testament in Modern English, Revised: (Also known as **Phillips**): This is one of the best translations ever produced, in terms of English style and impact upon readers. The translator was the British Biblical scholar, J.B. Phillips. Some consider it a paraphrase, being translated by a single person.

(LB) The Living Bible: Completed in 1971, is Kenneth N. Taylor's paraphrase of the American Standard Version. Easy to read and once immensely popular, it is often criticized for adding too much commentary to the biblical text. Published by Tyndale House, although apparently no longer available from them.

(Msg) The Message - Eugene Peterson completed this personal translation/paraphrase of the entire Bible in 2002. Peterson takes great liberties with words in his attempt to effectively communicate both the original thoughts and tone of the Scripture. The result is a very earthy, informal language, with an attractive, gripping English style - a real pleasure to read. The Message often challenges and convicts as no other recent English Bible translation does. Occasional overuse of idioms not familiar to the majority of fluent English speakers. Published by NavPress.

(NAB) New American Bible: The "standard" modern Catholic Bible.

(NASB) New American Standard Bible - completed in 1971, was produced by 54 conservative Protestant scholars sponsored by the Lockman Foundation. This version is very literal in vocabulary and word order, although the resulting English is quite wooden. It often is preferred by those who want an English version that reflects the grammar of the original. The quality of English is not as natural as that of the NIV; an Update was published in 1995 which seeks to use more modern English while preserving the literal nature of the translation.

(NCV) New Century Version: originally translated for children under the title International Children's Version. It has undergone some revision so that it can be appreciated by adults, as well. Very readable. Several formats are available for children and adults.

(NET) New English Translation: Done by a team of 20 translators. This version uses a relatively literal translation approach. It is, however, more readable than more literal versions such as the NASB. It will make a good study version for those already familiar with the Bible. Its website, like several other Bible version websites, lists its translation principles. Its most noticeable feature is the huge number of informative footnotes explaining NET translation decisions and giving other background information. It is Internet-friendly with footnotes clickable from the main text.

(NIV) New International Version: Completed in 1978, it is the product of 115 evangelical scholars. Within a decade it became the best-selling English version- the version of first choice by many evangelicals. A relatively literal translation with some dynamic renderings. Its English is, on the whole, a little more natural than that of the NASB, combining contemporary, literary English with traditional biblical vocabulary. The NIV is copyrighted by the International Bible Society.

(NJB) New Jerusalem Bible: of 1985 revised and updated the text and notes of the Jerusalem Bible (JB) of 1966. This version, translated by two Catholic scholars, is an elegant, literary rendering (perhaps the most poetic since the KJV). The notes reflect a modern, liberal perspective; in many ways similar to the NAB.

(NLT) New Living Translation: published in 1996, is the product of 90 Bible scholars from around the world, from various theological backgrounds and denominations. This is a very readable translation, while remaining more faithful to the original texts (and exegetically more accurate) than its predecessor, the Living Bible. Promoted by its producers as a thought-for-thought translation. Reads better than most recent literal and relatively literal versions.

(NKJV) New King James Version: Released in 1982, and involving 119 contributors, it updates the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, while preserving the classic style and beauty. Although it uses the same Hebrew and Greek texts as the original, it indicates where other manuscripts differ. Published by Thomas Nelson.

(NRSV) New Revised Standard Version - published in 1989 by the National Council of Churches, it revises/updates the RSV of 1952 (which was one of the very few versions accepted by both Catholic and Protestants). While following the literal tradition of the RSV, the NRSV eliminates much of the archaic language. One distinctive is the use of gender inclusive pronouns to replace male pronouns when the original writers meant both men and women. The NRSV does not change masculine pronouns referring to God, however, and is quite highly regarded in scholarly circles. Reads about as well as the NIV.

(REB) Revised English Bible: Completed in 1989, it is a thorough revision of the New English Bible. Like the original, it was translated by a committee of British scholars, representing all the major Christian traditions in the United Kingdom. The more archaic language was omitted and a more conservative approach was taken toward some of the difficult passages. Many readers find it to be an excellent translation for personal reading and study, with its pleasant literary language, though its British idioms make it less popular in the U.S. The target audience is moderately well educated adults.

