How To Study The Bible. Part 3

The best way to study the Bible is to study it one book at a time. If God wrote us a letter, wouldn't He expect us to read that letter from the beginning to the end? It wouldn't make sense if we only read bits and pieces.

A. The First Step In Bible Study Is To Survey A Bible Book.

1. Read a book 2 or 3 times without using any study aids.
   a. Focus on the book as a whole.
   b. Seek to understand its meaning as a whole.

2. When reading the book, look for several things:
   a. Theme or the purpose of the book.
   b. Who wrote the book and why?
   c. To whom it was written?
   d. Book's outline.

5 P's
Person speaking; Person spoken to; Place; Period of Time; and Purpose.

B. The Second Step In Bible Study Is To Study The Book One Passage At A Time.

1. Determine the passage boundaries.
   a. What is a passage?
      (1) A passage is a group of verses that usually has one major idea.
      (2) It varies in length.
      (3) It could consist of two sentences or it could consist of a whole chapter.

   b. Example:
      (1) (1 Corinthians 1:1-9) is one passage. It is the greeting section.
      (2) (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) is one passage. It is describes the division that was taking place in the church in Corinth.

C. The Third Step In Bible Study Is To Read The Passage Carefully.

Read the passage several times to try to figure out what it says.

D. The Fourth Step In Bible Study Is To Determine The Literary Style Of The Passage.

After reading the passage several times, try to determine what style of literature it is.

2. God chose to use almost every available kind of literature to communicate His Word to us. Below are some examples of the different types of literature God uses.

DISCOURSE LITERATURE

1. Discourse literature involves a presentation of ideas in an argumentative or logical form. It presents the truths in terms of a "chain of logic" or "ideas." Many times, commands are found in this type of literature.

2. The gospels and epistles use a great deal of discourse literature.

3. How do we interpret discourse literature? We must carefully observe the logical development expressed within the book or passage. We must be able to "trace the argument" in the book.

Each major argument of the writer should be treated as a paragraph within the passage.

a. (Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9) is one passage. It is the greeting section.
(2) (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) What is the primary teaching of this passage? We are to love our enemies.

NARRATIVE LITERATURE

1. The Bible contains more of this type of literature than it does any other kind (over 40% of the Old Testament is narrative).

2. Narratives are stories. Their purpose is to show God at work in His creation and among His people. 21 Old Testament books are largely or entirely composed of narrative material.

In the New Testament, large portions of the four Gospels and Acts are narrative.

3. How do we interpret narrative literature? Several principles for interpreting narratives.

a. A narrative does not always directly teach a doctrine (Matthew 1-3). We must not strive to build doctrines with narrative literature.

b. A narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught proportionally elsewhere.

According to (Mat. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:17-34), we are to partake the Lord's Supper. But how often are we to partake of it? According to the narrative passage in (Acts 20:7), we are to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

c. Narratives record what happened -- not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. What people do in narratives is not necessarily something we must always follow.

In (Acts 2:45; 4:34, 35), we have an example of the early church selling their possessions and giving the money to the poor. Is that a doctrine that we as Christians must follow today? No. The Bible does not command us or teach us elsewhere to sell all of our possessions and give them to the poor.

This narrative account simply explains how the early church gave to the poor.

4. We need to be very careful when interpreting and applying narrative literature. A good applicable narrative usually illustrates a doctrine that is taught elsewhere in Scripture. Not every narrative passage applies directly to us today.