

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

Lesson 29 – Studying the Bible (Teacher's Lesson)

Opening: Answer the opening question. Explain that most people do not like to study, studying the Bible is personally gratifying and also has eternal value.

Study Notes:

2 Timothy 2:15

Christians are ordered to correctly interpret the Word of God. This requires a more detailed study.

1 Corinthians 8

What does it say? – The student's summaries of this passage will vary, but should include the fact that the passage is speaking about meat sacrificed to idols. It seems that Paul (the writer) is addressing a matter or responding to a question from the Corinthian church (the recipients) about whether eating meat is appropriate for Christians. It seems like some of the believers did not have a problem with this, while others considered it sin. Paul indicated that he would not be a stumbling block to those who were weaker in their faith regarding the matter.

What did it mean? – Paul used his example to instruct the Corinthian believers not to put obstacles in the way of another person with Christ. Some believers did not consider eating meat sacrificed to an idol to be sin. They should not use their freedom in this “gray” moral area to tempt another to go against their own conscience and commit an act that they believed was sinful.

What does it mean? – The principle here appears to be that Christians should not persuade others to take an action that they cannot do in good conscience, even if it is a matter of moral indifference to us. This should only apply to actions that are genuinely areas of moral indifference, not simply those that we wish were. The Bible clearly indicates that there is nothing sinful about food. On the contrary, adultery (for example) is clearly an immoral action (Exodus 20:14), and cannot be done, in good conscience, by any Christian. Some examples of indifferent moral areas may be: worship styles, clothing, certain recreational activities, food, and drink.

Summary: Proper interpretation of the Bible depends on spiritual preparation and careful study.

Application: Complete your own personal study of each passage assigned in the student lesson. Encourage students to take the assigned passages (or at least one of them) and

apply the same process of interpreting each one in their own words. They will have some questions about the content where they will find the answers. Consider collecting some resources (like good Study Bibles, Bible Dictionaries, Concordances, and Bible Handbooks) that could belong to your church and be loaned to individuals as they work on their own personal study of the Bible.

**** Special – Guidelines for Proper Biblical Interpretation ****

Students can feel confused about how to study the Bible for themselves. The main point is to try to do the best they can, but not every interpretation is equally good. Below are some guidelines for good interpretation.

1. The meaning of a passage is driven by the intent of the original author. To correctly understand the meaning of a passage we must know what was said to the original audience. Even though we can get the meaning by interpreting a passage based on our own situation, the meaning of a passage cannot be separated from its original context.

2. A passage can never mean what it never meant. This means that not only our interpretation, but our application of the Bible passage to our lives must be comparable, if not the same as, the application intended by the original author.

These are simply two guidelines for proper Biblical interpretation. If you a more complete analysis of this matter, read How to Study the Bible For All Its Worth by Gordon D. Fee y Douglas Stuart.

Lesson 29 – Studying the Bible

A Deeper Understanding

Which class was the easiest for you in school? Which was the most difficult?

As we learned last week, the most important step in studying the Bible is spiritual preparation. However, God can use our spiritual preparation more effectively when we also practice good Bible study habits. Read Paul’s advice to his young protégé, Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:15.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

What it says is that understanding and correctly interpreting God’s Word is a process that requires diligence, patience, and study, but the rewards are great.

Asking the Right Questions

To understand the biblical message of a given passage, a good interpreter will ask and answer three questions:

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audiences?
3. What does this passage mean for us today?

To see how this works, we are going to take a passage as an example. We will study chapter 8 of 1 Corinthians.

What Does it Say?

Begin with prayer and then read the entire chapter in one sitting. It is best to read the passage in several different translations, to get the different possible meanings or interpretations. If you have a study Bible, do not check your notes just yet. Permit the Spirit to work as you absorb the passage in its entirety. If you have any questions or observations, write them in the space below.

Then, in one or two sentences try to sum up the passage in your own words. Write this in the space below.

What Did it Mean?

Occasionally, the meaning of a given passage is very direct. Other times, we must search for it. A good Study Bible can help here. For example, a good Bible Handbook or a good Study Bible would tell you that the first century city of Corinth was well known for its immorality and its many temples to many different types of gods. Many times the meat was sacrificed to these idols and later sold in the market. Also, we can see in the introduction of the book, that 1 Corinthians was a letter written by Paul to the Christians in the city of Corinth (1:1-2). With this in mind, note below your thoughts about what this passage meant to its original audience.

What Does it Mean?

In Corinth in the first century, the problem of meat sacrificed to idols was very real to them. For us, it doesn't exist. What then does this passage mean for us? This is called *application*. Do not try to fit the Bible into our current circumstances today. Try to understand the principle behind the original meaning and apply it to today. In the space below, summarize what you think this text means for us today.

During this week, try this same process for yourself on a few other passages. Use the attached pages to record the results of your study. Here are three passages that require a bit of thought, but should not be too difficult.

- Matthew 13:24-30
- Romans 3:21-30
- Ephesians 5:21-33

Scripture to memorize:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Matthew 13:24-30

1. What does it say?

2. What did it mean?

3. What does it mean?

Romans 3:21-30

1. What does it say?

2. What did it mean?

3. What does it mean?

Ephesians 5:21-33

1. What does it say?

2. What did it mean?

3. What does it mean?