

Methods for Bible Study

Understanding Bible Interpretation

Part 2

— specific methods for Bible study —

Course MB2 **Study Guide**

(complete – all materials included)

*An introductory “primer”
on the study of the Word of God,
with a focus on studying, interpreting,
understanding, living, and teaching the Scriptures
for the joy of the soul and unto the Glory of God*

Instructions for this course

The *reading material* for this course is self-contained in this booklet, together with the study questions. You will only need your Bible and this study guide.

Before each lesson: pray for God to give a teachable heart and understanding.



Begin each lesson by reading lesson text in this booklet.



Fill in your name, student ID, and date on the front cover.
Answer the questions at the end of each chapter.
Use any standard notepaper (or answer sheets if provided).
*Use **the required answer sheet format**, putting your name and course information on each sheet (sample on page 2).*
Try to be as clear and concise as possible.
Please do not rush! Meditate on what God wants you to learn.
Don't go to the next question until completing the current one.

If, and only if, you are taking the course as correspondence study (with written feedback from others):

After completing all the lessons 1 to 10, send your answers to your course coordinator, and request the next course.

Send only the answer sheets, not this Study Guide.

All sent answers are handled confidentially.

Label the envelope's lower left with: student, course, and lesson numbers.



Four months are allotted for course completion. Extensions may be granted upon request.



Your answers are returned to you after review.
Keep materials and returned answers together for future reference.

Methods for Bible Study

Understanding Bible Interpretation, Part 2

— *specific methods for Bible study* —

Contents

	<u>page</u>
Preface	3
Lesson 1 Review of the First Course	4
Lesson 2 Observation Questions	9
Lesson 3 Interpretive Questions	14
Lesson 4 Summarizing the Passage.....	17
Lesson 5 The Context: Historical Setting.....	20
Lesson 6 The Context: Literary Context	23
Lesson 7 Cross References	27
Lesson 8 The Big Picture.....	31
Lesson 9 Word Study	35
Lesson 10 Bible Study Tools.....	39
 <i>Appendices</i>	
1. Outline of <i>Ephesians</i>	43
2. Concordance Sample.....	44
3. Other courses from Mount Zion.....	<i>inside back cover</i>
4. Course overview	<i>back cover</i>

Continued thanksgiving...

The older I get, the more aware I become of my own frailty and utter sinfulness. How true are the words penned by Robert Robinson in 1758, “Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love...” So it is with great thanks that I wish to dedicate this little tool to the great God and King who is our “fount of every blessing!”

One of those many blessings have come in the form of various churches that I have worked with over the years in “interim” teaching-equipping capacities while an Elder based out of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. What a strange and unique joy these last several years, to be able to come along side His body—diverse and varied, broken, and yet beautiful each in their own way as God’s grace is poured out into them and through them. To preach and shepherd alongside the shepherds of these bodies in this capacity has been a merciful grace indeed. I dedicate this study guide to Faith Baptist Church, Grace Church Richfield, Grace Community Fellowship, Woodland Hills Bible Church, Fellowship Bible Church, Community Baptist Church of Fargo, and of course to our home church and to the Elders of Bethlehem Baptist. I hold all of these men in high regard.

*A pleasure to serve indeed!
Paul Dreblow – August 2003*

“Thou will make known to me the path of life, in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand there are pleasures forever!”

—Psalm 16:11

Copyright 2003 Chapel Library. Printed in the USA by Chapel Library.
The King James Version of the Bible is used in all Scripture quotations.
This course is written by Paul Dreblow, elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, who has traveled extensively in the third world. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material in any form, provided:

1. the material is not charged for, and
2. this copyright notice and all the text on this page are included.

For **conservative literature** from prior centuries, contact
Chapel Library • 2603 W. Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA
Phone: (850) 438-6666 • Fax: (850) 438-0227
chapel@mountzion.org • www.mountzion.org

For additional copies of this or other conservative **Bible study courses**, contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the address on the back cover. MZBI courses may be downloaded worldwide without charge from
www.mountzion.org

Preface

Welcome to this course on *biblical interpretation and Bible study methods*—Part Two. We hope to bring glory to God by encouraging and equipping the follower of Jesus Christ to study God’s Word for himself. Building upon the foundation of Course MB1, which dealt with overall hermeneutical principles, this course deals specifically with several Bible study methods (or tools for exegetical study). The goal is still the same: to better equip God’s people for spiritual growth by laying a foundation of a passion for God’s Word. Jeremiah expressed it thusly, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer 15:16). Again in Deuteronomy 32:47a (Moses speaking in reference to God’s Word or “Law”), “For it is not a vain thing for you; because *it is your life*: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land...”

As some in church history have sought to declare, the Scriptures must have the first and last word on any given subject. The joyful obedience of the Saints goes hand in hand with a clear and correct Word proclaimed. The desire here is for the Word of God to be for us a greater source of joy, treasure, and delight as we walk with God in obedience (Psa 19:7-11; 119:32, 46-47).

The continued prayer is for this tool to be used for the Glory of our God and King in the building up and equipping of His Church (the glorious Bride of Christ), and the in-gathering of God’s elect from the four corners of the earth!

Note: a quotation from the Scriptures is included at the beginning of each chapter for a devotional meditation as you enter into the topic at hand.

Lesson 1 Review of the First Course

*“For all those things hath Mine hand made,
and all those things have been, saith the LORD:
but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor
and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*

—Isaiah 66:2

As we begin, it is good to lay a foundation from the first course in basic hermeneutical principles. Remember, first of all, that *hermeneutics* means “interpretation.” It is the process whereby we understand the meaning intended by the author. Here are the primary points we covered in part one of the course.

1. We looked at the necessity of Bible Study and a sound hermeneutical (interpretive) approach to our task. We saw the importance of recognizing the authority of Scripture, and along with this, several corollary truths regarding inerrancy, clarity, and the trustworthiness of the Biblical text in general. The infallibility of the Scriptures is vital to our understanding of the text. Infallibility means that the Bible cannot err in all matters of faith, practice, science, and history about which it speaks. (This is stronger than “inerrancy,” which means that the Bible was without error in the original autographs.)
2. Next we looked at several basic “requirements” of the serious Bible study student. This included the need to be born again, belief in the authority of Scripture, common sense, and awareness of presuppositions.

By “presupposition” we are referring to our own prior ideas, concepts, or biases that each of us carries into study of the text which will affect our ability to accurately interpret the text. Presuppositions include our worldview, our cultural perspective, and the perspectives we gain by experience and background. In order to understand the au-

thor's true meaning (or ultimately God's meaning, 2Ti 3:16-17), the biblical words demand our *impartial* study. Our study must include an awareness of our own presuppositions and their removal where necessary.

3. Next we explored the question of "Why is accurate interpretation necessary?" The goal here was to help us understand and increase our motivation towards "rightly dividing the Word of truth." The need everywhere is for Berean-like people (Act 17:11) who study the Bible for themselves, and as a result can speak and teach confidentially with authority from the Word of God. Unless we are able to accurately interpret what the Bible says, we can never convey the truth as God intended it to be understood.
4. We then looked at several issues related to the text of Scripture, including its unity and trustworthiness. We also looked at modern day translation theory. We compared and contrasted the three major translation styles: Literal, Dynamic Equivalent, and Paraphrase (which is not so much a translation as an interpretation in the writer's own words). We concluded that serious bible study is best undertaken using translations that follow the literal translation style, such as the King James, the New American Standard, or the New King James Versions.
5. The last major section dealt with the primary goal of the study: to arrive at the author's intended meaning. We laid out a foundation for the LGH (Literal, Grammatical, Historical) interpretive framework. The goal of the LGH method is *to get at the author's intended meaning*.

We saw that the LGH method utilizes four perspectives to arrive at the clearest understanding of the author's meaning:

- a. *Context*. The perspective of context tells us that the words are to be taken literally *according to their context*. Using the LGH method would mean that the words refer to exactly the idea the author intended to communicate, as if he were taking them literally according to normal word usage *in context*.

- b. *Literal meanings of words.* The perspective of *literal* tells us that the words should carry their meaning from the normal use of language at the time, and not from some other imposed perspective. Words mean what they mean in the normal use of the words themselves; they do not carry some imagined or imposed meaning not intended by the author.
 - c. *Grammar.* The perspective of *grammar* tells us that the parts of speech of the language employed (mood, verb tense, etc.) to carry the sense of the words used. We identify who is doing the action by the *subject*, what action by the *verb*, and who receives the action by the *direct object*, etc. We identify a command vs. a question, a polite request vs. a statement of fact, etc. Grammar (and related syntax) becomes especially important when studying the epistles (New Testament letters) as we are often confronted with rather long, extended discourse therein.
 - d. *History.* The perspective of *history* tells us the situation in which the author lived. Much of what the author refers to is explained by understanding the history and culture of the times. To understand the meaning, we have to understand the cultural frame of reference of the author in his own time of writing.
6. Finally, we closed with a short section covering four more foundational principles for studying and interpreting the Scriptures.
- a. *We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.* We interpret the part in view of the whole, and the whole in view of the part. Understanding the Bible as a unified whole means that when we come to a difficult text, we seek to understand that text in light of other, related texts and the entirety (hence the “whole”) of Scripture. Another way to look at this is to say we want to strive to interpret that which is *implicit* (or not clearly stated) by that which is clearly or explicitly stated elsewhere in Scripture.
 - b. *Scripture presents a unified “picture.”* Scripture will not contradict Scripture. This principle speaks for itself, and it is related to the above principle. Based upon the fact that God is perfect and cannot sin or deceive, we conclude that

His written revelation is incapable of the same. That is to say there can be *no real contradiction*, though at times it may seem there is an apparent contradiction. The Bible is an amazingly unified message with a common thematic thread: the revelation of God's glory in creation and redemptive history. The message remains an amazingly consistent unified whole.

