
Following Jesus -- Course A

Instructions:

Please take all courses in order as listed on our home page (the computer will ask!). If you have not done all the lessons of previous courses, please [click here to go to the beginning](#).

If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

Then move on to the next lesson or the next course in order. **Please study all lessons in all courses in order as listed in the menus on our web site.**

Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

How to Study the Bible -- Part 2

Following Jesus -- Course A, Lesson #3

Introduction:

In this lesson we continue to learn about effective Bible study. Please review the previous lesson before beginning this lesson. We begin by considering some additional principles about Bible authority.

D. Only Divine Authority, not Human Authority, Is Acceptable in Religion.

When a practice is not included in what God has authorized, should we participate in it or not? Remember that the Scriptures provide us to every good work. What about works it does not provide? Consider:

The Bible teaching about wisdom

>>> Read Isaiah 55:8,9; Jeremiah 10:23. <<<

1 How do God's thoughts and ways differ from ours? Answer: His thoughts and ways are _____ than ours.

2 How limited is man's knowledge of his own ways? Answer: It is not in man who walks to direct his own _____.

Think: Can we know what God wants without revelation?

Ways that seem right to men may result in spiritual death (Proverbs 14:12). So we should not add to nor take from God's word (Rev. 22:18,19).

(Luke 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:21–24; 2:5; Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6)

The Bible teaching about worship

We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). But remember, all truth is revealed in God's word (John 17:17; 16:13).

>>> Read Matthew 15:9,13. <<<

3 What kind of worship is vain? Answer: Worship is vain when we teach as doctrines the commandments of _____.

4 What will happen to plants (doctrines) God did not plant? Answer: Plants God did not plant will be _____.

Think: When we follow human doctrines, do we honor God or man?

The Bible teaching about love

>>> Read Matthew 22:37; John 14:15. <<< (1 John 5:3)

5 What does love lead us to do? Answer: If we love Jesus we keep His _____.

Think: When we follow human doctrines, are we showing love for God or for men? Does a man show love for his wife if he gets her a power tool for her birthday because he wants it? When people defend their practices by saying "I think it's beautiful," or "We're satisfied with it," who are they showing love for?

The Bible teaching about faith

We cannot please God without faith (Heb. 11:6; cf. 2 Cor. 5:7).

>>> Read Romans 10:17; Proverbs 3:5,6. <<<

6&7 How does faith come? Answer: Faith comes by _____ the word of _____.

8 How do we show trust in the Lord? Answer: Don't lean on our own _____ but let him direct our paths.

Think: If our practices are not in the Bible, are we placing our trust in God or in man?

The Bible teaching about authority

>>> Read 2 John 9; Galatians 1:8,9. <<<

9&10 What must we do to have God? Answer: We must abide in the _____ of _____.

11 What is said of a man who preaches a different gospel? Answer: One who teaches a different gospel is _____.

Remember that all Jesus' teachings are found in the Scriptures. God did not intend for His word to itemize everything we should not practice. Rather, if an act is not included in what He said to do, He expects us to not practice it. We should not ask, "Where does God forbid this act?" but rather "Where does God tell us to do this act?"

(Col. 3:17; 2:8; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Cor. 10:18; 1 Tim. 1:3)

E. God May Teach in General or Specific Terms.

Our practices must fit the definition of God's instructions. However, we must distinguish specific language from general language.

A statement of the principle

Specific authority: We must not practice things that do not fit the meaning of God's instructions. So when He wants us to do a thing in a particular way, He instructs us by choosing words that are specific or narrow (limited, restricted, exclusive) in their meaning. If we then do things differently, outside the limits of the meaning of the terms He uses, we displease Him.

General authority: When God wants to leave men free to choose from several alternative ways of doing a thing, He instructs us with words that are general or broad (inclusive, comprehensive) in their meaning. We still must do only what fits the instruction, but we are free to choose any of the various alternatives that fit. Any such choice would be acceptable because we would still be doing what God said.

Applications of the Principle

>>> Read Genesis 6:14. <<<

12 What material was Noah told to use to make the ark? Answer: God told Noah to make an ark of _____.

Think: Could Noah have used metal, pine, or walnut? Did God expressly say not to use them? Suppose God had simply said to make an ark and named no specific material. Could Noah then have chosen any kind of material he wanted? Suppose Noah had used an ax or saw to cut the gopher wood to "make" the ark. Would he still have been doing what God said? Are these things specifically mentioned?

