



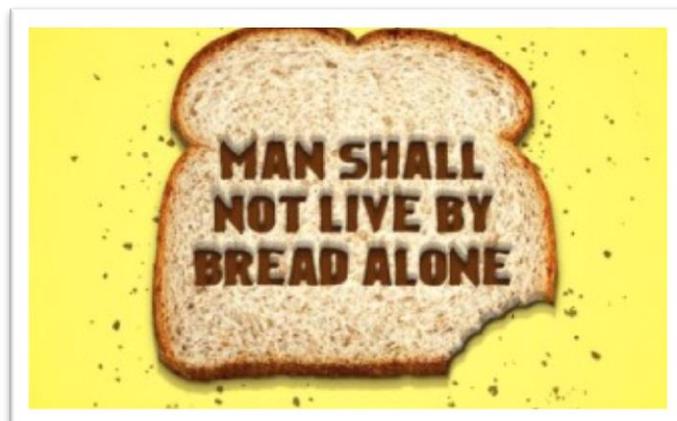
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# How to read the Bible for all it's worth

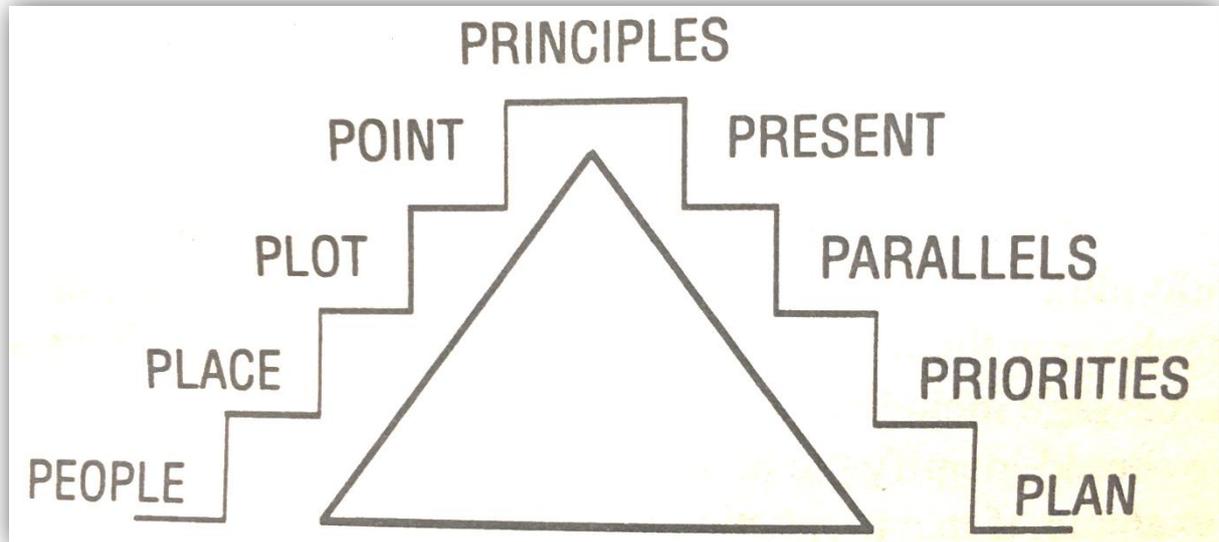
Week 5 – How to apply the Bible Part 2

*‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’*

*Luke 4:4*



Bible study must be more than reading, and even more than interpretation. Climbing up the pyramid is only half the process. We must come down. We must come back to earth, to application and real life. Last session, we climbed up the pyramid. Now we begin our descent.



We begin with;

### 1. **PRESENT**

This step expands the areas of application for the POINT and PRINCIPLES that we have extracted from the passage under study. Now a different kind of thinking is needed, because we are expanding possibilities and adding our lives to the principles. Here we describe those timeless truths for life at home, school, work, church and local community.

To bring a biblical principle in to the *PRESENT*, we can ask:

- What does this principle mean for my everyday life?
- How is this passage relevant to me today?
- What back then is similar today?

The *present* step brings the truth into our context, into today's world, into the here and now. We have to try and determine what might be a similar meaning and context to our life today.

**Discuss – What might be similar to washing feet or not eating meat offered to idols in our present day?**

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Read James 1:19 and answer the following;

What is the **POINT** and **PRINCIPLE** in the verse? (Remember the point and principle can be the same)

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To bring this POINT / PRINCIPLE into the PRESENT, have a think about the possible implications that this verse has in your;

*HOME*

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*WORK*

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*CHURCH*

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*COMMUNITY*

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*WORLD*

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While the meaning for the original audience and principles might be clear, the implications for the PRESENT are varied. Doing this step is helpful because it will help you find more areas in which a principle will apply in your own life.

