



**BIBLE STUDY METHODS
AND
RULES OF INTERPRETATION**

**COURSE MANUAL
No. 1**

(From p. 8 in Manual #1)

Course 1

BIBLE STUDY METHODS AND RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Syllabus

Course Description:

An introduction to basic Bible study methods and rules of interpretation with emphasis on accurately understanding and obeying God's Word and the development of practical skills. Students will learn to determine what Scripture says, what it means, and how it can be applied.

Course Goals:

1. To train pastors and church leaders to properly and systematically study and interpret the Bible in order to "correctly handle the Word of Truth" so that they may be "equipped for every good work."
2. To lead pastors and church leaders to an awareness of their need to personally apply and obey the Bible as they preach and teach others.
3. To demonstrate that an important purpose of studying the Bible is for personal "training in righteousness" so pastors and church leaders will become more like Jesus Christ.
4. To emphasize the necessity to absolutely and totally depend on the illumination and teaching ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
5. To encourage pastors and church leaders to engage in personal, serious, regular Bible study in the text of Scripture.

Study the Word of God to know the God of the Word

Course Outline

(From pp. 12–14 in Manual #1)

**BIBLE STUDY METHODS
AND RULES OF INTERPRETATION**

I.	Introduction	(pp. 15–32)
	A. Power of God’s Word	p. 15
	B. Purpose of God’s Word	p. 17
	C. Pastor’s responsibility to study	p. 21
	D. Role of Holy Spirit in study	p. 25
	E. Required Attitudes for effective Bible study	p. 26
	F. Essential Truths about the Bible	p. 27
	G. Definitions of Important Terms	p. 28
	1. revelation	
	2. inspiration	
	3. inerrancy	
	4. authority	
	5. illumination	
	6. interpretation	
	7. systematic study	

II.	Procedure for Systematic Bible Study	(pp. 33–109)
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Summary of the three basic steps of systematic Bible study

1. **Observation** – What does it say?
2. **Interpretation** – What does it mean?
3. **Application** – What shall I do?

A. Explanation of the three basic steps of systematic Bible study method

Step 1 **Observation** – **What does it say?** (pp. 34–46)

- a. Three key thoughts p. 34
- b. Asking the right questions p. 35
- c. What to look for:
 - 1. Words p. 37
 - 2. Structure p. 39
 - 3. Atmosphere p. 41
 - 4. Literary form p. 43
- d. Review of observation p. 46

Step 2 **Interpretation** – **What does it mean?** (pp. 47–77)

- a. Introduction – Key questions to ask p. 47
- b. Important matters to remember p. 48
- c. General rules (pp. 50–61)
 - 1. Interpret literally p. 50
 - 2. Interpret in context p. 53
 - 3. Interpret in view of history and culture p. 56
 - 4. Interpret in view of literary form p. 58
 - 5. Interpret in view of other parts of Scripture p. 59
–guidelines for difficult passages
 - 6. Interpret in view of theological consistency p. 61

d. Special rules	(pp. 62–76)
1. Parables	p. 62
2. Proverbs	p. 63
3. Poetry	p. 64
4. Figures of speech	p. 66
5. Symbols	p. 68
6. Typology (“Types”)	p. 69
7. Prophecy	p. 71
8. Use of OT in NT	p. 74
e. Interpretive dangers	p. 77
Step 3 Application – What shall I do?	(pp. 78–80)
a. Results of not obeying	p. 78
b. Rules for effective application	p. 79
c. Goal of application	p. 80
Summary of 3 basic steps	p. 81
B. Other Bible study methods	(pp. 82–110)
1. Biographical	p. 83
2. Topical	p. 92
3. Theological (doctrinal)	p. 100
4. Devotional	p. 107
III. A Suggested Plan for Systematic Bible Study	p. 111

General Rule #2 Interpret in Context (From pp. 53–54 in Manual #1)

- **Interpret each verse or passage of Scripture in its context, noting where it is located in Scripture, what precedes it, what follows after it, and how it is related to other Scriptures.**

1 Co. 7:1 – If you read this verse by itself, you will reach the wrong conclusion about God’s view of marriage (see the study note, the rest of **1 Co. 7**; **Mt. 19:1-11**).

Jas. 2:24 – If you read this verse alone, you may conclude wrongly that good works can save a man. (See the study note; read all the way back to verse 14 and forward to verse 26.)

Context is the single most important factor in correct interpretation. The context for each verse of the Bible is the Bible itself.

Ge. 9:3; Da. 1:12



Study hints:

- Before you conclude something about the character or conduct of a biblical person, look up in the concordance and index to study notes all references to that person in the Bible, e.g., **Heb. 11:4** and **Ge. 4:1-5**.
- Look for purpose/theme statements in a book and interpret in light of those statements. **Lk. 1:1-4**; **Jn. 20:30-31**; **1 Pe. 5:12**; **1 Ti. 3:14-15**
- **Correlation**: One of the aspects of context is to see how the material in a book is arranged and fits together.

The book chart of **Genesis** on page 55 gives you an overall look at the whole book and how the parts fit together. Review it carefully.

Here are some suggestions for discovering structure and arrangement and correlating the text being studied with other portions of Scripture:

- 1) Read through the entire book you are studying before you start to study parts of it (or at least read the surrounding paragraphs or chapters).
- 2) Think creatively as you read—
 Why is this here?
 How does this relate to what comes before and to what follows?
 How does this relate to the whole chapter or book?
- 3) Try to discover
 - the basic theme or purpose
 - main divisions of the book
 - important people
 - significant events
 - comparisons
 - contrasts
 - repetitions
 - theological ideas
 - common elements
 - climaxes
- 4) Think forward ➡ and backward ← through the book. This can be done for a whole book, a section, a chapter or a portion of a chapter.
- 5) Make a simple chart of a portion of Scripture.

Assignment: Read **Ps. 139:1-12** and correlate what is taught about God in verses 1-6 with what is taught in verses 7-12.

Record your results on the chart below:

Psalm 139:1-12

Everyth _____ is

kn _____ by God.

1

6

Everywh _____ is in

God's pr _____.

7

12

Suggestions for Teaching Course 1

(From p. 11 in Manual #1)

BIBLE STUDY METHODS AND RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Pages: 111 **Hours required:** 35–40 **Class sessions:** about 25
Pace and schedule: 4-5 pages per 1-1/2 hour class session, adjusted for natural divisions in the material.

Hints and approach

Bible Study Methods and Rules of Interpretation is by nature a “hands-on” course. Therefore, the teacher will need to

1. involve the students during class time in order to enhance their ability to practice the skills.
2. look up, read and interact with cited Scripture as much as possible within the allotted class time. (Spend as much time in the text as in the manual.)
3. balance lecture with good directed questions.
4. foster interaction by leading discussions.

The teacher will want to

- emphasize the importance of the process.
- illustrate the methods and rules through practice in class.
- enhance the students appreciation for and ability to use the Word to God.

To maintain perspective the teacher should use the main outline at the start of each session to briefly review and place the current lesson in its proper place in the course.

Occasionally the teacher may want to work through an assignment on the overhead to make sure everyone is grasping the process and methods.

In the later part of the course, refer again and again to the 3 steps of Bible Study Methods and continue to illustrate the basic Rules of Interpretation.

Probably 1-2 class sessions should be devoted to each of the four other methods of Bible Study starting on p. 82. If the material is completed early it may be desirable to begin to work through with the students in class one of the other assignment suggestions on p. 91, 99, 106, or 108 letting the students do most of the work or allowing the students to start their assignments.

Especially in Course 1 it is essential to make sure the students understand the specific question in the assignments—go over them in class if necessary.