(TNIV) Today's New International Version: a mild revision of the NIV. The subject of heated debate among conservative evangelicals, some of whom disagree strongly with the use of gender language in the TNIV for some passages where the TNIV translation committee believed the original biblical texts had a gender-inclusive meaning.

(Wuest) Wuest's Expanded New Testament: Very similar to the AMP (NT only), but done by a single vs group of scholars: Dr Kenneth Wuest, NT Greek professor at Moody Bible Institute. As the AMP, not intended to stand alone, but as a companion to a standard translation. Dr Wuest has made great effort to be as accurate, precise, and true to the original as possible, *without the usual translators' restrictions of using only one word for each original word*; i.e., he uses "as many English words as are necessary to bring out the richness, force, and clarity of the Greek text." He also deliberately uses the Greek order of words instead of an English one (subject, verb, object), resulting in a text that is both much clearer than a "standard" English one, particularly in the case of the original's emphasis and style, as well as much more cumbersome. The result, if the reader will take the time to work through it, is a reference that greatly expands one's understanding of the nuances of the original Greek: I Jn 3:14 (NAS) We know that we have passed out of death into life . . . (Wuest) We know absolutely that we have passed over permanently out of the sphere of the death into the light . . . I Jn 4:13 (NAS) By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. (Wuest) In this we know experientially that in Him we are dwelling and He Himself in us, because He has given us out of His Spirit as a permanent gift.

Conclusions

The original manuscripts (Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean, and Aramaic) were inspired by God and absolutely perfect. Translations are not necessarily totally so. So which to use?

KJ is the "old standby"; it is very literal, very good, very scholarly, but the language is archaic and no longer the vernacular, which can lead to misunderstanding (compare I Pet 3:1).

ASV, ESV, KJ II, NAS, NKJ, etc., are very similar: very literal, word for word, excellent for study, translated at least at a HS graduate if not collegiate level. They use words like propitiation, justification, etc., and retain many Hebraic and Greek forms which are not natural in English, but they give readers a better feel for what the structures were in the original Biblical texts (better for in depth Bible Study). They are not as readable; because all languages are different, both in vocabulary and grammatical structures, it is nearly impossible to retain both the original form as well as a high level of readability in any translation.

HCSB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, etc. are not quite as literal ("dynamic equivalence", requiring some interpretation by the translators) and are written more at mid-HS level. Still quite good for study, however, and much more readable.

CEV, GW, ISV, NCV, NET, TEV(GNT), TNLV, etc. are still translations, and still by a group of scholars, which tends to reduce individual bias, but are done more at a Jr. high level. This makes them poor choices for independent, stand alone Bible Study, but excellent for quick personal "overview" reading as well as public speaking. They are also very good for evangelism, especially for those who have little Bible background and/or are not highly educated.

Berkley, Living (TLV), The Message, Phillips, etc. are done by individual translators. Some are called translations, others paraphrases, but they're very similar. As the previous, they are very poor choices for independent, stand alone Bible Study, but good for quick personal "overview" reading as well as public speaking, and good for evangelism, especially for those w/ little Bible background and/or are not highly educated.

Amplified, Wuest's expanded, interlinear, parallel Bibles (various), etc., are not good stand alone study versions, and are also poor for quick reading and/or public speaking. But they are superb for "additional" bibles to GO WITH a more "standard" bible, and add exceptional added insight and perspective.

Recommendations

The middle groups provide the best balance of both ends – reasonable accuracy for Bible study, yet still good readability. For better Bible study, go left, for more readability, go right.

If it's important to follow along with your church public readings or what your minister preaches from, use that version. If it does not meet your need for understanding, supplement it.

Again, if your study or church Bible, or your favorite Bible is either more literal or idiomatic than you'd like, supplement it with one from the other end for better comprehension.

If you're content with your current Bible, continue with it. But periodically ask yourself how well you understand it. If you find yourself frequently wondering what English phrases in it mean, consider reading a more idiomatic version (right side) part of the time. Likewise, if you find yourself frequently wondering if the ancient Hebrews would actually use such obvious "Americanisms", consider comparing with a more literal version (left side).