Therefore, in the event that we end up with two seemingly contradictory statements or interpretive conclusions, we acknowledge the problem to be with the interpreter and not the author—who is ultimately God! Tensions will exist in Scripture. We do not want to fail to acknowledge there are some doctrinal assertions that will forever remain a mystery in terms of our ability to fully or satisfactorily explain. Since we, mere finite mortals, are dealing with an infinitely wise, holy and perfect God, this is to be expected (Isa 55:8-9).

- c. *Scripture has come to us in “progressive” stages.* We are referring to the fact that the Word of God came to us originally over the course of several centuries of God's working out of history. Revelation and redemptive history as revealed in the Scriptures move along a historical framework. Covering a period of 1,500 to 1,600 years (more if we include references to the onset of creation), the Bible comes to us as a unified message, developed out of the successive stages of history as God reveals the outworking of the purpose of His will (Eph 1:11).
- d. *Suffering is also an interpretive framework.* Suffering as an interpretive framework is significant. As Martin Luther said, “The devil will afflict you, will make a real [theological] doctor out of you, and will teach you by his temptations to seek and to love God's Word.” Thus it is often quite true that the best learning and loving (interpreting) of the Word often comes in the midst of trials and tribulation.

Study Questions: Lesson 1

If possible, review the key points of the first course using your own Part One booklet (course MB1).

1. Look back over the six areas outlined above from the first course. Write out any specific questions raised.

Note: Some of your questions may be answered in the material in this course. Make note of these and keep your eyes open!

2. Review the four basic requirements of the serious bible study student. What are they?

Very Important Note: We ask you to always **use your own words** in your answers. The answers to many questions are found in the reading material, but please **do not** merely quote the reading text for your answer. Rather, read what the text says, think about the meaning of what it says, and summarize its meaning in your own words for your answer. In this way, you will learn much more than simply a “search/find/quote” method for answering the questions.

3. a. What are “presuppositions”?
b. Why can they be a real hindrance to accurate interpretation?
4. a. What are the three major translation styles?
b. Which translation style is recommended for use in serious Bible study?
5. a. Briefly, describe the LGH method of interpretation.
b. What is the goal of the LGH bible interpretation method in relationship to the author?
6. List the four principles mentioned that are foundational to studying God’s Word.

Lesson 2 Observation Questions

*“The works of the LORD are great,
sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.”*

—Psalm 111:2

God has given us the mind and ability to ponder and think about Him (Psa 111:2). He has called us to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). In order to do this, it is important to start with the most basic of *observation questions*.

Observation questions are simple fact-gathering questions you can ask of the text. Think of yourself as a surgeon who wants to know every detail of every part of the body he is about to operate on. In this case you are about to “operate” on the Word of the Living God! Those who will eventually teach the Word know that God demands a higher accountability from them (Jam 3:1).

The following questions are basic to human inquiry and yet vital to the interpretive task. Learn to begin at the beginning by asking these questions. Very soon you will find that your mind is trained to do this naturally!

The “5W-H” Core Observational Questions

The “5W-H” questions are the familiar “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how.” These are the type of questions we normally ask whenever confronted with a new situation. They are fact-gathering questions that tell us what we need to know about the subject at hand.

Some of these questions may be more or less important depending upon the particular type of biblical material being studied. The Bible contains several types of material (or “genre”), including historical narration, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, epistles (letters), etc. Some of the observation questions will be different depending upon which type is being studied.

1. *Who?*

Here we first want to know **who is speaking** or writing.

Also, **who is being spoken** or written to? Who the speaker’s audience is can affect our understanding of certain words

and phrases. This impacts both our interpretation (the meaning of the words) and application to life.

Regarding application, you will need to ask as well, “to **whom** are you addressing your teaching?”; i.e., how will they understand what is being said?

2. *What?*

Here we are asking **what** topic is being described or taught by the author-speaker?

What is the problem being addressed?

What is the question being answered?

In **what** larger context is this text taking place?

What is the perspective of the author and audience being addressed?

For narrative / historical texts, **what** is happening in the story; what events are taking place; and what has occurred before and what comes afterwards?

3. *Where?*

Where is the action taking place?

Where has the author moved from in his description of events, situations etc.?

Where are you reading in the “flow” of events (especially if dealing with narrative material)?

Where does this particular revelation fit into the overall progressive development of the Word of God?

4. *Why?*

Why was this text written?

Why is it included here at this point in the overall revelation of God or in this particular context of the book/letter etc.?

Why are things stated the way they are? This will get at questions like, why is Paul giving a command here versus making a statement of fact; why does the mood change here from what it was before, etc.

Why is the text being addressed to this individual/group at this time?

On a larger scale we might ask, “**Why** is the author (and God!) concerned about this problem or situation?”

The latter should give us clues for application as to **why** we should be concerned and how this text should be applied.

5. *When?*

When was this text written and what difference might that make in how we understand it?

When do the specific events mentioned in this text take place? Does the author’s time frame correspond directly with the event therein?

When will the events described take place; is time really a factor in this text?

The question of “**when**” can even help us to get at some more of the detailed issues of grammar and syntax having to do with timing and the intended duration of specific commands, etc. In other words, “when” may help us to address questions like; “is this a command of enduring action (intended to apply to all generations into the future) or a one time (culturally specific) command or event?”

6. *How?*

While this question may not be as important as others, it might help you in asking something from the text that you may have overlooked in the other questions. **How** questions can be related to most of the other questions.

For example...

How did Israel get from here to here in this text?

How did Moses receive the 10 commandments?

How did the crowd react when Jesus cast out the demon?
Related to application one might ask:

How will my audience understand this particular teaching?

How might I need to clarify it?

What to look for

Observation questions should become more than simply asking *who/what/where/when/why/how* only once for each verse. We

may draw out dozens of observations from just one verse. We may ask 20 different “what” questions, for example.

The questions we ask will be derived from the passage itself, by carefully observing patterns, similarities, and contrasts. The following are some of the key things to look for in any passage. Those items that are the most helpful will vary depending on the passage itself.

- key words (*what are they, why are they used*)
- key subjects (*what people, places, topics; how are they connected*)
- commands (*why given, to whom, exactly what is expected*)
- warnings, repeated words or phrases
- lists of things
- comparisons (*things that are similar*)
- contrasts (*things that are different*)
- questions asked
- answers given
- anything unusual or unexpected

Keep in mind

Asking these questions will lay a foundation for further study of the text. These questions will also help you in determining and defining the *context* (to be considered in later lessons).

These questions will serve as good introductory questions in leading a Bible study through any given passage of Scripture.

Not all questions will necessarily be answered by every text or passage, but all *should be asked*.

What if you don't ask these questions? Failure to apply these basic questions will result in poor exegetical conclusions (the explanation resulting from the study) and, therefore, poor interpretation, because our own *presuppositions* will tend to find their way into the text (2Pe 3:16). We will make assumptions based on our own particular experience, perspective, and understanding. These will influence what we think the author is saying—to the degree we do not ask probing and thorough observation questions *before* we come to any conclusions!

Study Questions: Lesson 2

Exercise on observations

1. Begin by taking a pen or pencil in your hand, and hold it in place for a moment. Examine it carefully.
Write down **five details** that you notice about the instrument (these are “observations”).
Now take your eyes off for a moment and rest.
Then look again; write down **five new details** about the same pen in hand. Do this again until you have 15 to 20 individual, *non-repeated* observations.
Not only will you know more about the pen or pencil you hold than you care to, you will be on your way to practicing the patient, reverent *observation* necessary for studying and communicating the written Word of God!¹
2. When first beginning a study of an entire book of the Bible (a “book study”), it is often helpful to go through each chapter, writing notes/thoughts/questions by way of observation as they come to mind. Do this for the book of **Philippians**. Read one chapter at a time, making five or six one line observations for each chapter as they come to you.

Matthew 10:32-39

Go through Matthew 10:32-39 and ask each of the “5W-H” questions. Do this thoroughly (remember the “pen” and your earlier observations)!

3. WHO *Who* is Jesus Speaking to?
4. WHAT
 - a. *What* is being discussed?
 - b. *What* larger context is being dealt with?

