

FIVE SIMPLE, ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS WE SHOULD ASK OF EVERY TEXT <https://daveparksblog.com/2022/04/28/five-simple-essential-questions-to-ask-of-every-text/>

“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law!” ~Psalm 119.18

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” ~Psalm 119.103

“Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.

I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.” ~Psalm 119.161-162

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your Name, O LORD, God of hosts.” ~Jeremiah 15.16

“Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, LORD!

My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word!” ~Mary Ann Lathbury

A personal testimony...

I have been reading the Scriptures through – inclusively, comprehensively, systematically, repeatedly – since I was 16 years old. I started my first read-through of the Bible as a New Year’s Resolution early in the morning of New Year’s Day, 1/1/1967. A group of us young people from our church had been at a New Year’s Eve get-together. New Year’s Eve was on a Saturday night. After coming home in the early hours of Sunday morning, New Year’s Day, I resolved I was going to read the Bible through that year. I did. I read the New Testament first. I still have that Bible; I wrote down the date 1-1-67 over Matthew. At the end of Revelation, I wrote 4-28-67. Over Genesis, chapter 1, I wrote 4-29-67. Then I concluded the Old Testament with the date 12-5-67.

Over the next few years, I developed the habit, discipline, and spiritual exercise of reading the Scriptures through at least once every year. This continued for probably the next ten years. After I was married and we had children, I continued the spiritual exercise of reading the Scriptures through – inclusively, comprehensively, systematically, repeatedly – though it took me longer to do so. I am still following the same practice, but it will take me three to three-and-a-half years to read the Scriptures through.

To be honest, in the beginning, I did read through the pages and books of the Bible just for the content. I just wanted to read the words over and over and familiarize myself with the words. I wanted to know what was in the Bible, remember where it was, be able to refer back to it, and become more familiar with how the different parts and words of the Bible related to each other. Then I began to do extensive ‘cross-referencing,’ making notes of where related Scriptures were found elsewhere in the Scriptures.

However, as the years went on, I increasingly began to hunger more and more to truly understand the message of God in His Word. I distinctly remember one of these times I was beginning again to read through the Scriptures. *I had a heavy conviction on my heart that I wanted to know God Himself more personally and deeply. I was also convinced that God wants to be known and reveals Himself in His Word.* **This was my confession: “I am just a plain man seeking God...”** -- and I began reading in Genesis 1 with that prayer and quest in my heart.

So, I began to develop these questions to ‘ask the text’ as I read the words. Really, I knew that I was asking these questions of the Holy Spirit since He is the ultimate Author of the inspired Scriptures. I have thought, prayed, and asked these questions for years in my own mind and heart. Now, I want to share with you – with the prayer to God that He will use them for your encouragement and edification. **“Do you understand what you are reading?” ~Acts 8.30**

1 – QUESTION #1 / What do the words say?

- **Exercise: Reading [w/Praying & Meditating]**
- **Read 1 Corinthians 2.1-14 – *The Holy Spirit, being God, knows the mind of God ... and He reveals the wisdom, wonders, and depths of the mind of God to us in the Scriptures ... using***

human words that we know, recognize, and understand to communicate and translate what God thinks and says into words of human language!

1. Words mean things. Words are visible, tangible, material ‘clothes’ for invisible, intangible, immaterial thoughts...
2. Look for the theme, main point, over-arching ‘message’ of the passage you are reading: *Lead* words & *follow* words / *Primary* words & *subordinate* words / *Main* words & *support* words / *Repeated* words
3. Pay special attention to:
 - **Verbs [action words]:** they are the “directors” of the action that is either being performed or is commanded/expected of you
 - **Direction words:** “like” / “therefore” / “just as” / etc – these words will connect you with what has been said before – will serve as a ground or premise for what follows
 - **Connector words:** “and” / “but” will help serve to link ideas, or compare and contrast ideas
 - **Purpose words:** “because” / “for” / “that” / “so that” / “for this reason” – these words will tell us why something has been said
 - **Prepositions:** words that show the relations of words with other words...

2 – QUESTION #2 / What do the words mean?

- **Exercise: Understanding / Interpretation**
 - **Read Acts 8.26-35 [always look for the ‘Christ Key’]**
 - **Jesus Christ Himself is the Key to unlocking all the Scriptures.**
 - **In some way, all the Scriptures speak of Him. Matthew 5.17-18; John 5.39-40; Luke 24.27, 32, 44-45**
1. NOTE: we are not asking “What do the words mean ‘to me’ or ‘to you’?” but rather “What do the words mean ‘to God’?” because God says what HE means, and HE means what HE says – and that’s the meaning we must seek [see 2 Peter 1.19-21]
 2. Pray & ask God for His ***Divine Authorial Intent***
 3. Hermeneutics & Exegesis
 - **Hermeneutics** = the practical tools you use to ‘unpack’ the intended meaning of a text you are reading. When the verb ‘*hermeneuo*’ is used in the NT, it is translated in KJV as ‘*being interpreted, by interpretation.*’ [In ESV, it is simply ‘*meaning,*’ or ‘*which means.*’ The noun is translated ‘*interpretation*’ [1 Corinthians 12.10; 14.26]
 - **Exegesis** = from two words: ‘*ex*’ [out] and ‘*ago*’ [to lead]. The verb is used 13 times in NT, for example John 10.3. So, ‘exegesis’ is ‘leading the truth, meaning, interpretation, and message out of the text through carefully and diligently applied hermeneutics.
 4. **Contextual ‘re-creation’:** Over the years, I have studied and applied myself to employ what I call ‘contextual re-creation.’ By that, I mean to re-create the original context in my own mind and understanding as closely and exactly as I can... by asking questions and searching for the answers in the contexts...
 - **who:** who humanly-authored the words [assuming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit]?
 - **when:** what ‘time’ is it in history when this Scripture was written? ...when is this on the timeline of history & especially in relation to the coming of Christ into the world [OT] or its relationship with the Gospel of Christ?
 - **where:** what is the geographical location [coordinates] of this Scripture? ...and how does the geographical context of this text coordinate with its historical timeline context?
 - **what:** what is the main theme, subject, purpose of the message being delivered?
 - **why:** what are the events, circumstances, situations that are going on when this Scripture was written? ...what occasioned, necessitated the writing of this message by God?
 - historical, political, social, personal, religious, covenant,