Summary

Bottom line #1: The best way to do in depth Bible study is to start with a standard (read "literal") version, and then cross-reference, compare, and contrast several different versions for greater perspective and insight. This gives the best possible combination of all worlds; using expanded, interlinear, and/or amplified ones is even better. One way to do so without excessive, cumbersome, and numerous piles of volumes is to use a parallel Bible

Bottom line #2: But since the final goal is application with the ultimate objective of a transformed life, **the best translation is simply one that is well used and translated into life.**

Atch 3 – Basic Principles of Interpretation

I. General Principles of Interpretation (semi-review).

1. Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative. What is the **final** authority in my life? There are 4 main ones people use: a) tradition (often, "The Church"); b) reason/logic, like so many modern seminaries; c) personal experience (and/or emotion – "it just feels right"), or d) God's Word. We must pick – and **commit ourselves!** – to the latter. Jn 17:17
 - a. Therefore, interpret experience (both personal and Biblical) in the light of God's Word, and not vice versa. I.e., don't form a complete teaching/doctrine on tongues from Acts when there are doctrinal passages dealing with it (e.g., I Cor 12-14).
 - b. Likewise, Biblical examples are only authoritative when supported by a command. Jesus wore robes, was tempted in the Negev, & never married. Am I to do the same?
 - c. Church history, while important, is NOT decisive in interpreting the Scriptures. The Bible determines what the Church teaches, and not vice versa. (Matt 15:13).
 - d. God used the human background, culture, education, etc. of His human instruments. E.g., Luke's educated Greek is very different from John's blocky, 2nd language Greek; Moses' Hebrew differs markedly from that of David, 600 years later, or that of the refined and educated Daniel in the King's court of Babylon. However, that does NOT make any of it any more (or less!) authoritative than the remainder. Just different.
 - e. Likewise, while we as Christians have both the right and the responsibility to investigate and interpret God's Word for ourselves (i.e., - use the brains God gave us; "blind faith isn't faith at all! - II Tim 2:15, Acts 17:11), human reason/logic do NOT measure up to God's standard (Is 55: 8,9; I Cor 1:18-23).
 - f. Thus, both saving faith and the Holy Spirit's inspiration are necessary to both understand and properly interpret Scripture. (I Cor 2:14; Jn 16:13)
2. The best interpreter of Scripture is **Scripture!** Cross-referencing is an indispensable part of Biblical interpretation. But watch out for taking things out of context, and/or either adding to (Rev 22:18) or subtracting from (Gen 3:1-5) the Scriptural account.
3. The Bible is given to change our lives, NOT [just] to increase our knowledge! While it's ok to increase our knowledge, knowledge in and of itself (w/o an additional, overriding purpose of personal transformation) simply puffs up and creates arrogance. (I Cor 8:1)
 - a. Some passages are NOT to be applied NOW as they were when they were written: e.g., the OT temple offerings, which Jesus abolished (Eph 2:15) – see "history".
 - b. While we must *apply* a passage IAW its correct *interpretation*, we must understand it before applying it; taking it out of context is a recipe for disaster: ("Praying" for guidance, a man opened his Bible at random: "Judas went and hanged himself"; 2nd time: "Go thou and do likewise"; 3rd time: "Whatsoever thou doest, do quickly").
4. The promises (and principles!) of God throughout the Bible are available to the Holy Spirit for **personal application** to all believers everywhere at all times. Rom 15:4 "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction."
5. Thus, while we are free to do anything that the Scriptures do not prohibit (i.e., all things are lawful), NOT all things are profitable (I Cor 6:12, 10:23) - or pleasing to God!