*This is the 1<sup>st</sup> step in personal application.*

**Remember a biblical truth or insight will not make a difference in our life unless we take it personally.** The final steps will help us do that and cause us to become the kind of person God wants us to become and what we must do as a result of the truth we have encountered in the Bible.

Gaining insight is not enough; we must also THINK, PRAY AND PLAN to put it into PRACTICE.



After surfacing parallel areas, we may find one or more hot spots that need attention. Let's select one that we feel to be the most important and continue our descent down the pyramid.

### 3. PRIORITIES

This step involves looking at how we should change on the inside in order to change on the outside. It means stopping to think about work God wants to do in our lives before determining specific behaviours to change. At times this step involves considerable reflection.

You might ask questions such as:

- How should I adjust my priorities?
- What should I change about my values, beliefs, attitudes or character?
- What about my thought and motives should change?
- What kind of person does God want me to become?

When we find something in ourselves that is lacking or that needs to change, then we are PERSONALISING the biblical principle at the highest level.

Then after pinpointing problem areas, *we must ACT to see our lives change.*

### 4. PLAN

This is the last step in the Bible study process; actually DOING WHAT GOD HAS TOLD US TO DO. We put truth into practice by determining to change and then making plans to live differently.

Planning involves selecting a goal, breaking it down into bite-sized pieces and getting going.

To help you plan, ask questions like;

- What does god want me to DO about what I have learned?
- What steps will get me to that goal?
- What should be my first step? How can I get started?

Plans can be intentional or conditional. Intentional plans are step by step guides for taking action.

Read **John 13:12-15** and write out an intentional plan FOR YOU to apply those verses.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Conditional plans are anticipated responses to situations that may arise. Usually they follow an **'If.....then.....'** format.

You need a plan to avoid certain temptations and responding to specific opportunities.

Re-read Proverbs 12:15. What **'If.....then.....'** statement can you apply?

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In summary, the Bible pyramid is a step by step system for generating personal applications from the Bible.

**As we climb UP one side, we READ AND dig into the Bible to see what it says and means.**

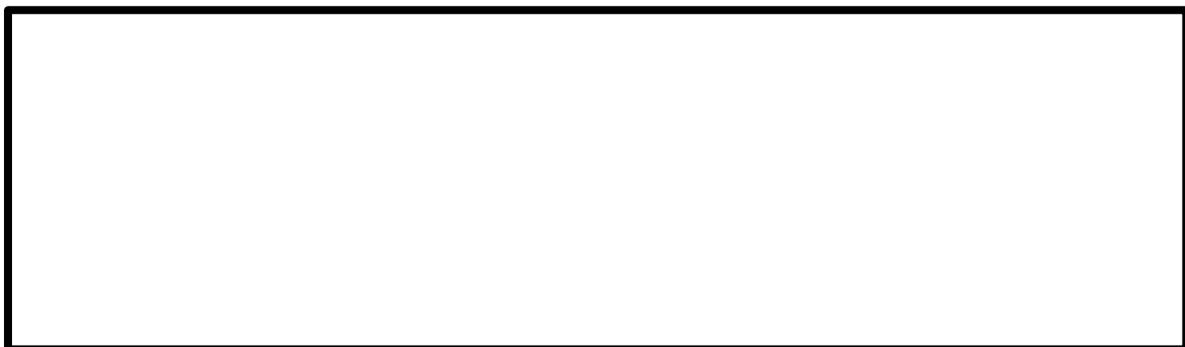
At the top, we COMPREHEND and look for objective truth so that we identify the timeless truths and avoid reading something into the text that is not there.

**Then we descend and APPLY. We personalise our insights and put them into practice.**

*The Pyramid system may seem complex at first because there are so many steps, but it will become easier as you use it. As your skills improve with practice, you will be able to apply the Bible more completely, thoroughly and effectively.*

**Read Exodus 3:1-22 and descend down the pyramid.**

**PRESENT**



**PARALLELS**

Empty rectangular box for writing parallels.

**PRIORITIES**

Empty rectangular box for writing priorities.

**PLAN**

Empty rectangular box for writing a plan.



**IF YOU DON'T STUDY**

*You shall not pass!*

## The Gospels – One story, many dimensions

### *The Gospels -Have You Heard the Good News?*

On the surface the Gospels appear to be a combination of the kinds of literature found in narratives and epistles as they contain stories about Jesus and records of His teaching. But a number of other considerations must be noted.

These are biographical accounts and **not autobiographical** for Jesus Himself did not write a Gospel. But they are more than biographies as along with true historical accounts they contain true records of the sayings and teaching of Jesus. There are four Gospels and four authors. Despite the close similarities in the Gospels, the wording of both the narratives and teaching is seldom exactly the same.

