

Understanding the Bible Advanced Edition

Kelly McDonald, Jr.

**Understanding the Bible
Advanced Edition**

**Please read the Beginners Edition Before
Reading this booklet.**

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Introduction

In this booklet, we are going to look at some more advanced study methods of the Bible. It is suggested that you read the beginners book before we look deeper into this advanced booklet. There are some things I may reference here that were discussed more in-depth in the beginner's guide. Paul informs us that the Bible was fit for four things:

2 Timothy 4:16-17

“16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

We learn that the scripture is breathed by God. Therefore it takes his breath, or Spirit, to help us understand it. This is why I emphasize prayer before you read or study the Bible.

- 1) We can use the Word for doctrine. We tend to slander the word doctrine in the church today. Doctrine is simply the teachings of the Bible.
- 2) We can correct people or expose fault with the Word.
- 3) We can reform people through the Word. This is walking them through the steps of conversion from a worldly lifestyle to a Godly lifestyle.
- 4) We teach righteous living with the Word. This means teaching right living for God as one of His Children.

I will simply pass onto you a series of deeper study methods God has shown me over the years so you can get the most out of your Bible. Enjoy this work as I pass years of tips and nuggets onto you.

The Problem with Translation

There is a tremendous argument in the Body of Christ over which version of the Bible we should use to read and study the Bible. Some say to go with an older version like the King James Version, while others say to go for an easier to read version like the New International Version.

I want to point out first and foremost **that all** Bible translations have issues. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with some Aramaic. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. The original texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are God-breathed. The teachings of the Bible are infallible.

Since men translated the Bible, then there can be issues with different translations. This is why all translations have issues. The original teachings are infallible while translations of the Bible can have issues. Why is this? Humans far removed from the time of Jesus do the translating.

Some translations, such as the King James Version, use language that is outdated. It was written in 1611 in Shakespearean English. For instance, I Peter 1:15-16 reads, “15 But as he which hath called you is holy, **so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;** 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

From a modern perspective, the phrase “all manner of conversation” would basically mean your conversations or speech with other people. In 1611, this phrase meant – everything you do. Peter is telling us to be holy in everything we do.

I will give you one more example of language used in the King James that is no longer applicable today. James 2:2 reads, “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile **raiment;**” The word raiment is not used in modern English. It was used in 1611 to refer to clothing or apparel.

As you can see, the time period that a translation was written in can affect the way you read it. You need a dictionary to understand some unused English words in an older version of the Bible.

The other problem with translation is choosing which word or words in the English language best convey the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word that is found in the original Bible manuscripts. The writers of the Bible had a culture very different from our own. They had “slang” like we have slang. These factors make translation a delicate process. It must be done carefully and with the inspiration of God’s Spirit.

The big argument over which translation to use is translation based upon Word for Word or Thought for Thought. Some translations try to translate every word in Greek into a corresponding word or two in the English language. The King James and New King James are examples of this.

Other translations try to capture the thought that is being conveyed and not just the individual words themselves. They are taking the Words used and conveying the entire thought being expressed by the writer. The New International Version and New Living Translation are examples of this. Some translations take the thought for thought translation too far. The Message Bible is one example. In my opinion, it translates in such a modern thought that the original cultural context is nearly lost. This is my opinion, as some people do use this translation.

When choosing a translation, I always recommend an easy to read version. This is especially true in evangelism efforts. The King James Version is often used with concordances, so you will end up reading it by default many times when you study deeper.

Older versions of the Bible, such as the KJV, were revolutionary at the time in which they were written. However, we have much older original manuscripts today than we did 400 years ago. An

older manuscript means it was written closer to the time that the events actually happened in. The Bible is simply copies of copies of copies going all the way back to the original writings.

For example, Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians around 53 AD. Since his original letter, people have been making copies upon copies until our modern day. As we discover older copies that are closer to 53 AD, we are getting much closer in finding the most accurate copy of his letter. More modern translations today are based upon older, more trusted documents. Furthermore, the English language has significantly changed. Newer translations have updated language.

I usually recommend cross checking the meaning of a verse with different translations to see how multiple versions translate it. <http://biblehub.com/> is a great website where you can type in one verse and see how it is translated by many different versions.

I usually look at the King James and New International Version. If necessary, I check the New King James, Revised Standard Version, and New American Standard Bible when the literal meaning is not easy to ascertain.

The contexts are also extremely important to help you ascertain the meaning of a verse. I went over 5 types of context in the last booklet. I will go over 7 more in the next chapter.