II. Grammatical Principles of Interpretation

1. Any given passage has only one [primary] meaning, and should be taken "literally"; i.e., determine the usual, ordinary sense of the word(s) involved and interpret them that way, unless the context requires otherwise. ***If the usual sense makes sense seek no other sense.*** E.g., "catching a plane" – do you stand on the runway w/ a catcher's mitt? Hardly . . . NOTE: When we have trouble w/ this, **why?** Do I not wish to obey? Does it not fit my pre-conceived notions? Do I find it repugnant? (e.g., Abraham offering up Isaac).
2. Many (most?) words have more than one meaning. However, a word can only mean one thing **at a time**. **Don't** shift meanings in the middle of the passage **unless the context clearly indicates** a shift. (E.g., "pass"). Thus, it can't have both a literal and a figurative meaning at the same time. When in doubt, the literal (usual, normal) meaning is the preferred one, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, in which case the literal meaning is superseded. In that case, don't change again - stick w/ the new meaning.
3. Interpret a word IAW it's immediate (sentence) and greater (paragraphs, book, time frame, etc.) **context**. (**Context is key!!**) Some considerations (see "background Bible Study):
 - a. Author context: the various uses of the word *by that author* (cross-references).
 - b. Historical context: What time frame (dispensation) was it written in?
 - c. Cultural context: what did the word mean in the times of the author? (Jn 2:14)
 - d. Content context: what is the theme or purpose of the passage/book?
 - e. Etymological context: what is the root meaning of the word?
4. Interpret prophesy in its literal, usual, historical sense, unless the Scripture clearly indicates otherwise (e.g., symbolic meaning). NOTE: Prophecy is often fulfilled in *installments*.
 - a. Later Scripture often sheds additional light. E.g. Mal 4:5 says Elijah will come, so people rightly expected Elijah. Later we learn this was [partially?] figurative – i.e., John the Baptist (Lu 1:17). We do **not** have that authority when interpreting Scripture ourselves. Further, many believe Elijah is still literally coming (i.e., 1 of 2 - Rev 11:3).
 - b. Later Scripture will sometimes ascribe a prophetic interpretation of an OT passage that at the time *didn't appear to have one*: Matt 2:15's comments on Hos 11:1; God calling His Son out of Egypt; or Melchizedek in Gen 14:18 being an actual historical figure, but Heb 7 calling him a type of Christ (also Sarah & Hagar in Gal, etc.)

NOTE: Literature comes in many forms: poetry vs prose; historical, satirical, humorous, metaphorical, etc. When Joyce Kilmer's tree wears a nest of robins in her hair, or Peter Cottontail talks to his mother, we know exactly what is going on. Figurative language is part and parcel of our everyday literature and life, and it communicates in ways that mere description can't. - Why should the Scriptures be any different, and forbidden to use such literary devices? Especially since the Bible is an Eastern, oriental book – from a society steeped in figurative language! (see below).

5. A few "figurative language" grammatical principles:
 - a. When an inanimate object is used to describe a living thing, the statement is figurative. "I am the bread of Life", I am the Door to the sheepfold". "The Lord is my rock . . ."
 - b. Likewise, when life and/or action is attributed to inanimate objects, the statement is figurative. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His . . ."
 - c. When an expression is out of character, the statement is figurative: Paul's "dogs" (Phil 3:2) are obviously not the 4-footed furry kind – he goes on to call the "evil workers".
 - d. The principle parts and figures in a parable represent certain realities. Consider only those parts when drawing conclusions - don't push too far! Jesus lists only 4 kinds of soil in His parable, but soil scientists list 10 in the US, entisol, vertisol, inceptisol, . . .)

III. Historical Principles of Interpretation

1. Since Scripture originated in a historical context, it can only be understood in the light of that historical context. E.g., Paul "appealed to Caesar". Will you? Do background study!
2. The Bible is God's *progressive* revelation to man, and all parts are necessary and form one continuous whole. The foundation (OT) is just as important as the superstructure (the NT).
 - a. Jesus said (Jn 3:14) He would be lifted up just as Moses lifted up the serpent (Nu 21:9).
 - b. The whole of Scripture becomes *progressively clearer* as one goes forward – much in the OT is hard to understand w/o the New. Thus,
 - c. The NT is a commentary on the OT (e.g., the entire book of Hebrews). Therefore,
 - d. Certain OT rules, laws, and practices are "cancelled" because they were fulfilled in Christ (Matt 5:17). They were not wrong, but were "shadows" of things to come – when the reality arrives, the foreshadowing is no longer necessary. (Heb 10:1).
 - e. While God's revelation is progressive, neither He, nor His character, nor His plan for mankind, have changed one iota. Only their revelation has become more progressively more complete.
3. Historical/OT events become symbols of spiritual truth only when the Scriptures say so. That is NOT to say we can't make spiritual *application* throughout - we can! But to "spiritualize" an OT passage beyond what the Scriptures do is improper. E.g., I Cor 10: 1-4 says that Israel's passing through the Red Sea (Ex 14:22) symbolizes their baptism. But they do NOT say that the Red Sea symbolizes the Blood of Christ - neither should we!

