

Psalm 119:34-“God give me understanding that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all my heart.”

The Five “C’s” of Biblical Interpretation

Table Questions:

--How has Bible reading going? Great (daily) Pretty good, or “I’m going to read more this week”?

--What did you receive from the Lord this week while reading the Bible?

Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical _____

Key Question: What is the intention of God in this text?

Five “C’s” basic principles of Interpretation.

1. _____

Observe, Observe, Observe, and finally _____.

Apart from understanding the meaning of the text there could be no application of the Word to our lives.

Once we receive insight we are able to begin hearing what the Lord wants to speak to us through His Word.

There is a direct “cause” and “effect” relationship between content and meaning.

The content of a passage of Scripture is the raw material, the database with which you will interpret the text.

In order to understand the content, we must ask questions and look for clues such as:

- What terms are used in the passage
- What form of literature am I reading?
- What is the atmosphere surrounding the author?
- We must also ask, who? What? Where? When? Why?
- What do I see?
- What is the author trying to say?

The more time you spend in observation the less time you will have to spend in interpretation and the more accurate your result. The less time you spend in observation the more time you will have for interpretation and the Less accurate your understanding will be.

2. _____

All 66 books of Scripture hang together as one unique book. They are individual yet connected.

They are a unified whole, that is the principle on which our next key to interpretation stands.

Context- context refers to that which goes before and that which follows after.

Misunderstand context can make it appear that someone said something they never actually said.

Much of our misunderstanding of Scripture can be solved by simply asking the question.

Would you please read the _____ ?

Example: Philippians 2:12... if we just read the last part of that verse we would feel lost and without hope.

But when we read the beginning we are filled with hope. Why? Because context matters.

Specific types of context

1. **Literary context:** This is the concept of learning to read a verse as part of a larger grouping of thoughts. Understanding that each verse of scripture is part of a larger passage, chapter and book. And we must interpret it as such or we may misunderstand.
2. **Historical Context:** In other words, when did this take place, where does this passage fit in history? What were some things that were happening socially, politically when this verse was written?
3. **Cultural Context:** Culture play a powerful influence on how a Biblical writer communicates. The more we know about ancient culture the more insight we will have into the text.
4. **Geographical context.:** For example Mark chapter 4, we see a storm on the sea of Galilee. Knowing the geographic features of the sea of Galilee that allowed storms to take place helps to bring this account to life.
5. **Theological Context:** The question here is, what did the author know about God? Where does this portion of scripture fit into the unfolding of Gods revelation? One of the resources you will want to turn to as you try to understand theological context is a Bible Commentary.

VIDEO on Context

3. _____

Solo scriptura/Scripture alone + the Reformation + Gutenberg = Scripture in Christian's hands

Rule: We compare _____ to _____.

"You rarely have to go outside the Bible to explain anything in the Bible." Dr. Donald Barnhouse

1. Compare Word usages in the Bible. Use a concordance or a Vine's.
2. Comparisons for _____ Studies in the Bible.
3. Comparisons on Topics or Themes in the Bible.

4. _____

You have to see the Bible against the right _____

Don't read our world and our culture into the Bible.

Go back to the historical context of their world so we don't mess up the message of God to our world.

Examples of Cultural Background

Ruth

Last Supper

First Corinthians 8

5. _____

The Holy Spirit speaks to us, but he has also spoken to many people about the text.

1. Concordances.
2. Bible Dictionaries
3. Bible Handbooks
4. Bible Commentaries
5. Additional Resources

Be careful with _____.

Close in prayer in your tables.

EXAMINING THE CONTENT

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Habakkuk 3:17–19

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

“There is a direct cause-effect relationship between content and meaning. The content of a passage is the raw material, the database, with which you will interpret the text. And because of your work in Observation, you already know quite a bit about how to determine the content of a passage” (p. 229).

As we move from Observation to Interpretation, we’ll start with a short passage to get some practice. For the next five days we’ll look at Habakkuk 3:17–19 and practice various ways to interpret what’s there. (Before long we will get to a couple of book studies where we plan to integrate all the elements of Bible study we’ve been learning, so we won’t get too deep at this point.)

Read Habakkuk 3:17–19. Remember to look for terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere. Try to find things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, or true to life. Then answer the following questions:

Who wrote this passage? To whom was he writing? (If you notice that the author did not address his people, you will have found something that makes this book unlike most other books of prophecy.)

- What is happening? What point was the author trying to make?

- Where was the author as he wrote this passage?

- When (generally) was this written? (We'll look more closely at the context in the next assignment.)

- Why did the author portray such a bleak setting? Why did he feel the need to be so affirming in light of the scene he described?

So what? As you look at this passage, what light can it shed on your life today? How can you take the things you've observed and begin to interpret them in a way that makes sense to you?

LOOKING FOR CONTEXT

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Habakkuk 3:17–19

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

“Context refers to that which goes before and that which follows after. . . . Whenever you study a verse, a paragraph, a section, even an entire book—always consult the neighbors of that verse, that paragraph, that section, that book. Whenever you get lost, climb a contextual tree and gain some perspective” (pp. 231, 233).

As we look again at Habakkuk 3:17–19, we want to move from content to context. Read these verses again. What’s your first impression of Habakkuk’s level of faith in God?

To begin to form a *literary context*, go back and read Habakkuk 3:16. How does that single verse influence the tone of the verses that follow?

Now go back and read the entire book of Habakkuk. (It’s short.) What is the context of the closing passage in light of the rest of the book?

What is significant from a *historical context*? You should have already determined when the book was being written. What else was going on in the world at that time? What is significant about Habakkuk's message from a political aspect?

