

### The Idea

**The Bible is God’s revelation of himself and his work in redemptive history. Our personal study of Scripture reveals this great God and how we are to respond to Him.** The Bible is not an instruction manual nor a “how-to” book nor a magic spell to make us feel good. The Bible is not about us. The Bible is about God and the salvation he provides in the work of his Son, Jesus Christ.

### The Tools

- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Consistently spend time in personal study of Scripture.
  - Don’t read to check off a box. Rather, read in order to build the most important relationship: knowing God your Father and Jesus the Son through the Holy Spirit.
  - As much as possible, read through entire books in the Bible instead of jumping around.
  - Read through the entire Bible from cover to cover.
- ✓ Listen regularly to good expository teaching.
- ✓ Use helpful tools for interpretation.
  - Identify the literary genre of a passage/book (prophecy, poetry, narrative, apocalyptic, gospel, epistle).
  - Read and understand a passage of Scripture in its context.
  - Find the structure of a passage that will lead you to a main emphasis/idea.
  - Because the Bible is God’s revelation of himself and his work in redemptive history, work out how your study relates to the gospel—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  - Identify any outside “frameworks” that you are bringing to a passage that would lead you to a skewed understanding.

For resources on tools to study the Bible (especially with an eye toward teaching it to others), check out the Charles Simeon Trust website at [www.simeontrust.org](http://www.simeontrust.org).

For resources on reading the Bible with another person, check out the One-to-One Bible Reading website at [www.reading121.org](http://www.reading121.org).

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### The Idea

We must understand the context in order to see how the original audience understood the text. When we understand how the original audience understood a text, then we can understand how it applies to us today.

### The Strategies to Find Context

- ✓ Read the passage and chapter on both sides of your text. Read the entire book. This is *literary context*. The original audience read it as a whole book, so should we.
- ✓ Study the history of the original audience. Much of this can be found within the book itself (or in other biblical books from the same historical period). This is *historical context*. The original audience lived in a different time in history; so we must understand how it would have been understood by the original audience (to them/then), so we can understand the right application to us/now.
- ✓ Ask, “Why is *this text here*?” Why is it in this place, in this chapter, in this book?
- ✓ Ask, “How does the context inform my understanding of this text?”

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## **Reading the Word in Its Context**

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### **The Idea**

The structure (or organization) of a text will reveal an emphasis. That emphasis will help to discern the main idea and lead to application.

### **The Strategies** to Find Structure

- ✓ Read and re-read; read out loud.
- ✓ Identify repeated words/phrases and key words/phrases.
- ✓ Know your text type (discourse/speech, narrative, poetry).
  - Discourse: Organized by logic. Identify grammar, verb tense, transitional words.
  - Narrative: Organized by plot. Identify characters, scenes, plot analysis.
  - Poetry: Organized by stanza. Identify imagery, transitions, stanza/parallelism.
- ✓ Ask, “How is this text organized? What are the parts?”
- ✓ Ask, “How do the parts fit together?”
- ✓ Ask, “What emphasis does the structure reveal?”

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## **Reading the Word in Its Structure**

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### The Idea

If the Bible is all about God's redemptive plan as revealed in Jesus Christ, then we must see how our text legitimately connects to the saving gospel message so we know how to live as Christians.

### The Strategies to See Jesus Christ

- ✓ Know where your text falls on the *redemptive historical timeline*.
- ✓ Follow up *themes* in your text that relate to the person and work of Christ.
- ✓ If your text is a *prophecy or promise*, determine the *fulfillment* in Christ.
- ✓ Follow up where your Old Testament text has been *quoted in the New Testament*. (Cross references in the Bible margins are helpful for this.)
- ✓ Look for imagery that relates to the person and work of Christ.
- ✓ Sometimes the gospel message is simply *in the text itself!*

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## **Reading the Word in Light of Jesus Christ**

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