IV. Theological Principles of Interpretation

1. We must understand the Scriptures grammatically before we understand it theologically. I.e., I must understand what it *says* before I can begin to understand what it *means*.
2. A doctrine can not be considered Scriptural on the basis of one or two passages. It must sum up and include all of what the Scriptures have to say regarding it – i.e., what is the **WHOLE** counsel of Scripture. Ex: Scripture says we are free from the Law (Rom 8:2). Can we then live any way we want, in self-indulgence and wanton decadence? NO!! "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! (Rom 6:1-4). We must look at ALL of what Scripture says on a topic. **Cross-reference!**
3. When two Scriptures *appear* to be contradictory, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief that God is bigger than our reason, and they will [eventually] resolve themselves into a higher unity. E.g., the Trinity (3 "gods" in one); Jesus- both fully God and fully man; the origin and existence of evil; the sovereignty of God vs the responsibility/free will of man; etc. Our loyalty and love is not to a system of theology but to God Himself and His Word. When God speaks clearly, so must we – when He doesn't, neither can we!! When the Word gives two (or more) "paradoxes", we must go with the same.
4. A teaching merely implied in Scripture may be considered biblical when a comparison of related passages supports it.

NOTE: Until now we've been mainly talking *inductive* Bible Study: looking at each individual piece and putting them together to form a whole (from the specific to the general). This looks at *deductive* reasoning – from the general to the specific. E.g., Mk 12:26,7; Jesus' teaching re: the resurrection. 1) God is the God of the living; 2) God is (vs was) the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are among the living. NOTE: We do this on a regular basis in everyday life. E.g., did your boss say specifically he wanted you to come to work today? However, 1) You are an employee, with a job to do. 2) Your boss wants you to do that job. 3) You are being paid to do that job. 4) Hence, you should probably go to work today.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

a. Resemblances

- i. Simile – like or as (float like a butterfly, sting like a bee)
- ii. Metaphor – (Matt 5:13 – you are the salt of the earth)
- iii. Type – Col 2:17 – “shadows of things to come”
 1. events (I Cor 10:11 – examples)
 2. things (Heb 10:20 – the veil of the temple)
 3. institution – Heb 9:11, 24 – tabernacle, of Jesus
 4. ceremony – I Cor 5:7 – Passover – of Jesus
 5. WARNING – main teaching, not every little detail (veil 6” thick, of blur fine twined linen – was Jesus?) – type/shadow is ALWAYS inferior to the reality/real thing!
 6. ONE type can prefigure several things: tabernacle is a type of Jesus & His work of salvation, but also heaven, our walk w/ Christ & fellowship w/ God, etc.
- iv. Allegory (Gal 4:21-31) – “continued metaphor”; Sarah & Hagar illustrate the 2 covenants.
- v. Parable – story that illustrates (or conceals!) by use of everyday, ordinary things to teach more important [spiritual] truths. Literally “to place by the side of”; a parable places two things side by side for the purpose of comparison. Rules to interpret parables:
 1. Look for the main object or purpose.
 2. Focus on the principle points (not the side issues or minor details). A parable will NOT be “perfect” in each and every detail!
 3. Parables are **not** given to **establish** doctrine but to **illustrate** it. Look for the doctrinal teaching(s) in the context around the parable.
- vi. Miracles – sometimes called “parables in action”. Yes, they actually occurred, but for a purpose, often to illustrate a point. So – what is the [spiritual] truth God wants to convey to us in/through that particular miracle? E.g., the Jn 5 pool healing is immediately followed by Jesus’ teaching that He and the Father are one, and that He does nothing of Himself, but only as God directs. It illustrates Jesus’ deity and power as the Son of God.

b. Other figurative language:

- i. Part-whole. (synecdoche) – use the part for the whole, and/or vice versa. Judges 12:7 – “Jephthah was buried in the cities of Gilead” (vs one city); in Acts 27:37 – Paul has 276 “souls” w/ him on the boat (vs people). Likewise – “drink the cup”, vs what is in it;
- ii. Cause – effect (metonymy) – Prov 12:19 – “the lip of truth . . . a lying tongue” – both used of the words coming out of/from those lips and tongue.
- iii. Personification (anthropomorphism) – “Oh death, where is thy victory?”
- iv. Hyperbole – gross exaggeration (beam out of your own eye) – extreme humor!
- v. Litotes – gross understatement (again, humor, often used w/ sarcasm or irony) – I Ki 18:27 – Elijah to the Baal worshippers – their “god” is in the bathroom relieving himself!
- vi. Hebraisms (uniquely Hebrew figures of speech): “son” = “descendent of” – Jesus was the “son of David”; also – “characterized by” – James and John were “sons of thunder”.
- vii. Hebrew poetry:
 1. English poetry uses rhyme, rhythm, and meter (I think that I will never see, a poem lovely as a tree)
 2. Hebrew poetry uses parallelism, “balanced lines”, and “thought rhythms”. NOTE: This is just about the only kind of poetry in the world that does NOT get totally lost in translation! (Job, Psalms, Prov, Eccl, S of Sol, Lamentations, etc.)
 - a. 2nd line repeats the 1st.
 - b. 2nd line adds to or explains the 1st.
 - c. 2nd line is the opposite of the 1st.

PERIODS OF TIME

NOTE: While the Scriptures obviously cover many millennia, which can likewise obviously be broken down into several time "periods", the following is NOT "gospel", and there are differences of opinion on some of the specifics. That's ok. The big picture remains – time, and the time period one is in – IS IMPORTANT in the study of Scripture!

- a. For example: In Eph, Paul speaks of at least 5 different times (or time periods): "before time began" (before the foundation of the world), before Christ came, the present evil age, the coming age, and the age of ages (fulfillment of time)
- b. Dispensations: For practical purposes, the Scriptures can be divided into several (some say 7) relatively distinct time periods. Without accepting all that some theologians read into this term, they are often called "dispensations". These are some of the more commonly accepted ones:
 - viii. Before time (and the earth) began – Gen 1:1, Jn 1:1, etc. We know very little about this.
 - ix. Age of innocence – before the Fall – in the garden – Gen 1-3
 - x. Age of Conscience – after the Fall, includes Noah, tower of Babel, etc.
 - xi. Age of Promise – Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob
 - xii. Age of Law – Moses the Lawgiver
 - xiii. Church Age (Age of Grace) – after Christ's resurrection (i.e., now)
 - xiv. Kingdom Age – after Jesus returns (1,000 year reign?)
 - xv. Eternity
- c. Time: While God is above, beyond, and outside of time, we are not. Therefore, God's relationship w/ people is w/in time, and a progressive revelation of Himself.
- d. Judgments: Each (or at least, many) of these ages or dispensations ends with a judgment (or so say many commentators)
- e. Resurrections: Jesus is the "first fruits" (I Cor 15:20, 23) of a final resurrection of all to stand before God; we are next (Jas 1:18)
- f. Gospel: PRIOR TO the beginning of time, God says that He had already provided (Matt 25:34, Heb 4:3b) a means of salvation through the Messiah. And so God's progressive revelation includes a progressive revelation of His salvation, beginning in Gen 3:15.
- g. Covenants
 - i. Age of innocence: Before the Fall, in the garden, was perfection, with only one rule, to not eat of the tree in the middle. Mankind was "on probation", so to speak, but told to be fruitful and multiply, and rule over the earth. Also, God created marriage.
 - ii. Age of Conscience: God made a covenant w/ Adam after the Fall - the ground and serpent were cursed, he had to work, there was pain in childbearing, etc. Noah had a rainbow to seal his covenant of no more world-wide floods; God also said they could eat meat, have governments, etc.
 - iii. Age of Promise: Abraham (and Isaac, & Jacob) were to become a great nation, and all the world blessed in him; also, the first promise of Palestine.
 - iv. Age of Law: Through Moses the Lawgiver God gave numerous (23 main?) laws of 3 main types: moral (reflects God's character), civil (only for Israel's theocracy), and ceremonial (type of Christ – fulfilled in Him). Note: Palestinian covenant and Davidic covenant also expansions in and on this)
 - v. Church Age (Age of Grace): After Christ's resurrection (i.e., now); a new covenant with internal vs external renewal & laws, through the continuously indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - vi. Kingdom Age – after Jesus returns for the second time (1,000 year reign?).
 - vii. Eternity

Atch 4 – “How To’s” of Application

Why apply?