After doing these first two questions, check your answers with the sample answers given on the next page.

¹ It is important to approach the text of Scripture like no other. When we open the Word of God, whether it be to look up a phrase, check on a reference, or to do in-depth study, what is our demeanor or attitude toward the text? May God help us to be like the Psalmist who said, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting [restoring] the soul...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Psa 19:7a, 9b).

Answer the following on your own.

5. WHY

- a. *Why* is the author saying this here and now?
- b. *Why* is this (:32-39) stated this way in this context?
- c. *Why* does this text seem to disagree with another text (if it does)? [*Compare verse 34 to John 14:27.*]

6. WHEN

- a. *When* (at what point in time) is the speaker speaking?
- b. *When* am I supposed to apply this (i.e., is there a sequence of events being described or actions being called for)?

7. HOW

- a. *How* is this text to be understood and applied?
- b. *How* would the first listeners/audience have understood this?
- c. *How* did this situation arise?
You may also ask general how questions like: How long?, How far?, etc.

Sample Answers to questions 3 and 4

3. The disciples, then and now (see 10:1 and 11:1).
4. a. Discipleship, the cost of following Christ, the consequences within a family when the Lordship of Christ is taken seriously.
b. See vs.32 and 33 of chapter 10. The word “therefore” ties this back into the basis or “grounds” found in the preceding section beginning at verse 26 (where the prior “therefore” is found).

Lesson 3 Interpretive Questions

*“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful,
and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing
even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of
the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts
and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that
is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and
opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

—Hebrews 4:12-13

“Interpretive” questions follow on naturally from the observations we have noted. They are a natural bridge from the facts we have gathered, to the beginning of understanding what those facts mean (taken altogether).

To be clear, the student is stepping through a progressive sequence that is leading him deeper into the real meaning at each stage. It is not unlike climbing a ladder, step-by-step, into the full riches of God’s Word.

To begin with, we asked the fact-based *observation questions*, the “5W-H”: who, what, when, where, why, and how. There were answers to each of these questions, and those answers composed a set of known facts that described the passage under study. We call these facts “observations.”

Now we in turn ask “*interpretive questions*” of these answers. We look at the factual answer to the observation question, and basically ask of each one: “so, what does this mean to my understanding?”

Some interpretive questions

Some interpretive questions to ask, depending on the nature of the observation, include the following.

- What is the importance of ...
 - a given word (especially good to ask of verbs)
 - a given phrase
 - names and titles
 - dates,
 - others?
- What is the meaning of a particular word?
- Why did the writer say this?
- Why did the writer say this like this?
- What is the implication of this word, phrase, or name?

Here, then, is a summary of the steps to follow

- Make observations on the text, listing them in the “**Observations**” column (first column). Remember, *observation* is asking “who, what, where, when, why, and how,” and then noting the answers as factual “observations.” (See “What to look for” in Lesson 2 for hints about what to look for.)

- Write “**Interpretive Questions**” about your observations in the second column. Do this by asking questions about what you have observed. (See “Some interpretive questions” in this lesson for how to ask yourself interpretive questions.)
- Write the *meaning* of your observation in the “**Interpretations**” column (third column). The meaning can be derived by answering the questions you have written in the second column.

Now please turn to Matthew 6:33. Read the verse and trace the above three steps in the following example chart. (Your answer sheet should be in this same format.)

<u>Observations</u>	<u>Interpretive Questions</u>	<u>Interpretations</u>
1. The verse starts with the conjunction <i>but</i> .	1. Why does the sentence start with <i>but</i> ?	1. This verse is linked to prior verses. Read :31-32 for context.
2. Key word: <i>seek</i> .	2. What does it mean? What action does <i>seek</i> require?	2. It means to pursue or search. It is a command.
3. The verb <i>seek</i> is in the present tense.	3. What does present tense indicate?	3. I must seek <u>now</u> .
4. Note the use of the word <i>first</i> following <i>seek</i> .	4. What is the importance of <i>first</i> ?	4. Implies priority. I must seek as a <u>top priority</u> .
5. Next key word is <i>kingdom</i> .	5. What does the word <i>kingdom</i> signify?	5. It is a sovereign rule over a specific realm.
6. “ <i>Righteousness</i> ” is preceded by the personal pronoun <i>His</i> .	6. Whose righteousness is identified? To whom does <i>His</i> refer?	6. Looking back to “kingdom of God,” <i>His</i> refers to God. It is God’s righteousness.

Study Questions: Lesson 3

1. What questions do you have about the above example using Matthew 6:33?
2. Now turn to Matthew 10:32-39 again (as in Lesson 2).

On your answer sheet, make three columns, as in the chart on the next page.

Label them “Observations,” “Interpretive Questions,” and “Interpretations.”

- Make observations on the text, listing them in the “**Observations**” column (first column).
- Write “**Interpretive Questions**” about your observations in the second column.
- Write the *meaning* of your observation in the “**Interpretations**” column (third column).

Make six of your own *observations*, *interpretive questions*, and *interpretations* in the three columns on your answer sheet.

Your answer sheet should be in the following format.

<i>Matthew 10:32-39:</i> <u>Observations</u>	<u>Interpretive Questions</u>	<u>Interpretations</u>
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		
f.		

Lesson 4 Summarizing the Passage

The paragraph or section title

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

—Isaiah 55:10

Let us begin by assuming you have been asked to teach through the passage we have been working on, Matthew 10:32-39. Where do you begin? By now you have taken the time to ask the **six observation questions (5W-H)** and have a general idea of the subject matter being dealt with. After one or two more initial readings of the larger context (or preferably even the entire letter—or at least 1 or 2 chapters on either “side” of the passage under study), it can be helpful to stop and try to write out a *section title* (a summary statement or paragraph title). In the case of a Unit Analysis or Outline (to be discussed in a later lesson), you would be doing this for every major division in an entire book—just as might be done in a standard Study Bible.² Keep in mind that text divisions, verses, chapters, and topical headings are all *non-inspired later additions to the text*. So we should feel free to do our own arranging of paragraph divisions if we feel the text warrants it. (This will be covered a bit further under “Literary Context” in the next lesson.)

Six Criteria for the Paragraph or Section title

Here then are six criteria for the paragraph or section title.³

1. Keep it at approximately *10 to 14 words in length*. You do not want long sentences—though you might start there and then shorten as you reflect and ponder.
2. The paragraph title should consist of words or synonyms of *words found in the text* under consideration.

² Study Bibles are here to stay and a helpful addition in our quest to know the Word of God. One drawback that any student of the Word must keep in mind is the tendency of such bibles to do much of the Bible study we are supposed to do. In other words, if we are not careful study Bibles can actually *prevent in depth Bible Study*. It is something to think about! This is one reason why many Bible teachers prefer to keep one or two non-study bibles (with no notes, text divisions, or other study guides) handy for all serious self-study and teaching preparation. It is important to recognize that every study Bible will have its own theological bias. We must know what that bias is in order to get the best use from each study Bible. And it is vitally important to remember: the Bible is inspired, not the notes!

³ Note: special thanks to Earl Morey in his book, *Search the Scripture*, pg. 37, for his help in shaping some of these questions.

3. Focus on *key or repeated words*. Look particularly at the first and last lines of the section under consideration. This may give you clues as to the general subject matter of the unit. The title must represent the content of the entire paragraph. Be careful not to jump to a conclusion based only on part of the section.
4. The title should point to the *most important elements* of the section—be they people, places, events, commands, etc.
5. The title should *be distinctive* from the other titles in the same book or letter.
Note: this is not a hard and fast rule and at times it might be entirely appropriate to have a similar title for more than one section in a book. If the similar sections are close together, you may want to consider combining them into one unit of thought.
6. The title should stand clearly as its own succinct proposition.

Study Questions: Lesson 4

Using Matthew 10:32-39

1. What key or repeated words are found in the text?
2. What is the overall message or theme of this passage? (What is it about?)
3. Please write a paragraph title for Matthew 10:32-39:
Sample answers (make one of your own):
“Following Jesus Christ can bring division within a family,” or
“Jesus did not come to bring peace, but a sword,” or
“Not peace, but a sword”
4. Are you satisfied with the section division as it is, from vs. 32 to 39? Are there other verses on either side you might have included?

Lesson 5 The Context: Historical Setting

*“And I will delight myself in thy commandments,
which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto
thy commandments, which I have loved; and
I will meditate in thy statutes.”*

—Psalm 119:47-48

Introduction

One of the first things you will want to do after asking the initial observation and interpretive questions is to deal with the issue of *context*. When speaking of context, we are referring to both the *historical-setting context* and the *literary (written) context*. In this lesson, we will deal with the historical-setting context.