>>> Read Mark 16:15. <<<

13&14 What did Jesus tell the disciples to do here? Answer: He said to _____ into the world and preach the _____.

Think: Do we obey Jesus if we preach man-made doctrines? But would we be "preaching the gospel" if we taught the Scriptures in the following ways: speak to people, write them a letter, divide them up into groups and teach them, speak over radio or TV, write on a blackboard? Do these fit the meaning of what God said to do?

Likewise, what are some methods of transportation a person might use to "go" into all the world? Are these things specifically mentioned in the verse? If we use them would they fit God's command?

Many practices are wrong in religion, though nowhere specifically forbidden, because they do not fit what God specifically said to do. Other things are acceptable, though nowhere specifically mentioned, because they do fit general instructions in God's word.

Study the chart below for other examples.

General and Specific Authority

<i>Instruction</i>	<i>Unauthorized</i>	<i>Authorized</i>
Make ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14)	Metal Pine, walnut	Hammer and saw Pegs and glue
Go preach the gospel (Mark 16:15)	Human Doctrine	Walk, ride Speak, write, TV
Believe, repent Buried in baptism (Acts 2:36-38; Rom. 6:4)	Baby, animal Sprinkle, pour	River, lake Baptistry
Collection on first day (1 Cor. 16:1,2)	Sale, business Week day	Container Time of day
Bread, fruit of the vine First day (Matt. 26:26ff; Acts 20:7)	Milk and lamb Week day	Containers Time of day
Sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)	Piano, organ	Songbook, parts

(Note: If you wish to study more about Divine authority vs. human authority in religion or about the specific topics listed in the chart above, please see the links at the end of this lesson.)

Part III. Other Rules for Bible Study

A. Consider Other Passages on the Same Subject.

Truth is determined by "adding up" all pertinent passages.

>>> Read Acts 3:22,23; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 14:33. <<<

15 How much of Jesus' teaching must we heed? (Cf. Matt. 4:4,7.) Answer: We must hear Jesus in _____ He says.

16&17 Is God the author of confusion? Answer (yes or no): _____. Does truth contradict itself? Answer (yes or no): _____.

Think: Should we "interpret" a passage in a way that contradicts other passages? How can other passages help us in our study?

(Rev. 22:18,19; Acts 20:20,27; Matt. 28:20; 12:25,26; James 2:10)

Some applications

Think: Is the pattern of worship entirely revealed in one passage? Can we find all the steps to salvation in just one verse?

Think: What application can be made to people who take passages that teach we are saved by faith, ignore passages about baptism, and conclude we are saved by "faith only" without baptism?

B. Consider Context and Background.

"Context" means the verses surrounding the one being studied. By "background" we mean who is speaking, to whom they speak, etc. Consider why context and background are important:

Context affects word meanings: Words may have different meanings. The context shows which meaning applies.

>>> Read Acts 20:17,28. <<<

18 Are "elders" (v17) the same or different from "overseers" or bishops (v28)? Answer: Elders are (a) the same as overseers, or (b) different from overseers. _____.

Context gives further explanation: When we are confused about a statement, other statements nearby may clarify the meaning.

>>> Read Acts 16:31–34. <<<

19 When the jailer learned all God's will, how urgent was baptism? Answer: He was baptized the same hour of the _____.

Some people claim v31 means we are saved by "faith only" without baptism. But like the jailer, when we learn the truth (v32), we see the need for baptism.

Context tells who is speaking:

>>> Read Psalm 14:1. <<< (Cf. Job 2:9.)

20 Who says, "There is no God"? Answer: The _____ says there is no God.

The Bible is from God, but sometimes it records errors stated by sinners. We know not to believe them, because of who was speaking.

Context tells who is addressed, when and where: Some commands applied to other people in other times, but not to us today.

>>> Read Genesis 22:1,2. <<<

21 What was Abraham told to do? Answer: God told Abraham to offer his son as a _____.

(Think: Must we do this?)

>>> Read Luke 23:39–43. <<<

22 What promise did Jesus make to the thief? Answer: Jesus said the thief would be with Him in _____.

Think: Was the thief forgiven before Jesus died or after? What law was then in effect (Heb. 9:16,17; Col. 2:14)? Does this prove we can be saved without baptism now that Jesus' gospel has come into effect?

C. Define the Meaning of the Words.

The Bible is verbally inspired – each word is from God. So we understand it only when we understand the words.

