

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM

Study Sunday 10:00 AM

Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM

Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM

Singing every 2nd Sunday evening

Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

Preacher / bulletin editor:

Kris Vilander, (256) 472-1065

E-mail: kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org**Website:** www.haysmillchurchofchrist.org

“...to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word,”

—Isaiah 66:2

**Servants during February:**

Songleader: Dwight (2), Stanley (9), Larry (16), Dwight (23)

Reading: Larry

Announcements: Marty

Table: Stanley, Marty, Larry

Wednesday Lesson: Larry (5), Stanley (12), Kris (19), Larry (26)

Area Meetings:

Fourth Street (Cullman), 7-9, Colby Junkin; **Eastside (Athens),** 21-23, Gary Fisher; **Pepper Road,** 22-26, Larson Plyler

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

Volume 7

February 9, 2025

Number 36

Worth All Our Effort

By Drew Hunter

Studying God’s word is worth all the effort we can give, because it is God’s voice to us, making us wise for salvation and equipped for a life of love, 2 Tim 3:16,17. But how do we study it more deeply? Where do we start and what should we look for in the text? Here are seven steps I take when studying the Bible.

One of the best ways to get to know someone is to ask them questions and stay curious. I’ve found that it’s the same with studying the Bible. That’s why with each step I ask a key question or two. I’ve found that asking these questions, in this order, provides a fruitful path of studying God’s word.

Approach with Prayer

But before we take a step, we need to take a posture of prayer. Without prayer, we study with a prideful sense of self-sufficiency. But God says, “this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word,” Isa 66:2. In light of this, we don’t approach the Bible to master it, but to be mastered by it. We don’t come to be puffed up by knowledge, but to be humbled before God.

See the structure

Start with looking for the structure of the passage. The first key question is “How did this author structure or arrange this text?”

Most texts have an organizational structure. Different kinds of literature use different kinds of structural norms. For example, stories often follow a narrative plotline with a setting, rising tension, climax, resolution, and a new setting. Persuasive letters often introduce a thesis, develop an argument with key points, and end with a conclusion. As we pay attention to the structure of a text, we find the main ideas the author is developing.

But authors don’t often explicitly state their structure. We have to develop eyes to see it. If you’re reading a story, discern the scene divisions or sections of a plot line. If you’re looking at part of a letter, follow the flow of thought. As you go, make an outline with summary phrases and verse references. For example, when I studied Psalm 19, I wrote down this outline:

- The sky declares God’s glory everywhere, Psa 19:1-6

- The word of God is powerful and precious Psa 19:7-11
- A responsive prayer for forgiveness and transforming power, Psa 19:12-14

Read in context

After seeing the structure, consider the narrow and broader literary context. Every passage is situated within the immediate context of its book, and also the broader context of the whole Bible. Ask, “How do the immediate and whole-Bible contexts inform the meaning of this text?”

First, with the immediate literary context, we seek to understand the role our passage serves in the flow of its larger book. In order to do this, we look at the texts on both sides of our passage—the preceding passage and the following passage. We have to gain a sense of how our text fits in the developing structure and purpose of the book in which it’s found. This means it is important to read through sections on scripture, thinking paragraph-to-paragraph.

Second, we consider the whole-Bible context. Consider how your text fits within the flow of the Bible’s unfolding storyline. Read through the text and identify any quotes or echoes of previous biblical texts the author draws on. Identify any whole-Bible themes that move through the text as they make their way through the bible’s story. Identify how the culmination of redemptive history in Christ informs the meaning of this text. For example, in the New Testament, “redemption” often has the background of Israel’s redemption from slavery in Egypt, which is used by the prophets to anticipate a greater redemption from deeper slavery.

Consider the background.

Every author wrote within a particular historical setting and

circumstance. Although the Bible is ultimately one book, it is also a collection of 66 smaller books. Various books were written within different cultures and circumstances. Ask, “What was the original setting and circumstance of the author and readers?”

Note anything that reflects the author or original readers’ culture or circumstance. For example, we learn from Philippians that Paul wrote from house arrest in Rome—he could be executed soon. This makes the letter’s theme of joy even more striking.

Grasp the main point.

When studying a text, press in to identify the author’s main idea. So we ask the question, “What is the main point the author is making?” Our goal is to restate the author’s point in a way that he would agree with.

This process requires humility. We set aside what we may want the text to say in order to embrace what the author actually did say.

We also have to focus on identifying the main point. Communication is incredibly complex. We rarely ever have just one point or idea. But we do typically have one main point. In the same way, biblical texts are saturated with interesting themes and important sub-points. But one of our most important tasks is to grasp the main point that the other ideas complement.

Identify the purpose.

Once we’ve identified what the author said, we need to identify why he says it. So, we ask the question, “What is the author’s purpose in writing this?” With this question, we’re moving from the author’s point to his purpose. If the main point is an arrow, the purpose is the target—it’s what he’s seeking to do with his words. We could refer to this as the

author’s pastoral agenda or burden. We consider how the author wants to change the reader’s thinking, believing, or living.

One of the best ways to get a start at this is to look for the larger purpose of the book in which your passages are situated. For example, John gives us the purpose of including Jesus’ signs in his gospel is “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name,” Jn 20:31. That helps us understand the purpose of passages in the rest of the book.

Relate to the gospel.


We may already see how our text relates to the gospel, but we need to give this direct attention. Ask the question, “What are a few ways that this relates to the good news of God’s grace for sinners and sufferers?” Reread the text and look for direct statements about Jesus and his death and resurrection. Look for direct gospel-statements, such as “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” 1 Tim 1:15. Look for our gospel-response of repentance and faith. Look for gospel-centered motivations like, “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,” Eph 5:2. As you become familiar with the central themes that thread through the Bible’s story, consider if any of those run through your text and how they culminate in Jesus (i.e., kingship and

kingdom, covenant, temple, priesthood, and sacrifice, exodus redemption, exile, and return, etc.). And finally, consider how this text shows the gracious heart of God, which we also see expressed in Christ through the gospel.

Respond to implications.

Our final step is to draw out and respond to implications. We now ask, “What are implications and applications for us today?” We didn’t start here because unless we rightly understand the text, we may miss how it uniquely calls us to respond. But after the process of prayerful and faithful study, we need to respond. Slow down and think through several categories:

- Personally, how should this text change the way you think, feel, or act?
- Communally, what implications does this have for your relationships?
- Vocationally, how should this change our work and how we engage culture?
- Missionally, what are implications for making disciples of our neighbors and the nations?

In all of this, prayerfully consider how to respond. Let the text lead you to praise God, repent of and confess sin, rest in his grace, rejoice in his promises, and to love God and others more deeply. And then step out into the rest of your day to reflect God’s goodness to others. *[Edited primarily for length— kv]* 

Remember in Prayer

Mike B was admitted to Huntsville MICU after being found unresponsive. He had high levels of CO₂, and is currently on a respirator; although he is better, no root cause has yet been identified. **Mark Horton** is having radiation treatments for prostate and bone cancers, it is difficult

for him. **Alice** is to have cataract surgery on her second eye this Tuesday.

Please continue to pray for **Barbara; Betty; Carolyn; Faye; Hazel; Joshua V; Vickie H; Kathy M; Kaylee; Deborah and Serenity; Pam; and the Pollard Family.** 