

Week 3: Bible Study Methods Study Guide

Week Three: Application

(1) Read and discuss The Bibliographic Test of the Scriptures.

The Bibliographic Test of the Scriptures

This test examines the transmission of the Biblical manuscripts from the original autographs to the present day. There are three aspects to this test: the **quantity**, the **quality**, and the **time span**. Because we do not have the "originals" of a book of the Bible, our discussion must be restricted to the manuscript copies.

QUANTITY of Biblical Manuscripts:

Old Testament: Only a small number of Hebrew manuscripts exist, due to the ceremonial burying of imperfect or worn-out copies. The Hebrew text was standardized in the 6th century A.D. by the Masoretic Jews, all other manuscripts were eliminated. The authenticity of the existing copies is supplemented by: the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Targans, and the Talmud.

New Testament: There are approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament in existence today. There are about 8,000 Latin manuscripts and about 1,000 written in other languages. The existing manuscripts of other authors (Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, etc.) range from one to twenty, compared to 14,000 of the New Testament. The writings of early Christians and the Church Fathers contain more than 86,000 citations of the Biblical text.

QUALITY of the Biblical Manuscripts

Old Testament: The Hebrew manuscripts surpass all others. This is due to the reverence and extreme care in which the scribes took to minimize the possibility of error. The scribal method included: counting the number of letters, words, and lines on each page. They also determined the middle letter of the entire Bible. If one mistake was found the entire manuscript was destroyed. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls proved to be a positive check of the Masoretic text.

New Testament: It is of much better number and quality than other ancient manuscripts. The accuracy of the thousands of New Testament manuscripts is about 99.5% compared to 95% and less among other ancient documents. There are some variant readings among the manuscripts; these do not affect doctrine. The occurrence of variation potentially affects the meaning in only several instances which are not unique commands or information.

TIME SPAN Between the Original and the Copies In Existence

Old Testament: The earliest Masoretic manuscript of the Old Testament is A.D. 895. The Dead Sea Scrolls which contain portions of the Old Testament is from 200 B.C. to A.D. 68, thus making the span at about 200 - 400 years from the originals.

New Testament: The New Testament was written between A.D. 50 and A.D. 90. The earliest fragment found is the John Rylands Fragment of the gospel of John dated between A.D. 117 and A.D. 138. Fifty other fragments are dated within 150 to 200 years of the time they were written. The Codex Vaticanus (A.D. 325) and the Codex Sinaiticus (A.D.) 350 are complete copies dated within 250 years of the

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originals. By comparison the time span between the original and the first copy of secular ancient manuscripts is about 1,000 or more. Examples include: Caesar’s Gallic Wars, 950 Years; Homer's Odyssey, 2,200 Years; New Testament, 117 Years.

(2) Open e-Sword or www.biblos.com to Ephesians Chapter 1. Review homework assignment to record observations and interpretations for verses 1-8.

(3) Using Ephesians 1:1-8, complete Step 3 of the Inductive Bible Study Method. Record applications in Column 3 of the attached worksheet.

Inductive Bible Study - A Systematic Approach – Step 3

III. Application: **“what does it mean to me?”**

- a. Goal of Bible study should be application not knowledge
- b. Thrust of application is obedience
- c. How to apply correctly
 - i. Know the correct interpretation
 - ii. Know the applicational situation
 - iii. State the application in the form of a specific principle
 - iv. Brainstorm
 - v. E.g., In Ephesians 1:3 we bless God. Although this is unusual terminology in our culture, it means to “speak well of God” when defined by the Greek word ‘eulogos’. Therefore, in the Biblical culture the principle would be to speak well of (i.e., praise) God’s character and actions.

This general meaning could be transferred to our culture. A specific application will vary for an individual but might be “I will praise God more throughout the week by remembering God’s character during my morning commute to work.”

Observation	Interpretation		Application
State the facts	Determine the meaning: (1) to those in Biblical times (2) to those in current times	Write out the principle. Create a “now” principle as a bridge between interpretation and application.	Decide on your response. Create a specific "I will" plan of action.

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- d. Signs of incorrect application
 - i. Substitute interpretation for application
 - ii. Apply to areas where we are already practicing it
 - iii. Rationalize our position and remain the same
 - iv. Have an emotional experience which we substitute for a volitional decision. E.g., in the illustration above, being excited over the explanation from the Greek work eulogos is not an application as it does not change behavior.
- e. Difficult applications

Interpreting difficult practices, behaviors or commands can be difficult. Such commands may seem awkward and senseless. Typically they are only stated once in specific cultural locational based situations. A little detective work typically helps to clarify them.

 - i. Interpreting difficult practices or behaviors
 1. Determine the meaning of the behavior in the biblical culture and if that meaning is the same in our culture
 2. If different meaning in our culture, determine the timeless principle
 3. Determine the cultural equivalent for the timeless principle
 4. Case study: John 13:4-11

Although several applications of this verse are possible, the meaning of foot washing in the biblical culture was to show hospitality since Palestine roads were dusty. Servants washed guests' feet as a practical display of making someone feel welcome and meeting their needs. Washing feet does not have the same meaning in our culture. The timeless principle is that Jesus carried out a servant's role to show hospitality to his disciples and make them feel welcome. The cultural equivalent is to make someone feel welcome by: the quality of verbal greetings, facial expressions, and perhaps offering something to drink or eat.
 - ii. Interpreting difficult commands
 1. Determine if the command is an isolated incident in a narrative or if it is repeated later as normative
 2. If it is an isolated incident in a narrative, then determine if there is an underlying principle
 3. Determine the cultural equivalent of the underlying principle
 4. Case study: I Corinthians 11:1-13

The command for a woman to cover her head while worshipping is isolated to this passage. The apparent purpose of the command was for women to honor their husbands (Greek 'aner'=husband) by covering their heads. The underlying principle is that wives should honor their husbands. One common application in our culture is wives wearing a wedding ring to signify marital status and thus honor husbands.

(4) Homework: Complete Steps 1 - 3 of the Inductive Bible Study Method on Ephesians 1:1-8