Our desire in doing biblical exegesis is to follow what has come to be known as the “literal-historical-grammatical” method of interpretation (see first course MB1, Lesson 6). Historical context deals with the middle element of the method. Broadly stated, historical context refers to that area of interpretation which involves understanding the original historical setting of the author or the events of a given text. This is significant because events occur (and authors write) in a given historical setting at a fixed time in history—even if it spans several years. Word meanings and events are to some degree conditioned by or understood in reference to their historical time period. For example, for someone to be “cool” in the 1800s meant that they might have a chill in winter and want a jacket. Telling a teenager today that you think they are “cool” might be taken very differently.

Depending on the desired purpose of the study and the intended audience, the following elements may be deemed necessary for understanding the historical context.

1. The general time period

Given that all of history is the outworking of God’s plans and purposes (Isa 46:9-10), it is important to consider extra-biblical events which may give further insight into the general outworking of history in that time period. This information helps in reminding

us that the Bible and the events recorded therein were written during a period of history; they did not occur in a vacuum. God was bringing about the purpose of His will (Eph 1:11), even though not everything that was going on in a given period of time is actually recorded in Scripture.

2. The socio-political world of the day

Here we are interested in gaining insight into the events and political personalities of the day. Who was in leadership, how did they gain leadership, were there significant political-societal tensions that may have “shaped” the author of the text being considered? What other significant events were taking place within the given culture that may have bearing upon the situation unfolding in Scripture?

3. Customs and specific cultural practices

Here we want to understand things related to how a given culture and its people dealt with life on a day to day basis. How were marriages, funerals, and other “ceremonies” carried out? Depending on the specific text we may also be interested in things like food and drink; transportation, commerce, etc.

4. Geography and archaeology

This field has produced some very significant findings over the last hundred years or so. Knowing more about geography and archaeology is especially important in dealing with many Old Testament narrative passages, various battles which may have taken place in the exodus-conquest period, and other texts which reference specific geographic locations.

5. Surrounding religious influence

The calling out and election of God’s covenant people did not (nor does it now) happen in a religious-philosophical vacuum. What were the prevailing religious and philosophical systems of the day? How did these false systems of belief and their related practices effect the people of God as they took up residence in the promised land? The same needs to be understood in relationship to the New Testament church as it plays a significant role in understanding the growth and expansion of the New Testament church.

6. *Specific life-setting/personal issues of the author or characters*

This could be referred to as the personal historical-life setting of the people involved in a given historical context. For example, what was happening to David when he wrote Psalm 51—what was his particular life situation? Or we might inquire as to the particular circumstances surrounding Paul’s captivity-imprisonment noted in his letter to the Ephesians (3:1; 4:1) and ask how this setting affected the content of this and other letters Paul wrote and his future ministry plans or goals.

As you can see, a grasp of the historical context will serve the student in gaining a fuller picture or understanding of the literary context, since the words of Scripture are addressed to a given people, covering events of a given time period, in a specific socio-cultural setting. All of these factors together will shed light on the literary and grammatical aspects of the text and bring to bear a more complete understanding of what the text is saying.

Study Questions: Lesson 5

1. What is one of the first things you want to do after dealing with the initial observation and interpretive questions?
2. What are the two types of context the Bible student must deal with?
3. a. Read the following extract from *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (or other resource of your choice). Briefly in two or three sentences, what is the historical setting of the book of *Ephesians*?
 - b. Can you see how this setting might affect your understanding of the book?

“Ephesus” from *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*

“Ephesus was the capitol city of proconsular Asia, which was the western part of Asia Minor. It was colonized principally from Athens. In the time of the Romans it bore the title of “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.” It was distinguished for the Temple of Diana, who there had her chief shrine; and for its theater, which was the largest in the world, capable of containing 50,000 spectators. It was, like all ancient theaters, open to the sky. Here were exhibited the fights of wild beasts and of men

with beasts (1Co 4:9; 9:24-25; 15:32). Many Jews took up their residence in this city, and here the seeds of the gospel were sown immediately after Pentecost (Act 2:9; 6:9). At the close of his second missionary journey (about AD 51) when Paul was returning from Greece to Syria (Act 18:18-21), he first visited this city. He remained, however, for only a short time, as he was hastening to keep the feast, probably of Pentecost, at Jerusalem; but he left Aquila and Priscilla behind him to carry on the work of spreading the gospel. During his third missionary journey Paul reached Ephesus from the “upper coasts” (Act 19:1), i.e., from the inland parts of Asia Minor, and tarried here for about three years; and so successful and abundant were his labors that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Act 19:10). Probably during this period the seven churches of the Apocalypse were founded, not by Paul’s personal labors, but by missionaries whom he may have sent out from Ephesus, and by the influence of converts returning to their homes. The apostle John, according to tradition, spent many years in Ephesus, where he died and was buried.”

Sources for this lesson

Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*; pgs. 19-21

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pgs. 231-242

Henry Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, pgs. 77-86

Easton’s Bible Dictionary

[not available from Mount Zion]

Lesson 6 The Context: Literary

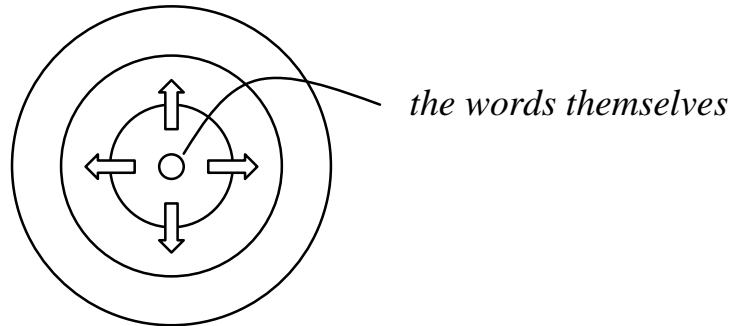
*“I will run the way of thy commandments,
when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”*

—Psalm 119:32

Closely related to the *historical* context in the hermeneutical process is the area of *literary* context, sometimes referred to as the “logical” or “internal” context. Whereas the historical context deals with events or life-setting external to the passage under consideration, the literary context refers directly to the words of a given passage themselves.

The following aspects of the literary context are important to consider. We can picture this like a “target” beginning with the

“bulls eye” as point one and moving outward from the center in concentric circles.



For our purposes we will use *Ephesians 2:2* as an example:

1. At the very heart of literary-grammatical investigation are the *words themselves* (or a particular word). For example we might seek to understand or interpret the word “walk” in *Ephesians 4:1* (*peripateo* in Greek). While one can gain understanding by doing a simple lexical search on the word’s “definition,” that in and of itself will not tell us all we may need to know.
2. Next we move out to the second “ring” or layer of context: that of the *sentence* in which a particular word is embedded. Since words are really defined by their surrounding context (or “referent”), context becomes critical for understanding how a given word is used in the particular passage under study.

Here it is important to keep in mind that the sentence structure we may have in a given English translation may be different at times from the original Greek or Hebrew. In fact, the apostle Paul who wrote *Ephesians* is known for his long, drawn out discourse—replete with multiple dependent clauses and prepositional phrases, which are normally rendered by multiple “sentences” when translated. Hence we need to recognize a certain degree of subjectivity when seeking to determine the actual sentence or phrase context, or any layer of context for that matter. In our example we could say that this level of context (the sentence) begins at v.1 and ends at the end of v.2. But, take note that the word “walk” is used again in v.10.

3. After the sentence layer we move outward to the area of the *larger paragraph* (*pericope* in the Greek). Once again it is helpful to remember that the original, God-inspired text of Scripture did not have the chapter, verse or sentence divisions we are used to, as those were added later on in history (in the 16th century). Here we may say that the word “walked” is embedded in a sentence that begins in v.1 and ends at v.2, all of which is part of a larger unit whose immediate boundaries are 2:1-3. At this point we begin to have a very “workable” context in terms of presenting a complete unit or section of Scripture from which to study and teach.
4. However the work of the interpreter is not necessarily finished. These three verses are part of a larger *chapter unit* with nineteen more verses. Once again though, we must be careful not to think in terms of chapter boundaries as much as “unit of thought” boundaries. At times we may find the chapter divisions helpful and succinct, at other times we may need to look beyond these imposed borders to determine where natural thought-breaks occur.

In order to accomplish this, it is helpful to look for “transition” or “connective” words, like: “so that,” “in order that,” “since,” “therefore” and so on (see Lesson 7 for more on how these words relate to an overall unit analysis). These words will often suggest how sections of Scripture are connected together beyond the normal chapter-verse divisions. In our example, 2:1-3 is part of the next larger unit of thought contained in vs.1-10. One way to determine this is to note the use of the word “therefore” in vs.11, which transitions into a different subject matter in vs.11-22.

5. The second to the last stage or ring of literary context to be considered involves the *book itself*, within which the text under consideration is found. In our example that would be the entire letter to the church at Ephesus and the surrounding areas (as some commentators suggest that this letter was “circular” in nature, that is, one which was taken around to several churches in the area of Asia minor in which Ephesus was located).

What else does the entirety of this letter tell us about the word or phrase “in which you used to walk...” in 2:2? How many times and in what context is the word used in the whole book? In this case, in chapter 2 alone we see that the word “walked” is used again in v.10. Beyond that its used in 4:1, 4:17, 5:2, 5:8, and 5:15.