After saying all of this, keep in mind that the Bible is God-breathed. I am not trying to confuse you with this information, but rather to help you. Use the version of the Bible that the Lord leads you to use.

Studying the Bible - Advanced

In this chapter, we are going to look at an additional 7 types of context that are considered a little more advanced than the first 5 types discussed in the earlier chapter.

7 More Types of Context for any verse in the Bible:

- 1) In Author
- 2) In Symbol
- 3) In Language or Word
- 4) In Covenant
- 5) Historical
- 6) Cultural
- 7) Location

1) In Author Context – Sometimes a specific author addresses a subject over the course of all the books they have written.

For instance, Luke was the author of both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. At the end of the book of Luke, he wrote:

Luke 24:47-49

“47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

In the opening of Acts, we find:

Acts 1:4, 8

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about....8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and

you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

When we connect them, we see a story line ending in Luke and picking back up in Acts. Try to connect the different books that a specific author has written.

2) In Symbol – Sometimes symbols are repeated in the Bible and they help us cross reference and understand other verses.

Example: Hyssop

Hyssop is used during the Passover in Exodus 12 when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt.

In Psalms 51:7, David said, “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”

Hyssop was lifted up to Jesus mouth in John 19:29 (which happened on Passover)

We see through these symbols that hyssop is tied to Passover, forgiveness, and turning back to God.

3) In Language or Word– Sometimes a word has a specific meaning. Sometimes a Greek or Hebrew word carries a specific meaning when it is used. You can develop themes from this type of context.

Examples:

The word holy is found in the book of Leviticus more than any other book of the Bible. This shows us that holiness is a theme of this book.

There is a Greek Word in the New Testament, *dorea*. It is used exclusively of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the tongues that manifest.

4) In Covenant – Sometimes you have connect verses to a specific covenant to understand the meaning.

The promise of the New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In verse 34, the Bible reads, “No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Some people have quoted this verse to say that the New Covenant is not in affect yet because not everyone knows the Lord. The verse clearly says that the New Covenant will cause all to know the Lord, but who is the **all** to which he refers?

Jesus discussed in Matthew 5:17-20 the qualifications for the least and greatest in the Kingdom of God. This helps us understand that the verse in Jeremiah is telling us that all **IN THE NEW COVENANT** will know the Lord, not every single person alive. This includes the least and greatest, which are defined by Jesus.

5) Historical – Historical information can help you including the events going on in the world at the time a specific verse was written.

In the book of Esther, the vile Haman offered to pay King Xerxes a large sum of money to exterminate the Jewish people. Most people are not aware that the Persian Empire was low on money at this time from fighting the Greeks. This helps us understand that King Xerxes’ refusal to exterminate the Jews was truly caused by his affection for Esther since he really needed money at that time.

6) Cultural – Verses can be better understood with the cultural context. This can involve studying the peoples that the author is addressing.

Example: In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

There was a saying in Rabbinic circles of Jesus day that whoever correctly interpreted Torah was said to have “fulfilled it”. Whoever incorrectly interpreted it was said to have “destroyed it”. Jesus came to teach us the right way to interpret the Torah, which means He came to show us how to Live it.

This cultural context enlightens us to the meaning of Jesus’ words.

7) Logistical – Sometimes a location gives us insight and revelation.

Examples:

Elijah was sent to a widow in Zerethan. Interestingly enough, that is where Jezebel was from. Elijah was afraid when she threatened him in his home country. When he dwelt in her home country he was not afraid!

Paul faced many issues in the Corinthian Church. Corinth in Greek means “Crossroads”. The people in the church were at a crossroads between serving God and serving the devil!

Searching for a symbol or word in the Bible through a concordance or website (as addressed in the beginner booklet) will help you.

Understand that the Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew with some of it being in Aramiac. The New Testament was written in Greek. There are certain study helps called Lexicons that help you understand the language. For Hebrew, I typically use the Strong’s Concordance (with Lexicon) and the Browns Driver Briggs study books. For Greek, I use the Strong’s Concordance

(with Lexicon) and Thayer's Greek Definitions. Vine's expository is also an excellent reference guide.

A Bible dictionary can help you when it comes to historical and cultural information. Commentaries can be good when they have historical, cultural, or language connections. Otherwise, I do not use commentaries very often because they are highly opinionated.

You can always look at Bible maps (which are in the back of many Bibles) to help you see where different events are occurring at.

