**How do we know the Bible?**

*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him-but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.-1 Corinthians 2:9-10*

Truly knowing the Bible is a lifelong process. Once we have asked Jesus into our lives, He promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, which will bring us to a new level of understanding of Him and the Bible: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).This gift is absolutely the first step in understanding the Bible and in deepening your relationship with the Author. For this reason, every time you open the pages of your Bible, the best way to be sure you understand what you are reading is to pray first. Ask God to show you what you need for your “daily bread.”

Additionally, there are some other practical ways to know the Bible. Despite the fact that God used 40 inspired writers to pen the Scriptures over the course of 1500 years, the text amazingly offers a cohesive, timeless message from start to finish. As Jim George so eloquently says in his *Bare Bones Bible Handbook,* “God sovereignly moves history in a definite direction toward the consummation of all things in the new heavens and the new earth, where His name will be honored for all eternity and His voice obeyed by all the people of the earth.”[[1]](#endnote-1) One of the key ways to really understand the Bible is to know it is one big story, not 66 disconnected ones. Seeing the “big picture” of the Bible offers a level of understanding that makes reading it much less intimidating.

Quite simply, the Old Testament is the story of man’s need for the Messiah, and the New Testament is the story of the coming of that Messiah and how we should respond. More specifically the Old Testament contains the old agreement between God and the Hebrews, as well as stories about how this agreement worked out. The New Testament contains stories and teachings about a new agreement between God and people based on the wisdom and life of Jesus. It’s just that simple.

**Please read the following passages and frame your understanding of them in the above context.**

**Isaiah 9:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Matthew 4:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Malachi 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Ephesians 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Micah 7:8 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Notice that these verses are pulled from all over the Bible, but the message is cogent. Open your Bible randomly and find three passages. Write the passages you chose and whether you were able to frame them inside the “big picture” message of the Bible.

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Another practical approach to understanding the Bible involves three simple steps: Observation, Interpretation, Application.[[2]](#footnote-1) Let’s look at each:

1. **Observation** is where you ask the “w” questions: who, what, where, when, and why of the passage. For example, who wrote the passage or who is the main focus of it? What does the emphasis of the passage seem to be? Where and when did the writing or story take place, and how is that important to the context? Why was the original text written-as instruction, admonition, information, etc.? Perhaps there are terms you struggle with that this passage can shed light on, such as justification, righteousness, grace, sanctification, etc. If there is repetition of a term, make note of its importance.
2. **Interpretation** involves discovering the meaning of the passage-the author’s main thought or idea. Answering the observation questions will lead you directly into the process of interpretation. Here we ask the “c” questions:
   1. What was the **context** of the passage-the verses or paragraphs immediately before and after?
   2. Are there **cross-references** for this passage? Because God is the greatest Author, scripture will interpret scripture. Let other passages in the Bible shed light on the passage you are examining. Many “study” Bibles offer exhaustive cross-referencing systems to help you in this area. These are the tiny letters dropped into each verse that refer to information often found between columns or at the end of the page.
   3. What was the **culture**? Since the Bible was written long ago, it is important to weave some cultural understanding into our interpretation.
   4. What is your **conclusion**? By this point in the process you are ready to draw your own understanding of the passage.
3. **Application** is why we study the Bible. We want to experience God, His promises, His instructions, His counsel. After observing and interpreting a passage, you may want to ask these questions to help you apply it’s truth to your life:
   1. How does this truth impact my relationship with God?
   2. How does this truth affect my relationship with others?
   3. How does this truth affect me?
   4. How does this truth inform my response to the enemy Satan?

Answering these questions is only the first step in applying the Bible to your life, because putting the understanding into practice is the tough part. But God will bless your time and attention to His Word by increasing its presence in you and your everyday life.

**Please choose one of the passages you randomly selected for the “big picture” activity and apply the Observation/Interpretation/Application approach.**

**Passage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Observation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Interpretation:**

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**Application:**

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**You’ve worked hard this week! Here’s a Bible trivia activity just for fun:**

**\_\_\_1. Number of authors used by God to pen scripture A. 4**

**\_\_\_2. Number of years spanned in the writing of the Bible B. 5**

**\_\_\_3.Number of books in the Bible C. 14**

**\_\_\_4. Number of Psalms D. 40**

**\_\_\_5. Number of books written by Moses E. 66**

**\_\_\_6. Number of books written by Paul F. 150**

**\_\_\_7. Number of Gospels G.1500**

**How did God speak directly to you through this week’s lesson?**

**What is your response to Him?**

**Please write 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 and commit it to memory**:

**Group Workshop**:

As a group, find three more passages and interpret them using the methods we learned this week.

**Passage: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Big Picture

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Observation

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Interpretation

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Application

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**Passage: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Big Picture

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Observation

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Interpretation

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Application

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**Passage: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Big Picture

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Observation

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Interpretation

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Application

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1. Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook* (Harvest House, 2006), 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Observation/Interpretation/Application method adapted from *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook,* Jim George, Harvest House 2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)