**They are not chronological**; the events in the Gospels do not follow exactly the same order. The **material in each of the Gospels is selective**. The material in the Gospels is not exhaustive, **there were other things that Jesus did that are not recorded** (John 21:25). As the Holy Spirit did not inspire their record, He obviously considered they were superfluous to Scripture. The language Jesus spoke was Aramaic, whereas the Gospels manuscripts were **written in Greek**. Around 30 years lapsed between the Ascension and the penning of Mark, with another 20-30 years before John wrote His gospel. During this gap, the stories of Jesus were passed down orally and through non-canonical writings (Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 20:35). Because of this time gap, how can we be certain of the authority and accuracy of the Gospels we read? (John 14:26).

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### **The Historical Task**

The commonality of shared material between Matthew, Mark and Luke goes beyond what might be expected from three writers independently recording the same events and teaching. It would appear that Matthew either borrowed from Mark or they both used one other source; and Luke then borrowed from Mathew, Mark and other sources. That writers of the Bible used uninspired records does not diminish the inspiration of their writing (Luke 1:1-4). **God gave us what we need to know about Jesus' earthly ministry in this way, and this is part of the genius of the Gospels, not their weakness.**

Matthew, Mark and Luke are identified as the Synoptic Gospels, that is, they *share the same view point, a common view*. John follows a different story and writes with a unique intent.

Why are there four Gospels? The simple and pragmatic answer is that different Christian communities each had need of written records about Jesus. For a variety of reasons, the gospel written for one community or group of believers did not necessarily meet all the needs of another community. So one was written first (Mark), and that Gospel was used as a

guide and written twice (Matthew and Luke) for considerably different reasons to meet considerably different needs. Independently of them, John wrote a Gospel of a different kind for still another set of reasons. And the Holy Spirit orchestrated all of this.

For us, none of the Gospels supersedes the other, but each stands beside the others as equally valuable and equally authoritative. Each author was divinely inspired to select only the material that suited his purpose for writing. Each author was divinely inspired to arrange the material that suited his purpose for writing. Each author placed the material in the contexts that suited his purpose for writing.

In summary, the unique characteristics of each Gospel suggest that each was written to a unique people group to present a unique aspect of Christ. Below is a chart to represent how the different Gospels are unique yet similar in story.

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Readers</b>	Jews	Romans	Greeks	Church
<b>Christ</b>	Messiah	Servant	Humanity	Divinity
<b>View</b>	Backward	Outward	Inward	Upward
<b>Jesus</b>	The King	The Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
<b>Type</b>	The Lion	The Ox	The Man	The Eagle
<b>Time</b>	Past	Present	Future	Eternity
<b>The Branch</b>	Jer.23:5-6	Zech.3:8	Zech.6:12	Isaiah 4:2

Numerous scholars have attempted a "Harmony" of the Gospels, but by doing this, the uniqueness of each Gospel is overlooked. It may be that the particular emphasis of each would be lost if we only had one Gospel. Because there are four Gospels we have the opportunity to compare the different accounts.

There are two important considerations in interpreting the Gospels; **thinking horizontally and vertically.**

*Think horizontally.* When reading from a particular Gospel it is valuable to read any parallel passages in the other Gospels. It is not essential as the writers intended their work to stand alone. Care must be taken not to harmonize the differences and overlook the particular emphasis. By thinking horizontally we become aware of the distinctiveness of each Gospel and the different contexts in which they place the event or teaching.

*Think vertically.* When reading from a Gospel keep in mind the singular **emphasis the writer is placing on Christ** and his audience.



When reading an incident from a Gospel, read the same account in the other Gospels.

### ***An Incident - The Temptation***

The Temptation of Jesus is found in each of the Gospels but not in John. Carefully read each of the passages that record this incident,

**Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.**

Where did the information come from?

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What notable similarities are there?

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What notable differences are there?

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What immediately precedes the temptation and is there any link?

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Where did the Temptation take place?

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Who did the tempting?

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What spiritual applications can be drawn from this incident?

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***A Miracle – Walking on the water***

The incident of Jesus walking on water is found in;

**Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:16-21**

What notable similarities are there?

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What notable differences are there?

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Why does Matthew record Peter’s involvement in the incident?

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What immediately precedes the incident and is there any link?

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What miraculous events occurred?

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What spiritual applications can be drawn from this incident?

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***A Teaching – The unpardonable sin***

One of the more intriguing teachings of Jesus is to do with sinning against the Holy Spirit. It is recorded in each of the Gospels, but omitted by John. Carefully read the following passages

**Matthew 12:22-27, Mark 3:20-30, Luke 11:14-23**

What notable similarities are there?

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What notable differences are there?

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Who is or was Beelzebub?

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Which of the accounts contains the strongest warning and why?

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What spiritual applications can be drawn from this incident?

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