Words are sometimes used today in completely different ways from the Bible meaning. "Baptism," for example, is used today for sprinkling or pouring, but in the Bible it always meant immersion (Rom. 6:4; Acts 8:38,39). Other similar examples are "saint," "church," "bishop," etc.

Dictionaries may help, but the best way to understand Bible words is to study them in context and parallel passages.

Part IV: Bible Study Tools and Procedures

The following ideas and suggestions harmonize with the principles we have learned, though other approaches may fit them too.

A. Helpful Tools for Study

Translations: The Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, so we need translations into our language. Since the Bible is verbally inspired, translations ought to give the exact meaning of the original words.

Some modern "translations" emphasize eloquence or simplicity instead of original meaning. Other translations come from one man or one denomination, so their personal beliefs may influence their work. Seek a translation made by many men who come from different groups, who believe in verbal inspiration, and who emphasize the meaning of the original words (read the introduction of the translation).

For a primary study Bible, we suggest the King James Version, New King James Version, American Standard Version, or New American Standard Version. Use others mainly for purposes of comparison.

Cross references: Some Bibles have footnotes on each verse that refer to other similar verses. These help find other verses on the subject.

Concordance: A concordance lists Bible words alphabetically giving passages where each word is used. Some concordances are brief; others are more complete.

Use a concordance to: (1) find passages about a subject; (2) find a particular verse if you know one or two words in it; (3) determine the meaning of a word by studying verses where it is used.

Other helps: Remember that the following helps are written by humans and are therefore subject to error.

(1) Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias are alphabetic descriptions of Bible people, places, things, and events. Do *not* expect them to give detailed definitions or discussions of doctrinal matters.

(2) "Expository dictionaries" and lexicons actually define Bible words. You look up the English word in an expository dictionary, but you must know the Greek or Hebrew alphabet to use a lexicon. Be careful with these books if you have no training in the original languages.

(3) Commentaries are verse-by-verse explanations of the text. Beware that authors' beliefs may contradict Scripture. If you use commentaries, study several to get alternative views, consider the *reasons* the author gives for his view, and always let the Bible be your final authority.

B. Suggested Procedures for Bible Study

The following suggestions will help you start with a few basic Bible study tools and study a Bible passage or subject for yourself. These are general guidelines that may be abbreviated or modified.

Suggested procedure for studying a Bible passage

1. *Study the general background of the book of the Bible.* Who wrote it? What do you know about the author? To whom was it written, when, and under what circumstances? This information may come from the book itself (see next step) or from cross-references or concordances.
2. *Read the passage.* Consider the theme of the whole book and the main subjects being discussed in the context.
3. *Study section by section.* Examine each paragraph, each verse, each phrase, and even each word. Define key words and study other passages on the subject (use cross references, concordances, etc.).

Ask questions about what the passage does and does not mean. Consider alternative views, then look for the answers to your questions. Try to explain the meaning in your own words. Think of examples or illustrations to help explain the passage. Make practical applications.

Suggested procedure for studying a Bible subject

1. *Select and define the topic.* Revise, if necessary, as you proceed.
2. *List the important words.* Define these as you proceed. Use them to find passages in the concordance.
3. *List the important passages.* Use memory, concordance, cross references, etc.

4. Study each passage using the methods previously described for passages. Ask questions, draw conclusions, make applications, etc.

Always make careful notes at each step and save them for the future.

Conclusion

God's word not only teaches why we should study, it teaches us how to study. Our eternal destiny depends on the outcome.

Personal application questions:

(These questions are for you to ponder. Your answers will help us understand your thinking, however they will not affect your "score.")

23 What conclusion do you reach about doctrines or practices that are not authorized in God's word? _____

24 Do you believe we must always find a "thou shalt not" in Scripture in order to know a practice is wrong? _____

25 How helpful has this lesson been in your understanding of how to study the Bible? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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Topics for further Bible study

[Why So Much Religious Confusion?](#)

[The Bible vs. Denominational Creeds](#)

[Divine Authority vs. Human Authority in Religion](#)

[Tradition as Religious Authority](#)

[How Can You Find & Identify Jesus' Church?](#)

[The Day for the Lord's Supper](#)

[Instrumental Music in Worship](#)

[What Does God Think about Denominationalism?](#)

[Does the Thief on the Cross Prove We Can Be Saved without Baptism?](#)

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