6. Finally when considering the literary context one needs to look at the *greater context of both the Old and New Testaments*, beginning with the testament in which the passage under study is found. We have already discussed the unity of the biblical message in part one of this course. We readily acknowledge and look for any passage of Scripture to “fit” (i.e. not contradict) within the overall message of the Bible.

Having dealt with each “ring” of literary context, the interpreter is now able to more accurately determine and then assess his interpretive conclusions. Some genres, like the epistles, are more context dependent than proverbs or psalms, for example. Depending on the particular genre, failure to deal with any given ring of context may yield faulty or incomplete hermeneutical observations, and hence affect the overall outcome (application) of the exegetical task.

Sources cited

Earl Morey, *Search the Scriptures*

Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, pgs. 42-47

Study Questions: Lesson 6

1. a. What is the literary context?
b. How is it different from the *historical context*?
2. *Briefly*, describe each of the six “rings” of literary context.

Lesson 7 Cross-References

*“Thy words were found, and I did eat them;
and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine
heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.
I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced;
I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou
hast filled me with indignation.*

—Jeremiah 15:16-17

In studying various passages of Scripture, you will inevitably discover that other passages in other parts of the Bible seem to relate to or are similar in nature to the passage under study. These texts may address the same subject directly or indirectly, or they may address something about the text by way of stating a contrast. We refer to these interchangeably as *parallel* or *cross references*.

As you search through and examine those other passages, you are simply allowing *Scripture to interpret Scripture* (a foundational rule which was discussed in part one of the course, MB1). As you study God’s Word, it is important to see “the part in view of the whole” and “the whole in view of the part.” This is another way of saying that we want to allow Scripture in other places to help us to understand and interpret the Scripture passage we are studying.

Normally after you have done the steps as described in prior lessons, you would be ready to examine other texts to see how they would be helpful in interpreting the passage under consideration. Here are some general guidelines related to how you discern and utilize *cross-references*.

1. It is important to keep in mind the need to arrive at a basic understanding (author’s intent) of the passage being studied *before* moving onto other passages, in order to avoid making inaccurate comparisons.
2. Avoid thinking that simply discovering any group of passages that *appear to be related* and then somehow seeking to “harmonize” them is the end-result of sound Bible study (or exegesis). There are limits to the value of using cross-references and they must not be used indiscriminately.

3. Keep in mind that while many study Bibles offer cross references for you, you must still do the work of finding out the degree to which they are truly helpful and compatible cross-references.
4. It is helpful to keep in mind what some have come to call the “chair” passages. These are passages that have come to be known throughout church history as the *sedes doctrinae* or “seat of doctrine.” Passages such as Genesis chapters 1 and 2 (creation), Isaiah 40 (the incomparability of God), and John 1 (the incarnation and deity of Christ) are good examples. These passages should be frequently sought out to “check” other more obscure (yet topically parallel) passages.⁴
5. Parallel-references may help to establish clarity of meaning on two levels.
 - a. It may state exactly or nearly the same thing as the author is saying in the initial passage. Examples are Psalm 37:4 / Philippians 4:4 and Romans 7:2 / 1 Corinthians 7:39.
 - b. It may address the same general topic or subject but given from an opposite⁵ view. Examples are John 14:6 (Jesus is the Truth) / John 8:44 (Satan is the father of lies).
6. Compiling such references carries with it a certain degree of subjectivity both in gathering and in assessing the value of the passages in relationship to the one under study.
7. Cross-referencing is one way of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, often allowing the more clear passage to help us to interpret that which is less clear.

Caution: be careful of those groups or individuals who selectively cite Scripture to prove their own (often misguided) theological point. Someone once said, “never read a Bible verse”—meaning: always understand a particular verse’s meaning in the context of surrounding verses.

8. There is nothing “authoritative” per se in determining which texts are truly “parallel;” there is a certain degree of sub-

⁴ See Kaiser/Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, pg. 201.

⁵ By definition an opposing view is not a parallel reference. Here we may prefer the term “cross-reference.” In other words, the passage provides clarity to the passage under study by virtue of its antithesis.

jectivity involved. You must therefore be careful what conclusions you draw when citing cross-references.

9. A cross reference may be direct or indirect, it may be partial or complete; but to *some degree* the cross-reference often impacts upon our ability to understand the text under observation.

We need to be careful in any conclusions we make. Meanings may change from one culture, time period, or author to the next. Certainly linguistic differences may be expected as we move among the above categories.

If a person is looking for cross-references with the goal in mind of understanding the meaning of a word or phrase, then the following is an indication of relative priority for those texts with the greatest likelihood of same or similar meaning:

- a. Same author/ same book
- b. Same author/different book
(as above comparing John's Gospel and epistles)
- c. Different author/ similar time period
- d. Different author/different time period

10. With the above in mind, we still want to be careful with statements like, "Paul says much the same thing in ...", or "Isn't this exactly what Jesus was getting at when He said..." Depending on how the author/speaker, context, and time period line up, such a statement may or may not be accurate or helpful.

11. Keep in mind that much of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are in Romans, Hebrews, and The Revelation. About 278 verses from the OT are cited in about 352 verses in the NT.⁶

Understand too that the NT authors took various "liberties" (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) in quoting from the OT. This might include slight modifications of quotes but nothing that really changes meaning in a sub-

⁶ from pg. 41, Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*

stantive way (compare 2Co 4:13 with Psa 116:10, or 2Co 6:17 with Isa 52:11).

Finally, keep in mind that there is not a single, definite quotation of any “apocryphal” literature⁷ within the biblical Canon of Scripture.

Study Questions: Lesson 7

From the preceding material, fill in the blanks for the following on your answer sheet. (You need not rewrite the entire question.)

1. There are _____ to the value of using cross-references and they must not be used _____ .
2. Compiling cross-references carries with it a certain degree of _____ both in compiling and in assessing the value of the passage in relationship to the one under study.
3. Cross-referencing is one way of allowing _____ to interpret _____ , often allowing the more clear passage to help us to interpret that which is less clear.
4. True or false? There is not a single, definite quotation of any “apocryphal” literature in the Bible.
5. Review point 9 in the lesson. Now, study the word for “world” (*kosmos* in Greek) as it is used in John’s Gospel and then in his first epistle. It is the same author, but different genre, and a different purpose in writing.
 - a. Read John 3:16; 17:11, 14; and 1 John 2:15-16. What differences do you notice in the use of the word “world”?
 - b. What would be the problem in using 1 John 2:15-16 as a cross-reference for John 3:16?

⁷ “The Apocrypha” are the old writings that the Roman Catholic Church has maintained in addition to the accepted Protestant Bible. These writings are not the Word of God, but only historical literature.

Lesson 8 **Getting the Big Picture**

(Seeing the Forest in View of the Trees)

“And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

—Deuteronomy 32:46-47

Part One: The Forest and the Trees

There are two equally negative tendencies that we are all capable of falling into without some degree of precaution. On the one hand it is easy to fail to see the trees in view of the forest, i.e. getting bogged down in the “big picture” of a book, a chapter, or larger unit of Scripture. We then fail to see the smaller individual parts. We may run into problems in terms of really grasping the authors’ individual commands or instructions.

On the other hand, we are equally open to the propensity to focus so much on the minute detail that we often lose site of the “big picture”, i.e. “What is the book’s overarching or main purpose?” So we fail to see the forest in view of the trees.

It is the latter tendency that we want to address here. We want to move from a detailed textual analysis to the development of an outline (or “Unit Analysis”) of an entire book. This book-level study seeks to trace the author’s development and structure of a given book. A unit analysis seeks to understand how the “minute parts” (“trees”) fit together into a comprehensive flow of thought, thus bringing into view the larger “forest.”

General principles to follow in attempting to “break down” a book, chapter, or passage into smaller units:

1. Find and use a Bible that is *not* outlined. Some bibles have done this work for you already. Our goal here is to become better equipped to do Bible study ourselves.

2. Look for repetition of thought, words, or certain phrases that can be helpful in determining structure
3. Look for use of “transition” words (such as “therefore,” “then,” “so,” “for,” “because,” etc.). These show explanation, purpose, etc., and can be helpful in determining structure. We might call these *structural* or *grammatical-syntactical* clues. There are other ones to look for, such as:
 - a. Use of transition words as mentioned. See for example Romans 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:1; 12:1 in the use of “therefore” or “then.” See also Ephesians 4:1, “therefore.”
 - b. Repetition or list of qualities, characteristics, etc. See for example: 2 Peter 1:5-7; 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.
 - c. Rhetorical or other types of questions could signal a change in the flow of the text or a new theme developing. See for example Romans 6:1, “Shall we continue to sin...?”
 - d. Repeated words, phrases, or propositions could signal or define the boundary of a section.
See Judges 2:11-13; 8:33; Acts 6:7; 8:2; 12:24; 19:20.
(The latter is an example of a “narrative summary statement” on the spread of the gospel.)
 - e. Geographical or chronological developments (as in historical narrative passages) may indicate a change in the author’s focus or location of events.
 - f. The author himself may signal new topics with words like “now about...” Or “concerning...this.” See 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 8:1; 12:1.
 - g. A shift in the mood or tense of the verb or person speaking may indicate a change in the flow of thought, from past to present or present to future, etc.
4. In the end, outlining is a somewhat subjective task and there may be more than one way to divide a book or chapter. The idea is to do justice to the Holy Spirit’s design and flow in the book or chapter under consideration. We recognize that God inspired not only the words, but also the very way the words are organized.

