



Bible Study Methods

Lesson Five

Introduction: The Author's Motive

Bible study is an investigation! The inspector must carefully examine the evidence and attempt to sort the essential from the incidental. This requires a trained eye. The key word is **WHAT**.

Having examined (observed) the evidence, the detective must try to reconstruct the scene of the crime. A key question to be explored is motive. **WHY** was this done?



The goal of interpretation is to discover the original meaning of the author in writing a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, section or book. Consequently, asking and answering the question of motive is pivotal. Does the author state his purpose directly? Does he state it indirectly? Or must we infer motive from his words? In any case, motive is crucial. Crucial not only for accurate interpretation but, as we will later discuss, crucial for sound application as well.

I. III John - Reconstructing the Scene

¹ The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² *Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.* ³ For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

⁵ Beloved, **you** are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; ⁶ and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth. ⁹ I wrote something to the church; **but Diotrephes**, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰ For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true.

¹³ I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Assignment: Read the small epistle of III John several times. Some Christians have taken verse two and concluded that it is not the will of God for Christians to be sick. Does the context support this? Why did the author of this letter include this verse? Did he intend for this statement to apply to all believers? Summarize your conclusions in a paragraph explaining the purpose of this verse.

Investigation:

WHY DID JOHN WRITE THIS LETTER?

Who is the author, recipient and deliverer of the letter?

What events preceded this letter?

What was the purpose / motive of the author in writing? (HINT: one aspect involves Gaius and the other aspect involves Diotrephes)

IN LIGHT OF THIS, WHY DID HE INCLUDE VERSE 2?

Is this verse addressed to all believers, a number of believers or to Gaius personally?

Is the physical health of Gaius (or believers in general) a part of the purpose of the letter as a whole.

Is this verse a simple statement, a wish or a command?

II. Barriers to Interpretation

Assignment: What advantages did the original recipients / readers of a biblical passage have over a modern reader of the same passage? Jot them down.

Overcoming Barriers:

Cultural and Historical Background

- ❖ Study the Bible against its cultural and historical background.
- ❖ Our problem is that we tend to read into that time period OUR history and culture.

Consultation

- ❖ Learn how to use tools (reference books) to study the Bible.
- ❖ Remember, however, the order is important: *God's Word* first and then *Secondary Sources*.

SIX HELPFUL TOOLS (See handout)



- ① Study Bible
- ② Exhaustive Concordance
- ③ Bible Dictionary
- ④ Bible Handbook
- ⑤ Bible Atlas
- ⑥ Commentaries

Assignment:

What is the meaning of the English word "wave?" Write your definition below (don't use a dictionary).

What is the meaning of this same word in the following sentences...

- Bob and Jim said goodbye and parted with a *wave*.
- Surfers are always looking for the perfect *wave*.
- Scientists debate whether light behaves like a particle or a *wave*.
- In response to the cheerleaders, the fans started a *wave*.
- Mabel went to the beautician to get a new *wave*.

In each case what helped you to understand the meaning of *wave* intended?

WEBSITE: www.drstevej.com/bsm.htm

Bible Study Tools:

Study Bible - The *Scotfield Study Bible* followed by the *Ryrie Study Bible* opened the door for an avalanche of study Bibles today targeting every imaginable audience. When selecting a study Bible try to determine the perspective of the author(s) of the notes. Below are some I find helpful.

Ryrie Study Bible. (available in KJV, NASV, ESV or NIV versions)

NIV Study Bible.

Exhaustive Concordance - The concordance you select should be exhaustive, i.e. include all references to all words. Select one keyed to the translation you use (see below). www.blueletterbible.org has search capabilities which make a concordance obsolete, except when your computer isn't available.

NASV *NAS Exhaustive Concordance*.

NIV *NIV Exhaustive Concordance*.

KJV *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* / *Young's Analytical Concordance*.

Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia - Contains articles on biblical subjects which provide helpful background for answering interpreting questions. An encyclopedia simply is an expanded, multi volume dictionary. Again watch for the author(s) perspective when selecting a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Unger, Harrison, ed. *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*

Butler, ed. *Holman Bible Dictionary*.

www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries

Bible Handbook or Bible Introduction - Gives background on each book of the Bible as well a suggested outline and other material. A good study Bible will contain most of this information. A Bible Introduction (usually either Old Testament or New Testament) provides far more information than practical for a study Bible to contain and is a good tool.

Unger. *New Unger's Bible Handbook*

Archer. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*.

Tenney. *Survey of the New Testament*, revised.

Bible Atlas - Most Bibles today contain some maps. An atlas expands this by giving maps that clarify geographical issues for many more of the events of the Bible. A good Bible atlas can yield significant insight.

Beitzel. *Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*.

Brisco. *Holman Bible Atlas*.

www.bibleatlas.org

Commentaries - Usually commentaries are classified as one volume, multi-volume or individual book depending on the scope of material being treated. A one volume commentary is helpful to a beginning Bible student but often is too limited in it's content. Multi volume commentaries provide more discussion but sometimes are better on certain books of the Bible than on others. When studying a particular book of the Bible it is wiser to select a commentary for that book. To aid your selection you should either ask a pastor for a recommendation or look up the key texts and read the sections to see if the level and contents are suitable. Some commentaries are technical, some are devotional and others blend the two.

Walvoord, Zuck, eds. *Bible Knowledge Commentary of the Old Testament* (Dallas Seminary Faculty)

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www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries

Bible Software - With the advent of the personal computer Bible software has grown in popularity. You must select software that will run on your computer. Of the packages available for the PC (Windows) the two most used are listed below. Pricing varies with the level of features, number of translations, etc.

www.blueletterbible.org

www.biblestudytools.com

<http://www.laprecept.com/StudyHelps.htm>