1. Because of who we are - lost, selfish, sinful, unable to (and uninterested in) help ourselves, or get ourselves out of the mess that we're in. We need help, guidance, love, direction, wisdom, and encouragement – in short, answers. Life is hard!
2. Because of who God is – He knows us, loves us, and has provided a way out. He wants the very best for us, and has provided that way – if we will but look for it, accept it, and follow it – and it's Him, and His way, the “owner's manual” for life.
3. Because of what the world is – fallen, ruled by Satan, and full of evil, temptations, questions, pitfalls, pressures. God doesn't want to take us out of the world, but transform us so that he can make a difference in the world through us!
4. God commands us to: Jas 1:22-25, I Cor 10:11, Is 42:23, and tells us how: Heb 4:12, II Pet 1:20-21; II Tim 3:16-17;

Why applications are difficult (or some reasons for weak or poor applications):

1. Emotional reasons:
 - a. Hard work – life is hard. There are no magic formulas; and we tend to resist change.
 - b. Poor preparation. It's hard to think through, plan, organize, be open to the leading of the HS, and write down a specific application.
 - c. Fear. Fear of failure, of being too simplistic, of not measuring up. Fear of society (and the people therein), as it pressures us to conform to it.
 - d. It's easy to substitute emotion for action. A “spiritual” high isn't necessarily an emotional high.
2. Intellectual reasons:
 - a. Wrong starting point(s) – if the first two steps (“say” and “mean”) aren't done well, this one never will be! E.g., Church business meeting: “Do we need a new chandelier?” Long-standing member objected: 1st, I can't spell it. 2nd, no one knows how to play it. 3rd, what we really need is more light!”
 - b. Wrong assumptions – it's very easy to assume that the connection between the Biblical teaching and one's own life is obvious. It isn't. E.g., I Thess 4:2-5 can have very different applications to a young single, a young married, and older single, an older married, a recently divorced or widowed, etc.
 - c. Lack of understanding of what application really is. The opposite of knowledge isn't ignorance, but disobedience. Scripturally, to **know** is to **do**!
 - d. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all working against us! All three also encourage us to have:
 - e. Wrong standards & values: the world's relative ones vs God's absolute ones; we accept a human viewpoint instead of a divine one; put it off until later, etc.
3. Practical reasons:
 - a. Lack of training (practice makes perfect). We need training and practice to do this well.
 - b. It's easy to substitute interpretation for application; again, outside assistance helps.
 - c. We tend to apply in areas where we are strong vs weak, where we're already applying.

“Possible Points and Places” of application (things to look for in the “say” and “mean” stages):

1. People – how are they like me, and what characteristics in them that I see in myself?
2. Parallels – what if any similarities are there to my world?
3. Plot – What’s the conflict? What would/could I have done? How is this similar to what’s happening in my life today?
4. Point – what was the point, the meaning for the original audience?
 - a. What did God want them to do?
 - b. What was God’s solution to the problem?
5. Principles – ascertain transferable principles (concepts) that can apply to many (all) people
 - a. What’s the message for all mankind?
 - b. What are the timeless truths, the moral of the story?
6. Present – what does this principle mean in the here and now for my society and culture?
 - a. How is it relevant, and/or similar to today?
 - b. How can I make these timeless truths timely?
7. Place – what are some possible places/arenas for application in my world?
 - a. (Living arena) – home, neighborhood
 - b. (working arena) – school, work
 - c. (ministry arena) – church, etc.
 - d. (recreational arena) – friends, hobbies, etc.
8. Personalize – what does this truth mean to/for me?
 - a. What are my areas of need, conviction, and opportunity?
 - b. Where in my life might this apply?
9. Priorities – How should I adjust my priorities?
 - a. What should I change about my values, beliefs, attitudes, and/or character?
 - b. What about my thoughts and/or actions should change?
 - c. What kind of person does God want me to become?
10. Plan – What does God want me to do about what I’ve learned?
 - a. What steps will get me towards that goal?
 - b. What the first step? How do I get started?
11. Partial – part of your applications will be in each of two types:
 - a. Intentional: “I will do the following regardless . . .”
 - b. Conditional: “If thus and so . . . , then I will . . .”