Such an outline can aid greatly in developing an overall understanding of the book or dividing material into teaching units.

Note: Once again, be reminded that the actual divisions presented in most modern study Bibles are not inspired. The chapter and verse divisions were added long ago, as were the sectional/paragraph headings etc. that you see today in many Bibles.

Part Two: Building an Outline

Once you have completed the above analysis you are ready to move onto actually putting things down on paper in outline form.

Outlining pattern for Unit Analysis

Outlining can be applied to a paragraph, a chapter, or an entire book. As suggested earlier, the principle benefit is in helping you to see the flow of thought and the structural pattern used to develop the material. This can be helpful in developing teaching and preaching outlines.

General rules for outlining

1. The outline must be unified. Each subpoint or division must relate to the preceding one and uphold the main theme. If there is a “I,” then there must be a “II.” If there is an “A,” then there must be a “B,” and so on. There can be more of any one subdivision, but there must be at least two subdivisions. If there is only one subpoint, then the material simply belongs somehow to the division that precedes it.
2. All main points should reflect and uphold the main theme or proposition.
3. Scripture should be used at all main points and sub-points.

Example of an Outline

- I. Main Point or topic
 - A. Subtopic
 - B. Subtopic
 1. subpoint
 2. subpoint

- II. Main Point or topic
 - A. Subtopic
 - 1. subpoint
 - a. subpoint
 - b. subpoint
 - 2. subpoint
 - B. Subtopic

And so on.

Each point beneath should clarify and further specify or develop the point above it. An individual point may provide categories or examples/illustrations, etc. After you are done with a first draft of your outline, go through and see if you can combine one or more points to make a less complicated outline.

See Appendix 1 for an example of a Unit Analysis of the book of *Ephesians*.

Study Questions: Lesson 8

1. Make a topical outline using the above format for the following narrative.
(Taken from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, 1678.)

“As I walked through the wilderness of this world...I saw a man clothed with rags standing in a certain place...a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and, not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, ‘What shall I do to be saved!!!?’ I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because (as I perceived) he could not tell which way to go.

“I looked then, and saw a man named EVANGELIST coming to him, and asked, ‘Wherefore dost thou cry?’ He answered, ‘Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to Judgment; and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.’

“Then said EVANGELIST, ‘Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils?’ The man answered, ‘Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave, and I shall fall into [hell]. And, sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit, I am sure, to go to Judgment, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.’ Then said EVANGELIST, ‘If this

be thy condition, why standest thou still?' He answered, 'Because I know not where to go.'

"Then EVANGELIST gave him a parchment roll; and there was written within, 'Flee from the wrath to come!' The man, therefore, read it; and looking upon EVANGELIST very carefully, said, 'Whither must I fly?'

"Then said EVANGELIST, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, 'Do you see yonder wicket gate?' The man said, 'No.' Then said the other, 'Do you see yonder shining light?' He said, 'I think I do.' Then said EVANGELIST, 'Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto; so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shall do.'

"So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, 'Life! Life! Eternal life!'"

2. Make a topical outline of the book of *Philippians*, chapter 3 only. (List the verse reference beside each point of the outline.)

Lesson 9 Word Study

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

—Joshua 1:8

A very helpful step in doing Bible study involves the study of individual words or phrases. There are many fine references available (both in print as well as computer versions⁸), which will enable the student of Scripture to succeed in this endeavor. However, before going into the study of a particular word it is

⁸ worldwide free download of excellent Bible study software is available at www.onlinebible.net or www.onlinebible.org (multiple languages), and www.freebiblesoftware.com.

important to keep in mind an overall format or process. The following is intended to give you a general overview of the process and practice of doing Biblical word studies. While there may be particular details that you run into in the Old or New Testament, the following will apply generally to words found in either Testament.

While helpful and important, we must recognize the inherent dangers in doing word studies. When present these dangers can affect our ability to do that which we most desire in studying the Bible—which is to arrive at the author’s intended meaning. We have all heard teachers make reference about the meaning of “such and such word...” or “this literally means.” or “back in the Hebrew text this word meant...” The quest for meaning can lead us astray if we do not exercise discernment, skill, and some degree of restraint in the conclusions we draw.

Here then is a general, step-by-step process to follow in studying any particular word.

1. Keep in mind the three literary elements associated with any given word:
 - a. *sign*: the collection of symbols (letters) that comprise a word
 - b. *sense*: the content associated with the symbol
 - c. *referent*: the actual item or things denoted by the word or term.

2. Determine the words to study

Obviously there is a certain degree of subjectivity here. You will want to focus on words that carry theological “weight” in the section or book as a whole. This may be determined by repetition or simply by picking up on the flow of the author’s argument or writing style. Normally, *verbs* are very important to understand since they express the action of the speaker or others. Other words should also be considered—words that may play a defining role in understanding the structure of a given text, as well as words that have importance in the “history” of salvation.

In this regard it may be helpful to keep in mind a series of investigative questions:

- a. Why did the author use this word and not another and why did he use it in this way?
- b. Was there an alternative word or form of the word he could have chosen?
- c. How many times is this word used: in this book; by this author; by other authors in different books?
- d. Is a particular word easily confused with other similar words in the culture or in the vernacular of the target audience?

While it is difficult to give “weight” to these answers, these are at least some of the questions one needs to ask in making decisions about various words to study.

3. Keep in mind the critical role of context

This cannot be stressed enough. When seeking to study a word in a given passage, it is crucial that you keep the immediate proposition/sentence/context as well as the larger literary context in view (see the earlier lesson). This is important because a basic premise of semantics (the study of meaning) is that words are defined by their surrounding context. So while the word “car” calls a general image to mind, it is only by the addition of surrounding context and relationship to other words that we begin to understand just which specific car an author has in mind (example: “the old black car racing down First Street”). If the word occurs elsewhere in the chapter or book, these instances should also be investigated, following the general guidelines laid down in the lesson on cross references.

4. Look up the word in a concordance. Use an “exhaustive” concordance that matches the translation you are using for added accuracy and ease.
 - a. Is the word you have found in the concordance the exact word you are focusing on, or a form of the word, or another word altogether? Does it occur in a variety of settings or forms?
 - b. How many times does it occur? Where? Does it occur in the same author/book?

- c. What is the “root” form of the word? How is it related to the form under consideration?

Beware of drawing too much conclusion from this knowledge, because the meaning of the “root” form and the form under study can vary to some degree.

5. Look up the word in a Bible Dictionary, theological word-book, or lexicon.

- a. Understand the origin and historical development (etymology) of the word—but don’t read too much into this. While it is helpful and important to know the usage of a word throughout different time periods, we want to be careful to avoid fanciful speculation. Keep in mind that you should not seek to interpret an OT word in light of the NT (or vice versa) since it is quite possible that meaning may have changed from one author/generation to the next.
- b. Are there other synonyms/antonyms that would be helpful to know or understand?
- c. How do other authors use the word? Keep in mind that we are looking for the author’s intended meaning. We do not want to be too generic in our conclusions.

6. Decide how or to what extent you want to include information you have gleaned from your study into your teaching.

The general rule is, “don’t overload people with endless, detailed information,” especially when teaching a general audience with diverse background. An automobile analogy might be: when teaching or preaching you want to do what you can to present the finished product, and *not* all the various parts and processes that went into making the car. Keep in mind that your audience has not done the study you have done.

Much good can come from helping people to clarify in their minds what a particular author meant in using a particular word. However, confusion can also result if we attempt to give too much information on background, derivation, usage by other authors, etc. Your main concern should be arriving at the *author’s intended meaning in the*

specific text under investigation. Then you want to help people to understand how that meaning aids in determining the meaning and significance of the larger context.

Sources

Biblical Words and Their Meanings, by Moises Silva

Exegetical Fallacies, by D.A. Carson

[not available from Mount Zion].

Study Questions: Lesson 9

1. Do a word study on Psalm 51:17. Refer to the concordance sample in Appendix 2.

The numbers in brackets following each word are the Strong's Concordance numbers, in numeric sequence for clear identification of the same word in the original language. All the Hebrew words of the Old Testament are numbered sequentially (from 00001 to 08674), and all the Greek words of the New Testament also are numbered sequentially (from 0001 to 5624).

