

Tools for Understanding God's Word

Dates: September 11 – (approximately 5 weeks)

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Module Description:

The aim of this class is to equip Christians with tools to help them better understand the Bible and apply it to their lives. It will follow the book by Nigel Beynon & Andrew Sach entitled *Dig Deeper: Tools to unearth the Bible's treasure*. After a brief introduction, several different tools will be presented and discussed each week, with practical examples from Scripture.

Reading recommendations:

Dig Deeper: Tools to unearth the Bible's treasure, by Nigel Beynon & Andrew Sach

ISBN: 978-1-84474-431-2

(The bookstall will have a few copies starting next week)

Other helpful resources:

40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible, by Robert L. Plummer

ISBN: 978-0-8254-3498-3

Dig Deeper into the Gospels, Andrew Sach and Tim Hiorns

ISBN: 978-1-78359-200-5

Dig even Deeper: Unearthing Old Testament Treasure, by Andrew Sach and Richard Alldritt

ISBN: 978-1-84474-432-9

Week 1 – Dig Deeper

Introduction

Assumptions

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God. We should want to read it and understand it for ourselves. See the example of the Berens (Acts 17: 10-11)
- The Bible has an objective meaning and purpose that is determined by its authors (i.e., the human authors and God who inspired them), and not by the reader.
- We need the help of the Holy Spirit to properly understand God’s Word (1 Cor 2:11-12)

Other remarks:

The various tools will not be presented in the same order as in *Dig Deeper*. The best strategy would be to read the corresponding chapters of the book *after* we treat them in class.

For class discussions, we will be using the ESV version of the Bible. We will discuss the various Bible translations explicitly, and these can be an important tool, but for the class discussions it is important for us to be working from the same set of words.

Author’s purpose tool:

What is the author’s purpose (and God’s purpose, since it is inspired).

Sometimes explicit: John 20:30-31; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Jn 5:13

Otherwise, look for clues:

- Who is writing and to whom?
- What is the situation of the author and readers?
- Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
- Are there any repeated themes or a single idea that holds things together?
- What (and how many) details are included?

Exercise:

Read 1 Cor 13

Where/when do you see this frequently quoted?

Now read 1 Cor 1:10-12; 3:1-4; 6:1, 6-8; 11:17-18

How do these passages reveal the author’s purpose? How does this change your view of 1 Cor 13?

Context tool:

What is the context of the passage:

An encyclopedia vs. novel

Example of John 12:32

Example of Exodus 20:3ff (The 10 commandments)

Different levels of context:

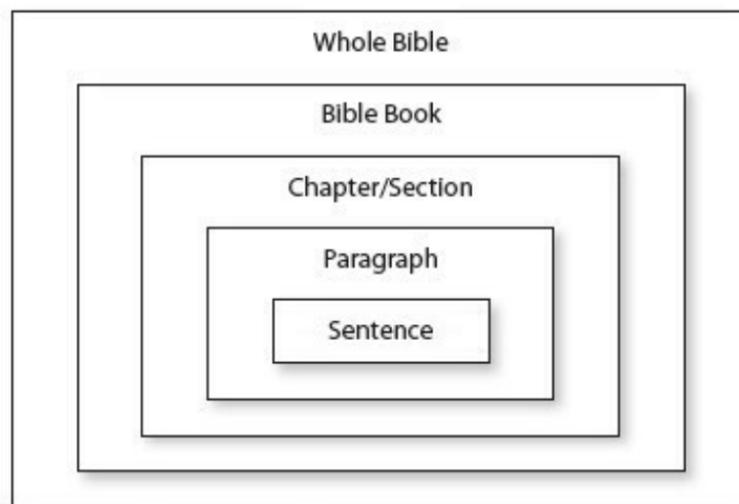


FIGURE 3.1. LEVELS OF CONTEXT

Exercise: Mark 8:22-26

First read the passage by itself – what does it tell you.

Now read vv 14-21 and 27-30. How might this change your view of the passage

Who am I? tool:

Who is the passage referring to relative to who I am? Who am I to identify with?

Example: John 14:26

Exercise: Read Mark 6:14-29 The beheading of John the Baptist

With whom would you identify?

Now, put it in the context of 6:7-13. Does this change with whom you would identify?