Application techniques:

1. role-play (Lu 5:1-8; Peter in the boat w/ the huge catch)
2. apply to others, THEN – how am I like that other person
3. Intensify the need (imagine it MUCH WORSE that it really is)
4. Put it in writing, and share w/ another (be accountable)
5. Use acronyms to help:
 - a. “SPIES” – social, physical, intellectual, emotional
 - b. “WWWWWH” – who, what, where, when, why, and how.
 - c. “FFFFF” – Family, Friends, Faith, Future, Fears.
6. Use an analogy; think of an example: “trying to live the Christian Life w/o the Bible is like roofing a house w/o a hammer or nails”
7. “watch me” – i.e., complete this sentence: Hey, Bill, watch me as I _____ (actually DO this application)

8. Look at the other side: i.e., how might this NOT work?
9. Reverse (like previous) – do the exact opposite, & consider consequences: e.g., put on a big clown outfit, get a 76 piece trombone band, and announce to the world that you just gave 53 cents to church (Matt 6:2)
10. Look at it from God's perspective: "why did He put this in the Bible? So that His people would . . ."
11. Action lab: actually give yourself an assignment to complete prior to . . . (and then be accountable to someone for that!)
12. Make a joke – find the humor in the situation, a la Mat 7:3-5 (log, speck, eye)
13. Create a "zinger" (short punch line to use in a conversation). Then use it on YOURSELF!

Application window:

	People's need/problem	God's Action/solution	People's Response/(Dis)Obedience
Then			
Now			
Me			

"How To's" for good applications:

1. Receive and understand the message (be **open to** what God has to say to ME)
2. Put the biblical truths into personal context; reflect on one's own life. what does God have to say to ME
3. Be willing to and take the steps to identify what needs to change.
 - a. What – look for a specific action
 - b. Should – understand that this message is to be obeyed
 - c. I – recognize this is for ME, not for someone else.
 - d. Do – action, obedience, is required
 - e. About – this action is a response to
 - f. It - what God has said/done, a biblical teaching
4. Lay out a plan to accomplish it. That plan must be
 - a. Specific – I will memorize the following 3 verses on "God's love"
 - b. Measurable – by next Friday
 - c. Accountable – I'll ask Bob now to check up on me a couple of times between now & then, and check it all off with him next Fri evening.

A specific example:

1. Set the goal (e.g., read I Tim 4:7, "... discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"=> goal-be more godly)
2. break the goal into more manageable smaller parts
 - a. Begin w/ prayer, asking God for His help in the entire process.
 - b. Come up w/ a specific definition of "godly" (do a topical bible study on godliness, using several dictionaries and multiple cross-references, biblical examples, etc.)
 - c. Set a time limit, at the end of which the initial study will be complete.
 - d. Break that initial definition into more manageable components, based on the initial study, e.g., Gal 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, . . .
 - e. Repeat b. above for each of the component parts of "godliness"
3. Seek additional input; e.g., come to KMI, and attend a workshop on godliness (or, better, one of the smaller parts), meet w/ a mentor, or pastor, attend a SS class on that topic, etc.
4. Design a specific, measurable, attainable plan
 - a. E.g., "patience". Pick one instance where you either are not patient, or where you need to be more patient. (e.g., when my kid spills his milk at the dinner table)
 - b. Observe, ask questions, get to the heart of the matter (who, what, where, when why, - see above)
 - c. Pick ONE of those specific instances (e.g., when I've had a frustrating day at work, get home late, immediately sit down to dinner, and lose my temper at normal, typical childish behavior)
 - d. Creatively "pray and plan", at a later, un emotional time, some specifics on what I can do about that specific situation: e.g.: NOTE: Accountability is IMPORTANT!!
 - i. Sit in the car for a couple of minutes before coming in on those days.
 - ii. Use that time to surrender my frustration /bad attitude to God, and ask Him for patience (write out a prayer ahead of time!)
 - iii. Confess to my wife (and kids!) that I'm not in the best possible mood when I come home and ask (ahead of time!) their forgiveness and forbearance.
 - iv. Ask them to help me identify (when it first starts to happen!) when I start getting frustrated or irritated at the dinner table.
 - v. Ask them to pray w/ me when those times first come up that God would change my attitude.
 - e. Lay the whole plan out before a mentor
 - i. ahead of time for his counsel, and then
 - ii. at various times while I am employing it for joint feed-back & improvement.