“The sacrifices <02077> of God <0430> are a broken <07665> spirit <07307>: a broken <07665> and a contrite <01794> heart <03820>, O God <0430>, thou wilt not despise <0959>.”—Psalm 51:17

- a. Which words are the key words to study?
 - b. What does each key word mean?
 - c. For each key word that has a different root word, what is the root word and its meaning?
2. Do a word study on Romans 6:6. Refer to the concordance sample in Appendix 2.

“Knowing <1097> this <5124>, that <3754> our <2257> old <3820> man <444> is crucified with <4957> him, that <2443> the body <4983> of sin <266> might be destroyed <2673>, that henceforth <3371> we <2248> should <1398> not <3371> serve <1398> sin <266>.”—Romans 6:6

- a. Which words are the key words to study?
- b. What does each key word mean?
- c. For each key word that has a different root word, what is the root word and its meaning?

Lesson 10 Bible Study Tools

*“But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and
in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*

—Psalm 1:2

The most important tool for studying the Bible is the *Bible itself!* You will want to use a literal translation as much as possible. If you are able, there are a few other tools that could be helpful to you depending on God’s call upon your life, skill level, access to original languages, availability, and of course budget. But no matter what—if you have the Scriptures, you have *treasure* (see Psalm 19 and 119)! Keep in mind that many of the tools that today’s student takes for granted as being “absolutely essential” have only come into existence in the last 150-200 years.

The following are given roughly in order of preference, relative necessity, and with a limited budget in mind:

1. *Concordance*. Used for finding all the places in which a word occurs in the rest of Scripture, and how many times. It will give a good basic definition, and show from where the word is derived. Often they are “keyed” to various Bible translations.
2. *Bible Survey*. These may be either OT or NT or combinations. They generally give a wider view of the entirety of either the Old or New Testament or sometimes both. They will deal with overall themes, key places, people, events, etc. but not in significant depth (as the name implies).
3. *Lexicon*. A little bit more advanced than a concordance. Some lexicons require basic abilities in the original language. They have more in-depth definitions of word meanings, given in context, and with more thorough historical background on the etymology of a word and its related semantic field.
4. *Word Study Books*. There are several of these by various authors. Some caution should be taken in looking at these as “infallible” (as is the temptation at times). The articles can be very helpful for understanding the historical develop-

ment and background of the word and how it is used in Scripture. They are more in depth than a lexicon.

Three that are helpful are *Vines' Expository Dictionary*, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, and *Word Meanings in the New Testament* by Earle.

5. *Bible Dictionary*. Several good sets are published. There is really very little difference, practically speaking, from a Bible encyclopedia. Both give article-style treatments of different subject matter with varying degrees of analysis and bibliographic reference. These tools can be especially helpful for doing background study (mostly the external context of society, economics, culture etc.) in preparation for teaching through a book of the bible.
6. *Bible Encyclopedia*. See above.
7. *Commentary*. These can be helpful, especially some of the better, single volume ones. Prices can vary greatly. Commentaries give explanation and understanding of the meaning and sometimes application of a passage. Most important is the work that helps to uncover linguistic and grammatical-syntactical information. However, the validity of the author's conclusions can be hard to judge without abilities in the original language. Beware of overly "applicational" commentaries. Look at the comprehensiveness of the bibliography and also note the degree to which they refer to other scholars of the past.
8. *Bible Atlas/geography references*. There are several good works that can be helpful for the student who wishes to go more "in depth" on historical setting and political boundaries, etc. However, at the present, most good study Bibles include several good maps that will suffice for most needs.
9. *Individual "handbooks."* We are referring here to books like "Bible handbooks," "manners/customs," or "plant life" of the Bible. Depending on a particular interest these can be helpful. Once again some study Bibles will provide any necessary and helpful data in these areas.
10. *Theologies (Systematic/Biblical)*. Actually, this can be as helpful as some of the primary study tools, depending on the situation and other resources available. These books give systematic (topical) treatment to various areas of theolo-

gy/doctrine. In the case of a “Biblical Theology,” it may give a more chronological understanding of the historical development of a particular doctrinal area.

Study Questions: Lesson 10

1. What is a *concordance*, and how it might be useful in study?
2. What is a *lexicon*, and how it might be useful in study?
3. What is a *Bible dictionary*, and how it might be useful in study?

Making It Personal

4. Review all the lessons of this course.
 - a. What have you learned that will be useful to you in your Christian walk in the future?
 - b. How has your habit of study changed as a result of taking this course?

*Thank you for taking this course.
Please write now for your next course.*

And, we suggest reviewing these lessons regularly
for the coming two weeks in order to help
in remembering what you have learned.

Choose other Bible passages (one to three verses),
and do observation/interpretive questions,
in order to come to the *meaning intended by the author*.

Appendix 1

Unit Analysis (outline) of *Ephesians*

I.	The Glory of God manifested in the spiritual blessings to those in Christ	Ch.1-3
A.	Introductory comments and greetings	1:1-2
1.	The author—Paul	
2.	His calling—an apostle by the will of God	
3.	The recipients—Ephesus? or circulatory?	
4.	Greetings	
B.	God’s will revealed in granting every spiritual blessing “in Christ”	1:3-14
1.	Praise to the “author” of the blessings—God the Father	v.3
2.	The believer: Chosen	v.4
a.	When? Before the creation of the world	v.4
b.	Why? To be holy and blameless in his sight in love	v.4
3.	Predestined to adoption	v.5
4.	Redeemed by the blood	v.7
5.	Forgiveness of sins	vs.7-8
6.	Revelation of the mystery of God’s Will	vs.9-10
7.	The believer’s obtaining of the glorious inheritance	vs.11-14
C.	Paul’s Intercessory Prayer for the Churches	1:15-23
1.	Thanksgiving	vs.15-16
2.	Requests	vs.17-19
3.	Explanation of the requests	vs.20-23
D.	The Process of Salvation (redemption)	2:1-10
1.	Bondage to sin & the believer’s warfare	vs.1-3
2.	What God does (Grace for the future)	vs.4-7
3.	How God does this (saving Grace, leading to works of grace)	vs. 8-10
E.	The mystery of the Gospel: Jews & Gentiles one by way of Christ	2:11-3:13
1.	Gentiles—formerly excluded from the benefits of the covenant	vs.11-13
2.	Jews and Gentiles now have peace in Christ	vs.14-18
3.	Fellow citizens dwelling together in God’s household	vs.19-22
4.	Paul’s stewardship of this “mystery”	vs.3.1-13
F.	The Glory of God in the indwelling love of Christ	3:14-21
	<i>Note: this is the pivotal point of the letter, which links the doctrinal basis of chs.1-3 with the “application” (“walk worthy” 4:1) basis of chs.4-6.</i>	
II.	The Glory of God manifested through a worthy life	Ch.4-6
A.	Characterized by Unity	4:1-16
1.	Personal humility	vs.1-6
2.	Recognition and use of spiritual gifts	vs.7-13
3.	Diligent commitment to truth leading to maturity	vs.14-16
B.	Characterized by Personal and Corporate Holiness	4:17 - 5:21
1.	The pagan mind (Thinking based primarily on the world’s systems, which leads to a life of insensitivity to moral goodness and to lustful craving.)	vs.17-19
2.	The Renewed mind (Thinking and life based on the new life in Christ)	vs.20-24
3.	Renewed relationships	vs.25-32
4.	The imitation of God	vs.1-2
5.	The warning to avoid deeds of darkness	vs.3- 14
6.	Life in the Spirit	vs.15-21
C.	Characterized by Submission	5:22 - 6:9
1.	In the marriage relationship	vs.22-32
2.	In the parent-child relationship	vs.6:1-4
3.	In the servant-Master relationship	vs.6:5-9
D.	Characterized by Standing Firm in the Lord	6:10-20
III.	Closing instructions and benediction	6:21-24

Appendix 2 Concordance Sample

Old Testament Words (Hebrew)

Please note: the first number after the word is the Strong's Reference number. The following format mentions "AV," which stands for the "Authorized Version," also known as the King James Version (KJV). The numbers after the "AV" indicate the number of times the translated word appears in the KJV.

The definitions are from the Online Bible Hebrew Concordance.