While there are many ways to look at a verse, ultimately prayer and seeking the face of God will lead you to which one you should look at.

Hebraic Interpretation

A final way we can get a deeper, fuller understanding of the Bible is through a Hebraic perspective. Most people in the Western world or in any culture with Western influence have been taught to think with a Greek mindset. The problem is that the Bible was not written from a Greek perspective.

In fact, there is not a single writer of the Bible who was a Greek! They were all Israelites, which means their world perspective and thought patterns are Jewish or Hebraic! In Romans 12:2, Paul wrote, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” – There is a pattern of this world we must avoid. The Greek mindset conforms to this pattern. So much of what we believe as Christians and teach has been influenced by Greek culture. This mindset can lead us to false conclusions. Our minds must be transformed to think the way the Lord thinks. Then, we will understand the Bible even more.

Linear versus Cyclical

The Greek mindset thinks linearly. For instance, someone with the Greek mindset sees things in terms of Event A is followed by Event B, which is followed by Event C, which is followed by Event D, which is followed by Event E, etc. Part of this mindset is that once we are at Event E, then Events A, B, C, and D are over with. They will not occur again. Linear thought method leads people towards believing evolution, where things are progressing and evolving into a higher state than what they were before.

The Hebraic understanding of time is cyclical, meaning that whatever occurs now has already happened before. Solomon worded it best, “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Thus, history is simply a series of cycles repeating themselves. Events A, B, C, and D oc-

cur, and then the cycle repeats. These cycles may have different details involved with them, but they are the same events occurring over and over again. The Bible says that God never changes (Mal. 3:6, Hebrews 13:8).

The linear, evolutionary mindset is completely opposed to creation and the Bible. Unfortunately, in America evolution is crammed into our minds from birth. Due to this, we view the Bible from a linear, evolutionary mindset. I want to give you a list of misconceptions people have about the Bible because of the linear, evolutionary mindset.

Some people believe the gifts of the Spirit were used in the first century and then faded away in the fourth century. This is another evolutionary, linear mindset. The gifts of the Spirit can even be found in the Old Testament. How can a New Covenant with better promises lack the power of God's Spirit? The gifts of the Spirit are still alive and in operation today.

Sometimes people believe that Christ nailed the Law to the cross in the gospels, changed the Feast days, or that Paul changed the gospel when he went to the Gentiles. These are all evolutionary, linear thought patterns. The commandments and Feasts are found in the Old and New Testaments. Even in the New Heavens and New Earth, the whole world will keep the Sabbath (Isaiah 66:22-23). Jesus is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. How could He nail the Law to the cross if He was sacrificed even before the Law was given?

There are also four levels of Hebraic Interpretation. These add additional power of understanding to a verse in the Bible. A verse form Paul will help us emphasize this.

Ephesians 3:17b-19

“17b ...And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may

be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

There is a width, length, height, and depth to Christ’s love for us. Christ is the Word made flesh, and He is the expression of God’s Love to us. We notice that there are four dimensions here to discuss the fullness of God. These four dimensions also correspond to the four ways to look at the Scriptures from a Hebraic Perspective.

Pashat – This is the literal meaning of a verse. Without the most literal meaning of a verse, deeper levels of interpretation can be hindered or twisted. The context keys we discussed in the last chapter and last booklet will help you with this.

Ramez – This is the allegorical meaning of a verse. Sometimes this is called the Kingdom meaning. This is how a verse applies to the Kingdom of God or a Kingdom mindset. A Bible verse can have any number of Kingdom applications.

Drash – This is how a verse applies to you at a specific point in time. Sometimes a verse stands out in your mind when you read it because it applies to you at a specific time. It can also apply to an entire church at a certain point in time. There is an limitless number of ways that a Bible verse can apply to you at any point in time.

Sod – This is the deep spiritual meaning of a verse.

These categories will be a guide to help you understand the Bible on a deeper level. To Learn more about the Hebraic Perspective of the Bible, order our booklet “Our Hebrew Roots”.

We will take one verse and give an example of all four levels of interpretation.

After Jesus multiplied the bread in John 6, He said in verse 12, “Gather the pieces left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

Pashat - Teaches us on a personal level that we should not be wasteful in how we spend money or use resources.

Ramez - Kingdom Principle that there is no waste in God's economy

Drash – The Lord shows you that you overspent on eating out last month.

Sod – Everything we have done in our lives will be turned around and used for God's glory. Even though we thought that we wasted some of our lives, God turns it around and uses it for His purposes.

