

One of the most important skills you can pass on to a new believer is the ability to study the Word of God. Study goes beyond devotional reading. Do all you can to develop 2 Timothy 2:15 in the disciple, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and *who correctly handles the word of truth.*”

Three Components of Any Good Bible Study Method

The primary goal for the study of Scripture is to arrive at the meaning of the passage. This meaning needs to be discovered in three stages:

a. **Observation**

This always occurs first. One seeks to discover facts and structure of the passage in order to lay a foundation for interpretation. A good way to start is by asking Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How questions. Write down all that you can observe from the text. In your observation, answer some of the following questions. What kind of literature is this, i.e., history, teaching material, poetry, prophecy, parable? Who are the people mentioned, where does this passage happen, when did it occur? What literary constructions are significant, i.e., repetitions, comparisons and contrasts, verb tenses, cause and effect? What is the main point of this passage? What did the first readers understand in their context? It may help to outline the passage, or paraphrase the passage, trying to maintain the meaning but using your own words.

b. **Interpretation**

Here we intend to answer the question, “What did this passage mean to the first readers?” What was the purpose of writing for the author? Our first aim in biblical interpretation is to determine the meaning which the author intended to communicate to his audience. Therefore, the meaning of a passage must be something the original readers could have understood. Stated differently, a biblical text cannot mean today what it could not have meant when it was written. Only after we have a good idea of what the text meant can we go on to see what the text means for us today.

c. **Application**

This is a process where the meaning of the passage to the first readers is then translated into our present day situation. It answers the question, “What does this passage mean to me?” For more on this see the “How to Apply the Bible” method.

A Bible Study Tool

PROAPT is an acrostic that stands for:

- Pray
- Read
- Observe
- Apply
- Pray
- Tell

You can use the “PROAPT” worksheet in your study.

You are trying to accomplish two things in using the PROAPT tool. First, the PROAPT format does give you the necessary steps for study. It helps to organize your thinking into an orderly pattern. And second, it gives you a tool that you will always be able to use to teach another in Bible study. Thus, it is a trans-generational discipleship skill. You are not only training a disciple, but also the next several generations of disciples.

PROAPT is not intended to be the tool a believer will use for the remainder of the Christian life. As a believer grows, no doubt his hermeneutic skills will become more refined. But it is absolutely essential that he have a skill to launch from, and a skill to use to equip another.