"mighty" 0193 from an unused root meaning to twist, i.e. (by implication) be strong; adjective/noun

in the AV (the KJV "Authorized Version") translated as:

mighty 1 time, strength 1 time; 2 appearances in total

1) prominence

1a) body, belly (contemptuous)

1b) nobles, wealthy men

"ram" 0352 from the same as 0193; noun

in the AV (the KJV "Authorized Version") translated as:

ram(s) 156 times, post(s) 21 times, mighty (men) 4 times, trees 2 times, lintel 1 time, oaks 1 time; 185 appearances in total

1) ram

1a) ram (as food)

1b) ram (as sacrifice)

1c) ram (skin dyed red, for tabernacle)

2) pillar, door post, jambs, pilaster

3) strong man, leader, chief

4) mighty tree, terebinth

"God" 0410 shortened from 0352, noun

AV-God 213, god 16, power 4, mighty 5, goodly 1, great 1, idols 1, Immanuel + 06005 2, might 1, strong 1; 245

1) god, god-like one, mighty one

1a) mighty men, men of rank, mighty heroes

1b) angels

1c) god, false god, (demons, imaginations)

1d) God, the one true God, Jehovah

2) mighty things in nature

3) strength, power

"God" 0430 plural of 0433, noun

AV-God 2346, god 244, judge 5, GOD 1, goddess 2, great 2, mighty 2, angels 1, exceeding 1, God-ward + 04136 1, godly 1; 2606

1) (plural)

1a) rulers, judges

1b) divine ones

1c) angels

1d) gods

- 2) (plural intensive-singular meaning)
 - 2a) god, goddess
 - 2b) godlike one
 - 2c) works or special possessions of God
 - 2d) the (true) God
 - 2e) God

“*God*” 0433 probably prolonged (emphatic) from 0410

AV-God 52, god 5; 57

- 1) God
- 2) false god

“*despise*” 0959 a primitive root; verb

AV-despise 36, contemptible 3, contemned 1, disdained 1, vile person 1, scorn 1; 43

- 1) to despise, hold in contempt, disdain
 - 1a) to despise, regard with contempt
 - 1b) to be despised, despicable, vile, worthless

“*contrite*” 01794 a primitive root, adjective

AV-break 3, contrite 1, crouch 1; 5

- 1) to crush, be crushed, be contrite, be broken
 - 1a) to be crushed, collapse
 - 1b) to be contrite, be broken
 - 1c) to crush down to pieces, to grind into powder

“*to sacrifice*” 02076 a primitive root, verb

AV-sacrifice 85, offer 39, kill 5, slay 5; 134

- 1) to slaughter, kill, sacrifice, slaughter for sacrifice

“*sacrifice*” 02077 from root 02076 noun

AV-sacrifice 155, offerings 6, offer 1; 162

- 1a) sacrifices of righteousness
- 1b) sacrifices of strife
- 1c) sacrifices to dead things
- 1d) the covenant sacrifice, the passover, the annual sacrifice
- 1e) thank offering

“*heart*” 03820 noun

AV-heart 508, mind 12, midst 11, understanding 10, hearted 7, wisdom 6, comfortably 4, well 4, considered 2, friendly 2, kindly 2, stouthearted + 047 2, care + 07760 2, misc. 21; ; 593

- 1) inner man, mind, will, heart, understanding
 - 1a) midst (of things)
 - 1b) heart (of man)
 - 1c) soul, heart (of man)
 - 1d) mind, knowledge, thinking, reflection, memory
 - 1e) inclination, resolution, determination (of will)
 - 1f) conscience
 - 1g) heart (of moral character)
 - 1h) as seat of appetites
 - 1i) as seat of emotions and passions
 - 1j) as seat of courage

“broken” 07665 a primitive root; adjective

AV-break 115, destroy 9, break in pieces 8, break down 4, hurt 3, torn 2, give birth 1, crush 1, quench 1, misc. 6; 150

1) to break, break in pieces

1a) break, break in or down, rend violently, wreck, crush, quench, rupture (fig)

1b) to be broken, be maimed, be crippled, be wrecked, be crushed (fig)

1c) to shatter, break

New Testament Words (Greek)

Please note: the first number after the word is the Strong’s Reference number. The following format mentions “AV,” which stands for the “Authorized Version,” also known as the King James Version (KJV). The numbers after the “AV” indicate the number of times the translated word appears in the KJV.

The definitions are from the Online Bible Greek Concordance, adapted from Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.

“to err” 264 verb

in the AV (the KJV “Authorized Version”) translated as:

sin 38 times, trespass 3 times, offend 1 time, for your faults 1 time; 43 appearances in total

1) to be without a share in

2) to miss the mark

3) to err, be mistaken

4) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong

5) to wander from the law of God, violate God’s law, sin

“sin” 266 from 264; noun

AV-sin 172, sinful 1, offense 1; 174

1) equivalent to 264

2) that which is done wrong, sin, an offense, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act

3) collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many

“man” 444 noun

AV-man 552, (not translated 4), (miscellaneous 3); 559

1) a human being, whether male or female

1a) generically, to include all human individuals

1b) to distinguish man from beings of a different order

1c) with the added notion of weakness, by which man is led into a mistake or prompted to sin

1d) with the adjunct notion of contempt or disdainful pity

1e) with reference to two fold nature of man, body and soul

1f) with reference to the two fold nature of man, the corrupt and the truly Christian man, conformed to the nature of God

1g) with reference to sex, a male

2) indefinitely, someone, a man, one

3) in the plural, people

- “*to know*” 1097 a prolonged form of a primary verb
 AV-know 196, perceive 9, understand 8, (miscellaneous 10); 223
 1) to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel
 2) to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of
 3) Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman
 4) to become acquainted with, to know
- “*through*” 1223 a primary preposition denoting the channel of an act
 AV-by 241, through 88, with 16, for 58, for ... sake 47, therefore + 5124 44, for this
 cause + 5124 14, because 52, misc. 86; 646
 1) through
 1a) of place: with, in
 1b) of time: throughout, during
 1c) of means: by, by the means of
 2) through: the ground or reason by which something is or is not done
 2a) by reason of, on account of, because of for this reason
 2b) therefore, on this account
- “*serve*” 1398 verb
 AV-serve 18, be in bondage 4, do service 3; 25
 1) to be a slave, serve, do service
 1a) of a nation in subjection to other nations
 2) metaphorically, to obey, submit to
 2a) in a good sense, to yield obedience
 2b) in a bad sense, of those who become slaves to some base power, to yield to,
 give one’s self up to
- “*we*” 2248 plural pronoun
 AV-us 148, we 25, our 2, us-ward 2, (not translated 1); 178
 1) us, we, our etc.
- “*our*” 2257 plural pronoun
 AV-our 313, us 82, we 12, (not translated 1), (miscellaneous 2); 410
 1) our, we, us
- “*that*” 2443 conjunction
 AV-that 486, to 76, (miscellaneous 8); 570
 1) that, in order that, so that
- “*to destroy*” 2673 verb
 AV-destroy 5, do away 3, abolish 3, cumber 1, loose 1, cease 1, fall 1, deliver 1, (mis-
 cellaneous 11); 27
 1) to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative
 1a) to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency
 1b) to deprive of force, influence, power
 2) to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish
 2a) to cease, to pass away, be done away
 2b) to be severed from, separated from, discharged from, loosed from any one
 2c) to terminate all contact with one
- “*henceforth*” 3371 adverb
 AV-no more 7, no longer 4, henceforth not 2, no 1, no ... henceforward 1, hereafter 1,
 misc. 5; 21
 1) no longer, no more, not hereafter
- “*that*” 3754 conjunction
 AV-that 612, for 264, because 173, how that 21, how 11, (miscellaneous 212); 1293
 1) that, because, since

- “*old*” 3819 probably another form for 3825 adverb
 AV-long ago 1, any while 1, a great while ago 1, old 1, in time past 1, of old 1; 6
 1) of old, former
 2) long ago
- “*old*” 3820 from 3819 adjective
 AV-old 18, old wine 1; 19
 1) old, ancient
 2) no longer new, worn by use, the worse for wear, old
- “*again*” 3825 adverb
 AV-again 142; 142
 1) anew, again, renewal or repetition of the action
- “*cross*” 4716 noun
 AV-cross 28; 28
 1) a cross: a well known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; for the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors of insurrections
 2) an upright "stake", esp. a pointed one, used as such in fences or palisades
- “*crucify*” 4717 from 4716 verb
 AV-crucify 46; 46
 1) to stake, drive down stakes
 2) to crucify one, destroying its power utterly, with intense pain
- “*with*” 4862 a primary preposition denoting union
 AV-with 123, beside 1, accompany + 2064 1; 125
 1) with
- “*to crucify*” 4957 from 4862 and 4717; verb
 AV-crucify with 5; 5
 1) to crucify alone with
 2) to put to death by staking to a wooden upright and leaving to bleed and to suffocate.
- “*to save*” 4982 verb
 AV-save 93, make whole 9, heal 3, be whole 2, misc. 3; 110
 1) to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction
 1a) to save a suffering one (in danger of destruction) from perishing
 1b) to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively: to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment
- “*body*” 4983 from 4982; noun
 AV-body 144, bodily 1, slave 1; 146
 1) the body both of men or animals
 1a) a dead body or corpse
 1b) the living body
 1b1) of animals
 2) the bodies of planets and of stars (heavenly bodies)
 3) is used of a (large or small) number of men closely united into one society, or family as it were; a social, ethical, mystical body
 3a) so in the NT of the church
 4) that which casts a shadow as distinguished from the shadow itself
- “*this*” 5124 neuter singular pronoun
 AV-this 199, therefore + 1223 44, that 22, for this cause + 1223 14, wherefore + 1223 7, it 5, (not translated 1), (miscellaneous 25); 317
 1) that (thing), this (thing)