

II. GUIDELINES FOR TEXTUAL TEACHING

A. Types of Textual Teaching

1. A study of a verse
 - a. This is solely and exclusively the study of a single Bible verse.
Note: When a verse is an incomplete sentence, it would be wise to make it a study of a passage rather than a single verse.
 - b. It incorporates and considers every part and aspect of said verse. Even the minutest of details matter.
 - (1) This could include words and punctuation.
 - (2) It could include people, places, and/or times.
 - c. The purpose could be either practical or doctrinal, but the context and contents of the text are of the utmost importance.
2. A study of a passage or a chapter
 - a. A passage could involve as little as two verses or as much as an entire chapter.
 - b. Although much of what is considered in the study of a verse will also be considered in the study of a larger section, it will likely be done more in the way of a survey.
 - c. Again, a theme or purpose will be present, but the context is to be given the preeminence.
3. A study of a book of the Bible
 - a. Elements from the previous studies will be implemented in the study of a book of the Bible.
 - b. However, depending upon the size of the book of the Bible and amount of time available, a much more high level survey could be required.
 - c. If time allows, a more in-depth background of the book should be given prior to the study of any part of the text thereof. Note: For example, it is not uncommon to have one or two lessons solely laying the background for the book being studied.
 - d. Depending upon the book being studied, the study of time, places, and people may play a more prominent role in this approach.
 - e. If the book of the Bible is of any substantial length, this is best accomplished over a series of lessons/sermons.
4. A study of a section of books within the Bible
 - a. This will not be as common due to the complexity of this study in any reasonable amount of time.
 - b. However, one could offer a survey of the law of Moses, or a survey of the major or minor prophets, or a survey of the gospels, or of the synoptic gospels, or a survey of the epistles of Paul.
 - c. In such cases, one will consider themes or purposes prominent across a larger part of the body of scripture.
 - d. Depending upon the section being studied, the study of time, places, and people may play a more prominent role in this approach.
 - e. This is best accomplished through a series of lessons/sermons.

B. Treatment of Textual Teaching

1. A study of a verse

a. Possessing the knowledge

(1) Become familiar with the verse.

a) Read the verse.

i) Read the verse aloud numerous times until you feel completely comfortable with the rhythm.

ii) All scripture, even that which is not poetry, has a natural rhythm to it. Reading it aloud several times in rapid succession is the best way to find this rhythm.

iii) The natural rhythm gives evidence as to what parts of the verse receive the greatest emphasis.

iv) This is also a great way to make sure you are noticing every word and phrase in the verse.

b) Write the verse.

i) Write the verse slowly two or three times making sure to notice every word.

ii) God places importance on every word of scripture.

iii) Much of good Bible study consists of careful observation. These first two exercises help the student of the word to notice every part of the verse.

c) Meditate upon the verse.

(2) Breakdown the verse.

a) Consider the words.

b) Consider the punctuation marks.

c) Consider the parts of the verse.

i) Subject, verb, and direct object

ii) Nouns

iii) Verbs

iv) Adjectives and adverbs

d) Chart the verse.

i) This refers to a phrasing of the verse in such a way as to see how the parts fit together.

ii) This is possible by grouping the phrases and statements in a natural form and by using indentations to indicate sub-thoughts and by placing parallel thoughts directly below each other.

e) Define larger words.

f) Summarize the content.

(3) Classify the verse.

a) Classify the contents.

i) Classify the contents of the verse as history, prophecy, doctrine, commandment, prayer, promise, condemnation, question, or other.

ii) Many verses may fit into more than one category.

- b) Identify keys of the verse.
 - i) Is this a key verse for a particular doctrine?
 - ii) Is this a key verse for a practical issue?
 - iii) Is this a key verse in the life of a person?
 - iv) Is this a key verse in identifying a place or event?
- (4) Look at the context.
 - a) What precedes the verse? Look at the three or four verses preceding this verse. How do they lead into the verse you are studying? How does this context help explain the meaning of the verse?
 - b) What follows the verse? Look at the three or four verses following this verse. What connection exists between these verses and the one you are studying?
- (5) Other keys to understanding the verse
 - a) People—Do people (including persons of the Godhead) play a major or minor role in the verse?
 - b) Time—Note any references to time that are made in the verse. Include relational words such as “before” and “after.” These may not mention a particular time, but they can show a time relationship.
 - c) Places—What places are referenced? This includes geographical locations (Bethlehem), specific locations (in the house), and generic locations (in thick darkness).
 - d) Comparison and contrast—We learn new material in three basic ways: rote learning (repetition and drilling), comparison (seeing how things are like one another), and contrast (seeing how things differ from one another).
 - e) Cause and effect—Look for instances of cause and effect: one thing or action being the cause or the result of another. Look also for any sequence of events. That is, are there any places where certain things must occur before another event occurs?
 - f) Omissions—Proper Bible study not only assumes that God inspired the words in the Bible, but also assumes that the omissions are of the Lord. Omissions are on purpose and are meant to draw your attention to what the Lord wants emphasized (see Matthew 14:19).
 - g) Incomplete thoughts—Sometimes verses will not complete a thought, nor will the verses that surround it in the context. This is on purpose. This will leave you to consider that there are several possible solutions to complete the thought (see Luke 15:18-22).
 - h) Repetition—Are certain words or phrases repeated within the verse? If so, what does this add to your understanding?
 - i) Cross-references—What verses contain similar phrases or thoughts? How do these verses build your understanding of the verse being studied?

- b. Passing the knowledge
 - (1) Develop your outline.
 - (2) Pass the knowledge.
 - a) Context is KING.
 - i) In all Bible teaching, context should dictate the meaning of words, phrases, and passages.
 - ii) This is especially true in a textual study and lesson. One of the most fearful statements a teacher or preacher can make is...“I am going to lift this verse out of the context.”
 - (a) This is not to say that a verse cannot be used to teach a practical truth or a Bible principle.
 - (b) However, in doing so, the verse cannot be taught contrary to the context.
 - iii) One of the great benefits of textual teaching is that the text itself should be allowed to guide the flow, direction, and purpose of the teaching.
 - b) Stay on point.
 - i) A true textual study should not be allowed to turn into a:
 - (a) Geographical study
 - (b) Biographical study
 - (c) Typological study
 - (d) Word study
 - (e) Phrase study
 - ii) Turning a textual study into any one of the above will divert the attention from the concise teaching of the passage to other studies and by the time the teacher returns to the text and context, the flow will be lost.
 - (a) Definitions can be helpful, but they should not be given to the demise of the context.
 - (b) Background information such as geography, biographical instruction, or historical insights can be helpful, but again the amount of time and attention given cannot be allowed to detract from the text and context.
 - iii) Even cross-references can be a distraction from the text if one is not careful. Before you write this off, consider the fact that early believers typically received one letter of the Bible and were able to understand all they needed from said letter.
 - c) Give priority to the most important aspects of the text.
 - i) As stated before, one should always ask (in order) what does the Bible say, what does it mean, and what does it mean to me.
 - ii) The passage has to be taught by giving priority and preference to this order and these questions.