We'll save the *cultural context* until later (pp. 121–22). But from a *geographic context*, what might be changing for Habakkuk's people? In other words, what geographic relocation of people is likely to take place if the "nation invading us" (3:16 NIV) is successful?

Finally, what can you determine about the *theological context* of this passage? What kind of relationship did Habakkuk seem to have with God? How does this passage compare with other prophetic passages you might be familiar with? What, ultimately, was God trying to communicate to Habakkuk? What was Habakkuk trying to communicate to God?

MAKING RELEVANT COMPARISONS

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Habakkuk 3:17–19

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

“In comparison we compare Scripture with Scripture. And that offers a great safety net, because the greatest interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. . . . Comparison points out the great need you have for a concordance” (p. 237).

Most of us in the United States cannot relate to living in a city being attacked by outsiders. While we may see news stories of locations where that kind of threat is still very real today, most of us are free of such fears. So how do we relate to what Habakkuk was saying here? Let's try to make a few comparisons.

Get a concordance and look for some comparative Scriptures. Naturally, you can spend all day perusing Scripture for comparisons. But take a few moments to do something that appeals to you. Here are a few suggestions, but feel free to create your own comparison study.

Can you find other examples of when a fig tree does not bud? What are the circumstances? What are the lessons to be learned?

What else can you find about grapes and/or vines that might shed some light on this passage?

Are there other places where deer (“hind”) is used as a symbol of a person under God’s care?

Why do you think Habakkuk differentiated between “the Lord” (v. 18), “the God of my salvation” (v. 18), and “the Lord God” (v. 19)?

CONSIDERING THE CULTURE

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Habakkuk 3:17–19

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

“When you study . . . any portion of the Word of God . . . make sure you study the background. Re-create the culture. Because then and only then will the text come alive” (p. 247).

It is possible that you grow grapes or olives for a living. Or you may just happen to be a shepherd. But if not, you'll need to put yourself in the place of a farmer many centuries ago as you again examine Habakkuk 3:17–19.

The passage describes someone waiting “fruitlessly” (if you'll excuse the pun) to see figs and olives bud out on trees and grapes spring forth from vines. But in order for his produce to be at this stage of growth, what things would a farmer have already done to prepare his crops? List all the things you can think of.

Now suppose you defined your job as “herdsperson.” However, under the present circumstances you have “no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls” (v. 17 NIV). How do you think you would feel about yourself? How might you feel about God?

In the culture of Habakkuk's time, crops and animals were the equivalent of today's bank accounts. That's where the money was. People who had neither vineyards, herds, nor olive groves had no means of income. Yet what was the attitude of the writer?

Suppose Habakkuk were writing from your job and culture. Rather than using the imagery of olives, grapes, sheep, and cattle, what terms and comparisons might he have used? Try to rewrite verses 17 and 18 to make the same point, but from the perspective of your own culture.

DOING FURTHER CONSULTATION

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Habakkuk 3:17–19

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

“Consultation involves the use of secondary resources. They can shed light on the text that will help you make more sense out of what you’re looking at. You see, we never want to become arrogant in the study process by thinking that we’ve got all the answers, that the Holy Spirit speaks to us, but He’s never spoken to anyone else. The truth of the matter is, thousands of people have walked this road before us. . . . But one word of caution: Never forget the order. First the text of Scripture; then secondary sources” (pp. 249–50).

To review what was said in chapter 34 of *Living By the Book*, it helps to have “tools” to assist you in Bible study after you’ve observed and interpreted the text to the best of your ability. A good study Bible and an exhaustive concordance are key to Bible study. But in addition, you will probably make good use of a Bible dictionary, Bible handbook, Bible atlas, a good commentary, and other helpful resources. As we learn to consult the right references, our Bible study can progress to a new depth.

Collect all the “tools” you have for Bible study, and again read Habakkuk 3:17–19. You’ve already used a concordance, so use the other resources to see what you can find out about some of the following things. (You’ve already answered some of these questions on your own. Now see if you can discover anything new about them.)

What was the significance of olives, grapes, and figs in Bible times?

How important were herds of sheep and cattle?

How bad did things get during times of famine?

What else can you discover about the Babylonians (or "Chaldeans") who were attacking the city?

Speaking of the city of Jerusalem, what would have made it a challenging target for an invading force? Why was it worth the effort?

Based on the words chosen to describe God, what was Habakkuk's intention in describing his Lord?

What other questions do you have about this passage? (Now is the time to check them out.)

COMING TO TERMS

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Book of Habakkuk

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes

"A 'term' is a key word or phrase that an author uses to make his point. He may use the word repeatedly to give it emphasis. He may place it on display in some prominent verse. He may build a story around it to illustrate its significance. Or he may put it in the mouth of a central character in his narrative. However he signals them, an author wants you to pay attention to his terms, because they are freighted with meaning. Unless you 'come to terms with the terms,' you'll never understand his message" (pp. 257-58).

You've just been through the five keys to Interpretation: Content, Context, Comparison, Culture, and Consultation. In doing so, you've remained in the same passage of Scripture—only three verses, for the most part. But while you're familiarizing yourself with various Bible tools, today's assignment gives you the opportunity to better identify some noteworthy terms used. Since Habakkuk 3:17-19 is a relatively straightforward and simple passage, let's back up and look at some terms found earlier in the book.

Depending on the Bible translation you are using, these terms pop up in various verses. Choose one or more of the following terms, start with its occurrences in Habakkuk, and then use a concordance to see where else it pops up and what conclusions you can draw about its significance.

- Justice/injustice

- Judgment

- Cup (2:16)

- Deliverance

- (Choose another term that looks interesting to you.)