- **how:** what human actions is God responding to? ...and what human actions and responses is God requiring?
5. **Linguistics & Logic:** These are two primary tools to use to understand and interpret the mind and meaning of God in the Scriptures.
- **Linguistics** – we must pay attention to the words and study the words. **Remember 1 Corinthians 2.12-13.**
 - What do they mean?
 - Why does the Holy Spirit choose to use this word and these words?
 - How are the words put together in this context?
 - What are the thoughts and thought processes that are in the mind of God and communicated to the recipients of the message by these words?
 - **Logic** – again, assuming the words are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and delivered through the human author, and express the very mind of God, then what is the logic that God is using?
 - What is His main point?
 - What does He say to support His main point?
 - What are His declared truths?
 - What are His reasons?
 - What are His conclusions?
 - What is He revealing that we should know and believe, requiring that we should do?
6. **Genre** [what kind of writing is it?]: The lists and classifications of genre vary widely—but these are the most prominent and common:
- History/Narrative
 - Prophecy
 - Apocalyptic
 - Wisdom
 - Poetry
 - Gospel
 - Epistle
7. **Intertextuality:** How does this Scripture relate to other texts—in this book and in the whole storyline of Scripture/Redemptive History of Creation / Fall / Redemption / New Creation?
8. **Good Study Bible:** a good Study Bible will give you loads of introductory, background, contextual, and textual insights to help you gain a deeper understanding and interpretation of what you are reading.

3 – QUESTION #3 / What will it look like when I do the words of this text?

- **Exercise: Application**
 - **Read 1 Thessalonians 2.13 & Acts 1.1**
1. What both of these sample Scriptures demonstrate is that The Word of God is NEVER FYI-only or just cerebral or academic only. **God's Word is given, purposed, and designed to be transformed into obedient human conduct!**
2. **1 Thessalonians 2.13: "...the Word of God, which is at work in you believers."** Also, in **chapter 1.5: "...because our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."** When the Word of God is read and believed, proclaimed and received, the Holy Spirit quickens the hearer with faith and life and radical transformation that conforms to the will of God prescribed by the words.
- a. **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ / Romans 10.17**
 - b. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them / Ephesians 2.10**

3. **Acts 1.1: "...I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach..."** Jesus did not come ONLY to teach OR ONLY to do, but to both teach and do. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of that Kingdom, and then He did everything He did to demonstrate its presence and to fulfill all its truths.
4. So must we. When we are saved and trust Christ as our Savior and Lord, we will evidence our faith by our works that are produced by a transformed life.
 - a. **Luke 6.46: Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?**
5. Here are just a few expressions the application of the text may produce in our faith and conduct – ALL of these, EVERY ONE of these demands a practical response:
 - a. an occasion to praise and worship God
 - b. a command to obey
 - c. a sin to confess or avoid
 - d. an example to emulate and follow
 - e. a prayer to pray
 - f. an exhortation or admonition
 - g. an encouragement or comfort
 - h. a commendation or affirmation
 - i. a warning or rebuke

4 – QUESTION #4 / Am I doing what this text teaches?

- **Exercise: Implementation**
 - **Read James 1.22-25**
1. This is kind of a reiteration and reinforcement of the previous point: *Application*. The only correct application of any Scripture is its prescribed *Implementation*.
 2. We can't be hearers of the Word of God only and be obedient to the Word of God. It is never enough only to *know* what the Word of God says if you do not *do* what the Word of God says.
 3. The very best translation of the Word of God is the Holy Spirit's translation into human conduct.
 4. God ALWAYS tells us what He wants us *to know* so we can know what He wants us *to do*.
 5. We have to wonder how often God may 'complain' about us like He did those who came to Ezekiel: **"And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it ... for they hear what you say, but they will not do it..."** / Ezekiel 33.30-33

5 – QUESTION #5 / If I am not..., when am I going to start?

- **Exercise: Obedience**
 - **Read 2 Timothy 3.14-17**
1. **NOTE: the question is NOT "If I am not, WHY not?" because there is NO excuse, reason, or justification for disobedience; but rather "WHEN am I going to repent and start obeying?"**
 2. God's Word is suited, skilled, and sufficient to completely outfit and equip us for every action and activity God assigns for us to do.

And so, I would encourage you to read God's Word...

- **Continuously:** over and over again—both portions and in whole
- **Consistently:** regularly, daily
- **Contiguously:** both canonically and especially chronologically—making the connections in the one storyline of the Bible
- **Contextually:** see Question #3 above
- **Contemplatively:** reverently and humbly pray & meditate