

UNIT 4.1

USING THE BIBLE

MANY LEADERSHIP qualities apply equally both to Christians and non-Christians. However, a defining quality in every Christian leader is a firm grasp of the word of God. The aim of this Unit is to show the importance of the Bible for Christian leadership and how to use it. ‘You can’t believe the Bible – it’s full of contradictions’. ‘You can use the Bible to prove anything’. ‘It’s all a matter of interpretation.’ Comments like these may undermine our confidence in the Bible. In fact, God has interpreted the gospel for us in the Bible.



Read 1 Corinthians 15:3

Identify three things from that verse which are essential to the Christian's faith...

- The fact – what happened
- The source – how we know
- The explanation – what it means to us

GET INTO THE BIBLE



Read Joshua 1:1-10

What components might make up an army officer's training course at Sandhurst? Military History? Knowing Your Enemy? Advanced Military Strategy? ... these would all certainly be included. Joshua needs all these skills as he leads the Israelites into the promised land. Picture the scene in Joshua's tent as the General gathers his commanders for their final briefing. There are maps and charts everywhere. And, of course, the strategy for taking Jericho is a little out of the ordinary and will take some explaining. What does Joshua do? He remembers the word of the Lord and says, 'Now before we go any further, let's read the Scriptures'. If a busy general before a crucial battle needs to draw on his Bible, so do those of us involved in leadership in the church today.

WHY IS THE BIBLE VITAL FOR LEADERSHIP?

Match the reasons given on the left to the Scriptures quoted on the right in the diagram below.

The Bible is a vital weapon in our spiritual warfare and we need to know how to use it

John 5:39

God has given us the Scriptures so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every task he has in mind for us

Ephesians 5:25-26

The word of God has a direct bearing upon our purity of heart and mind as believers

Ephesians 6:17

The Bible reveals Jesus to us, who is our supreme leader

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible is our supreme source of guidance through life

Psalms 119:105

You cannot expect to be an effective spiritual leader if you do not make the Bible a priority in your life.

HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE



Read Titus 1:1-5



Ask yourself these questions:

- Who is the writer?
- To whom is he writing and when?
- Why is he writing?
- What is the main purpose of his letter?

There are three steps to studying the Scriptures:

1. *Context* – Why is this passage here? How does it fit into Scripture? How does it fit into the book to which it belongs?
2. *Content* – What is its main theme or point? Who are its main characters? What is happening? Identify the key words.
3. *Consequences* – What will be the outcomes of our study? They could be many and various, personal and/or communal, and related to belief and/or behaviour.

Take the time to learn the rules of interpretation well. If we fail at this point, we will go astray ourselves and run the risk of leading others with us. At the very least, we risk denying them an understanding of all that God has provided for us in Christ.

THE RULES OF INTERPRETATION

1. **The grammar** – Scripture has only one meaning. So:
 - What kind of literature is it? Laws are very different from proverbs. Look back over Track 1, Understanding the Bible: *Setting the scene* – the Bible as literature.
 - Take the text at face value unless there is good reason for not doing so – such as, for example, when dealing with a poem or a parable.
 - What do the individual words mean? John uses the word ‘world’ in his Gospel several times. What does he mean by it?
 - Is there a natural structure or flow to the passage? Is there a key question or a punch-line that sets the agenda?
 - Watch out for figurative language like, ‘I am the true vine’.
 - When interpreting parables, don’t try to analyse every detail, but go for the big idea.
2. **The history and the geography** – when do the events described take place, and where? Remember the Bible has an unfolding storyline which is why the Understanding the Bible Track of *Learn2Lead* is so useful.

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- Read your study passage in the light of biblical history. Why is the birth of Cain such a big event in Genesis 4? And such a big disappointment? For the answer, review God's response to the Fall in Genesis 3.
 - Names, places or events often carry symbolic meanings. Look for the clues in the text itself.
3. **The theology** – what does this passage mean in the unfolding message of the gospel?
- How does it fit into the book? Into its Testament? Into the whole Bible?
 - How does it relate to other parts of Scripture? Because it is God's word, Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. So, if you're not sure what your passage means, find a parallel and see if that helps to unlock the meaning.

We all have our presuppositions as we approach a passage. As you become more familiar with the Bible, allow it to mould your mental framework so that your presuppositions themselves become truly biblical.

Now, gather your background material together and start to ask some of the basic Bible questions:

- What did this passage say to its original hearers? What did it tell them about God? About the world they lived in? About his plans for them?
- What does this passage have to say to us? And what do we need to do about it?

Using this approach, think of some of the different ways you could study the Bible.



Take a look at Titus 2:11-14



Prepare a five-minute outline, showing how this doctrinal passage serves Paul's practical purpose in the whole letter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

It's an appealing thought that God will inspire us with the necessary words on the spur of the moment. And sometimes he does! But don't imagine that he blesses laziness.



What do these passages teach about the importance of prayerful preparation?

- 2 Timothy 2:15
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

REMEMBER YOUR PEOPLE**Read Colossians 1:28-29**

Paul was a purpose-driven man. We need to follow his example. The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives. In leadership, you will need to keep your people in mind all the time.

- Remember their needs, their sins, their hopes and fears
- God has given you the Bible as the great instrument for change in their lives.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

Our critics sometimes claim that we worship the Bible. The language of some of the psalms comes pretty close to it at times. Take Psalm 119:48 for example: Is the psalmist guilty?

What is he saying?

Why does he feel so strongly about the Bible?

What about you?

**FOLLOW IT UP**

Take a Bible passage which you will be using in your ministry (for a talk, Bible study or lesson) and follow the rules of interpretation. How have those rules helped you to use the Bible more effectively?