

Chapter Three

METHODS AND PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

It has been said:

“Methods are many, Principles few,
Methods may vary, Principles never do.”

A. METHODS OF BIBLE RESEARCH

1. Definition of “Method” (as used here)

- * A suitable and convenient arrangement of things, proceedings or ideas; the natural or regular disposition of separate things or parts; convenient order for transacting business, or for comprehending any complicated subject.
(Noah Webster’s Dictionary)
- * A way; system; course of procedure; classification; logical arrangement; orderly.
(Collin’s Graphic Dictionary)

Thus when we speak of a “method” of Bible study, Bible research, we mean a suitable and convenient order, procedure and logical arrangement of Bible subjects.

2. Seven Methods of Study

Seven major methods of Bible research are presented in this course with their respective assignments.

- * WORD Studies
- * CHARACTER Studies
- * PLACE Studies
- * TEXTUAL Studies
- * TOPICAL Thematic Studies
- * PASSAGE Studies
- * BOOK Studies

B. PRINCIPLES OF BIBLE RESEARCH

1. Definition of “Principle” (as used here)

- * A general truth; a law comprehending many subordinate truths; such as the *principles* of morality, of law, of government, etc.
(Noah Webster’s Dictionary)

- * A source or origin; that from which anything proceeds; a fundamental truth or tenet; an elementary proposition; a settled rule of action.
(Collins Graphic Dictionary)

Thus when we speak of a “principle” of Bible Research, we mean a general truth, or fundamental truth, a settled rule of action.

2. Six Principles in Bible Research

Following are six major principles in Bible Research, each of which form successive links in a chain in proper research.

- * **OBSERVATION** — What does the Bible say on that subject? Observation is the collection or gathering of all the data in Scripture on any particular subject.

- * **INTERPRETATION** — What does the Bible mean?

What does it mean to me? What did it mean to them?

Myles Coverdale, AD1535 says: “It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, If thou mark not only what is spoken or written, But of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, Considering what goeth before and what followeth.” To interpret Scripture then we must therefore investigate:

- (1) **WHAT** — What is actually being said (not “reading between the lines”).
- (2) **OF WHOM** — Who is being talked about (Acts 8:30. “Of whom speaketh the prophet?)
- (3) **TO WHOM** — Who is being spoken to?
- (4) **WITH WHAT WORDS** — In what language? (consider why such terms are used).
- (5) **AT WHAT TIME** — When was it written? (e.g., James written before Romans).
- (6) **WHERE** — The writer’s circumstances and perspective (e.g., Paul in jail when he writes Philippians).
- (7) **TO WHAT INTENT** — The writer’s purpose in writing (e.g., Galatians Epistle).
- (8) **WITH WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES** — What circumstances were the recipients in? (e.g. I Peter, “Sufferings”).
- (9) **WHAT GOETH BEFORE** — The preceding context, what flows into the verse.
- (10) **WHAT FOLLOWETH** — The succeeding context, what flows out of the verse.

All of this belongs to the field of Interpretation or Hermeneutics.

- * **ORGANIZATION** — What do I do with it?

Now that one has all this information, and interpretation, what do I do with it? How do I organize it?

A heap of stones does not make a building anymore than a quantity of Scriptures make a message!

It is not enough just to quote 50 references from Strong’s Concordance! There are many ways to organize a subject, but it is generally good to use the building method of line upon line, in logical, sequential manner, thus building a message into the hearers.

Generally speaking, organization belongs to Homiletics. Organization will basically follow:

- (1) Introduction, statement of proposition, what you hope to communicate to hearers.
- (2) Main Body of Message — The material, illustrations, etc.
- (3) Conclusion — The practical application of all that has gone before.

* **PRESENTATION** — How do I communicate it?

This also belongs to the field of Homiletics. Presentation has to do with manner or method of communicating the message, whether preaching or teaching the Word.

* **APPLICATION** — How can I apply it practically?

Information without application is incomplete. How can people apply truth to their lives in a practical manner?

If we have numbers 1-4 without this then the message has failed in its total purpose.

Application is making the meaning relevant.

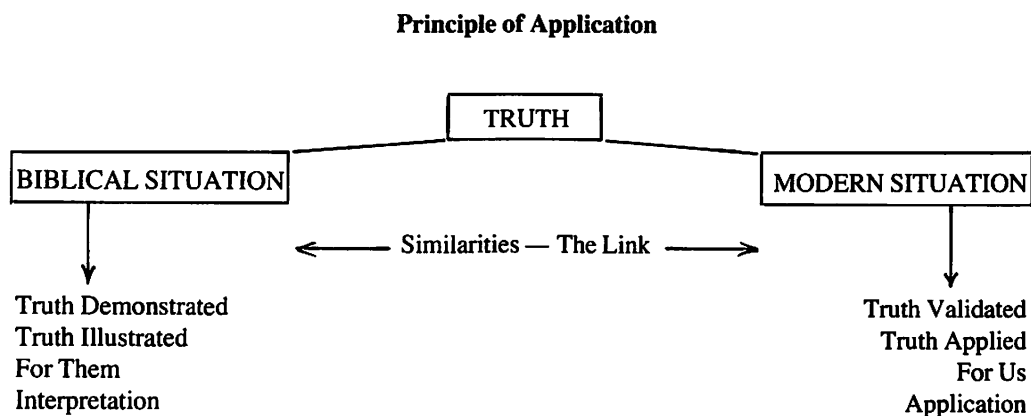
Knowledge — the possession of facts.

Understanding — the interpretation of facts.

Wisdom — the application of facts.

People need not only to know the rules of the game of life but how they apply to them.

The principle of application is seen in the following triangle.



Theologically speaking then, “application” is the taking of truth communicated (revealed and directed) to one person or group of people and making it relate to another person or group of people. The basis for this is the understanding that God’s principles of truth are timeless — TRUTH IS TRUTH in every generation.

* **EVALUATION** — What did the people learn? How and what was communicated?

All need to evaluate the communication of the Word. How much is taught can really be evaluated by how much is learnt.

The ultimate aim of Bible Research is to be the best communicator of Scripture and its life-changing and life-giving principles to the people to whom we minister!