We can see the amazing potential for any one verse to have multiple applications at any time. The Hebraic mindset and interpretations add another level of excitement to reading the Bible.

All books and sermon sets are gift for donation!

Order yours today, by mail, PO Box 10334, Jackson TN 38308; email, hungryheartsmen@aol.com; or by phone (731) 736-1055.

Holy Time With God

Hungry Hearts Ministries' book on the Sabbath is now available. This new book will captivate your heart to serve God by obeying His Sabbath. Order yours today, and order for all of your friends. This will explain how God's Sabbath brings you into a closer relationship with Jesus.

Yours for a suggested donation of \$7

(The CD sermon set is yours for a suggested donation of \$20)

Freedom Under the Law of God

The Torah is the first five books of the Bible and is also called The Law. Some believe that God's law is bondage. This book explains how God's Law, or Torah, actually *encourages* freedom. Order *Freedom Under the Law of God* to learn how the Torah encourages us as Christians and human beings to live a life full of happiness, prosperity, and freedom.

Yours for a suggested donation of \$10

Holy Spirit and Fire

There has always been a Holy Fire burning in the hearts of God's Holy people. It has burned down through the ages to our present time. It will give us strength today if we will let it. This fire is called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it will quench the deepest longings of every human. This fire will produce spiritual fruit and activate spiritual gifts in our lives. It will set us apart to God Almighty. Learn about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and how it will change your life!

Yours for a suggested donation of only \$9

HUNGRY HEARTS MINISTRIES

Is Your Heart Hungry For The Lord?

The purpose of Hungry Hearts Ministries is to teach Christians how to LIVE according to the way of life taught in the Law of God, and to BAPTIZE them in the Holy Spirit, so they can WORSHIP the Living God both in Spirit and in Truth. We accomplish this with a five point outreach: a local service, a Feast of Tabernacles Celebration, a weekly message ministry, books on our purpose, and missions overseas.

We are a Ministry dedicated to serve the God of Israel. Too many Christian organizations are focused around men. It takes men and women to serve God, we just need to change the focus from us to Him. Our purpose and our outreach is focused on bringing people to Him. That is, to God our Father and to His Son, (Yeshua) Jesus Christ. We live by His laws, because he told us to live that way. We accept His son as our Savior because, Jesus paid for our sins with His death on the cross. We want the fullness of His Spirit, because it is the power of God living in us. We want Him and all of Him that we can have. We worship God because it is the whole duty of mankind. We worship God because He has redeemed us to Himself. We worship God because we know Him.

We are a people who are hungry for more of God. We are sick and tired of man-made church. We want to feel His Spirit stir within us. We are focused on the real God to help us with our real needs in our real lives. We are hungry for His Presence, we are thirsty for His Spirit, and we are willing to offer Him our lives.

Meet the Author

Kelly McDonald Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. For 21 years, Kelly attended Trinity Baptist Church in Bemis, TN, where he was saved in 1992. While at Trinity, a small independent Baptist church, Kelly learned boldness for the Kingdom of God and that being a Christian is an all or nothing experience. In June 2006, Kelly was called to his first ministry, going door to door in the Bemis community and inviting people to church. In September 2006, Kelly was called to begin a Christian men's group at his then college, Lambuth University. In February 2007, Kelly was called to preach. Less than a month later, he became introduced to Hungry Hearts Ministries.

Since becoming a member of Hungry Hearts, Kelly has taken on many roles to further the ministry's work, from going door-to-door to pass out booklets, preaching, administering the prison ministry, teaching Bible Studies, and starting churches. Due to his service in the ministry, he was ordained a Deacon during the Feast of Pentecost on May 31st, 2009. His spiritual growth and desire to serve God led to his ordination as an Evangelist during the Feast of Pentecost on May 25th, 2012.

Kelly has written for a local Christian magazine, *The Christian to Christian Connection*, and for the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*. He currently writes for and serves as the Editor for the Ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. Kelly has written five books on how to live a holy life. Kelly graduated *summa cum laude* from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Legal Studies. As a Torah Observant/Spirit Filled minister, Kelly has spoken at several different congregations in four different states, and is available to speak at your church upon request.

This booklet is a continuation of our series on understanding the Bible. It is highly advised that you read the first booklet in this series “Understanding the Bible—Beginners Edition” first. In this second booklet, we will look at various ways to study the Bible from an in-depth perspective. The tips you will learn will make your Bible study more excited and fruitful.



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