

Personal Bible Study Lessons

Introduction

The purpose of this course of study is for you to find out what the Bible says about itself, not what people say about the Bible. There is no need for a commentary or other study tools. This is consistent with what Jesus himself said: "Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) Every person should search the Scriptures, but time and opportunity are often not available. The Bible can be an imposing and intimidating book to those not familiar with it. Many are bewildered as to how or where to start. These lessons address the main theme of the Bible - salvation. What does the Bible itself say about salvation?

During this study many questions may arise which are not covered by the lesson. Rather than be distracted by them, and be led away from the main theme, write those questions down for a later time. You might be surprised how they may very well become answered in the process of study. Never let that which you don't understand disturb that which you already know. As someone said, "It is not what I don't understand in the Bible that unsettles me, rather it is what I understand."

Instructions

A - - - **Read** the question carefully until you understand it.

B - - - **Look up** the Bible reference or references indicated in the question and read it slowly several times until its meaning is clear in your mind.

Example - - - A typical question might be:

"According to John 3:16, who does God love and want to save?"

Find the Bible reference by identifying the following three parts:

- ▶ Book - in this case, John (you can use the table of contents to find the page number of the beginning of each book in the Bible)
- ▶ Chapter - the first number after the name of the book, in this case, "3"
- ▶ Verse - each chapter is divided in verses, usually consisting of one or two sentences, and are identified by small numbers at the beginning, in this case, "16"

Use of a comma and hyphen in the Bible references indicate multiple verses:

John 3:16,17,20 means chapter 3, verse 16, 17, 20

John 3:16-20 means chapter 3, verses 16 through 20

C - - - **Answer** the question

- ▶ Put an X through the box by the answer that seems most correct in light of the Bible reference.
- ▶ Put an X through the box labeled “I’m not sure” if you don’t understand the question or are unsure of the answer. Please don’t be too quick to make this selection. Allow time for thoughtful meditation and review. It might be necessary to skip that question and come back to it later. Another question might stimulate your thinking and enlighten your understanding.

Example: According to John 3:16, who does God love and want to save?

- a select group
- the world
- I’m not sure

Hints and Helpful Suggestions

The purpose of the course is to discover **what the Bible says**. When in doubt as to what the Bible is saying, here are some suggestions:

- ▶ Read the context, that is, the verses before and after the Bible reference. This might mean reading the entire paragraph or the entire chapter.
- ▶ Compare verse with verse, that is compare other similar verses in the Bible with the one you don’t understand. Sometimes the lessons will provide these. At other times, you may remember a verse previously studied. If your Bible provides marginal notes or cross referencing tools, feel free to use them. The rule of thumb is that the difficult verse should be understood in light of the easier understood verse, not the other way around.
- ▶ Give time to meditation and careful analysis. Identify nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc., to determine how the words are being used in the sentence. Follow the argument the author is giving. The Bible is written with linguistic continuity, that is, there is logical progression and purpose in it.
- ▶ Use an English dictionary if words are unfamiliar. Often a dictionary will tell you when the word has archaic usage (helpful if using a King James Version of the Bible). Choose the definition that best fits the context when multiple definitions are given.
- ▶ The questions are based on the King James Version of the Bible, but can easily be answered by using other translations.