



RIVER
C H U R C H

UPON THIS
ROCK

Spiritual Growth Campaign for 2021

By Louie Marsh



Upon This Rock Small Group Study Lesson #1 – Can I Trust the Bible?

Opening Prayer

Introduction:

Do you believe the Bible is true? Or do you think it's just a collection of ancient writings? Or maybe your somewhere in the middle.

How confident are you in what you believe about the Bible? 100%, 50?

Put your percentage here: _____

VIDEO ONE: WHY SHOULD I TRUST THE BIBLE?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- Biblia – Latin for _____
- The two parts of the Bible: The _____ Testament and the _____ Testament.
- The Bible has _____ books in it.

WHAT THE BIBLE CLAIMS ABOUT ITSELF:

"²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:2–4, ESV)

"¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." (2 Peter 1:16, ESV)

"¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." (2 Peter 3:16, ESV)

"²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21, ESV)

How do we these claims are valid?

1) The Honesty Test:

2) The Telephone Test

The Time Gap:

Pliny the Younger's time gap 750 years

Caesar's time gap – 1000 years

Plato's Tetralogies – 1200 years

New Testament – 50 years

Approximate number of Manuscripts -

Caesar = 10 manuscripts

Plato's Tetralogies – 7 manuscripts

Tacitus – 20 manuscripts

New Testament manuscripts – 24,633

3) The Corroboration Test:

42 Non Biblical sources speak of Jesus, 10 sources for Tiberius Caesar

Discussion Questions:

- 1) After watching this video how would you change the percentage of certainty you gave the Bible at the beginning of the lesson?
- 2) Why is it important that the Bible is written by eye witnesses?
- 3) Is it really important to believe the Bible is inspired? Can't I just take the good things from it and not worry about the rest?
- 4) Does the Bible pass the honesty test?
- 5) What do you think about all those manuscript evidence and the time gap? Does that seem like evidence to you that the Bible is what it says it is?

Closing Share & Prayer Time

After taking prayer requests and praise reports, close out your group by spending some quality time in prayer. We encourage you to practice Conversational Prayer if you know how to do that.



Upon This Rock Small Group Lesson #2 Setting the Stage

Open with Prayer:

Introduction:

“Our spiritual health is directly linked to reading and applying God’s Word.” Do you agree with this statement, why or why not?

If this is true then how healthy are you? How often do you read and **study** God’s Word?

PLAY VIDEO

“¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—” (1 Peter 2:1–2, ESV)

“⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’ ”” (Luke 4:4, ESV)

We must Live according to God’s Word.

Church and Bible Study must be supplemental to my own prayer life and Bible Study.

Setting the Stage:

1) When I read God’s Word I am talking to God and He is TALKING to me.

- I must respect God by being INTENTIONAL about how I read the Bible.

*“¹¹For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³You will seek me and find me, **when you seek me with all your heart.**”* (Jeremiah 29:11–13, ESV)

2) I must give God my BEST.

- Time
- Discipline
- Focus

“¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV)

3) Understand Bible Study is WORK.

- I must protect this time with God's Word

4) Study when I am most ALERT.

- This will vary from person to person.
- I must be Alone, Alert and Available.

5) Start with a moment of SILENCE.

- Get focused, calm and ready to study the Word.

"³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30, ESV)

6) Prepare my heart – find my REASONS for studying God's Word.

- The real reason to study the Word is to KNOW GOD BETTER.
- This takes discipline – not just doing it when I FEEL LIKE IT.
- Start small – work up from there.
- When you miss a day – don't feel guilty, just get on it tomorrow.

Discussion Questions:

1) Why isn't going to church and Bible Study enough? If Louie and Amy are doing their jobs shouldn't that be all I need? Why do I have to try and do this myself, isn't that what we pay them for?

2) Am I giving God my best in Bible Study? How well do I protect that time?

3) When is the best time for me to study? Morning? Afternoon? Evening? Late night? Pick a time and explain why that works best for you.

4) Am I reading the Bible to know God or to problem solve? Is it bad to read to solve my problems? Can I do both at the same time?

5) How do I deal with days that I find reading the Bible boring? Is that a sin? Should I feel bad or unspiritual because sometimes it bores me?

6) What part does having a reading plan play in helping me read and study the Bible? Do you have one? Have you checked out YouVersion on your computer or smart phone for literally hundreds of Bible reading plans? If so have they been helpful?

Closing Share & Prayer Time

After taking prayer requests and praise reports, close out your group by spending some quality time in prayer. We encourage you to practice Conversational Prayer if you know how to do that.



Upon This Rock Small Group Lesson #3 Laying the Foundation

Open with Prayer:

Introduction:

Should I just jump right into Bible Study? Or should I take some time to prepare my heart and mind for what I'm about to do? Since everyone's so busy do have to add even more time onto our Bible Study by doing this?

PLAY VIDEO:

The Five Questions that will lay the foundation for Bible Study.

1) Who?

- Who is the author of this book?
- Who was the audience?
- Who are the characters in the book or story?

2) What?

- What's happening in the Book?
- What's the author going through?
- What's the audience going through?
- What are the characters going through?
- What's the historical context?

3) Where?

- Where are the events taking place?
- Where in Israel or other country?
- What city or town? Are the characters traveling somewhere?
- What do I know about the places mentioned?

4) When?

- When was this book written?
- Find a rough date for when the book was written or the event occurred.

5) Why?

- This is the most important question – but at times can't be fully answered.
- Why did the author write the book?

- Why is this book in the Bible?

This question looks at the purpose of the book you are reading.

An Example: 2nd Timothy

Author: Paul

Audience: Timothy

Time: 66-67 AD.

Event: Persecution of Christians by Nero

Where – Paul was in prison when he wrote this.

Why? – He repeats the need to endure hardship often in the book.

“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV)

Benefits of Laying the Foundation:

- I gain an understanding of the context in which it was written.
- This allows me to get much more out of the text than I would otherwise.

Resources for Study:

Aside from what’s mentioned in the video you can find much if not all of what you need online. Here’s a few good websites:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

And if you’d like to read lots of classic Christian literature for free try this: <https://www.ccel.org/>

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you think it’s really necessary to answer these questions? Should we just get into the Word?
- 2) I was taught these questions in a journalism class I took in High School. Are they really spiritual enough for Bible Study?
- 3) Why is the context of a book or a historical event in the Bible so important, or is it?
- 4) What should I do if I can’t answer one or more of these questions? Get help? Push on into study anyway? Both?
- 5) Have these first three videos helped you to study your Bible more or in a deeper way?

Closing Share & Prayer Time

After taking prayer requests and praise reports, close out your group by spending some quality time in prayer. We encourage you to practice Conversational Prayer if you know how to do that.



Upon This Rock Small Group Lesson #4 Inductive Bible Study, Pt.1

Open with Prayer:

Introduction:

Are you a detail person? Do you enjoy not just looking at the big picture but the details as well? Do you think that could help you understand the Bible better?

START VIDEO

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶" 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' "

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went

and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.” (Matthew 2:1–23, ESV)

Step 1: OBSERVATION

Look for the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How), Look for cause and effect, comparison and contrast and repeated words.

Pause video – mark the text above with your observations. When done resume video.

People – Jesus, Herod, Wise Men, Mary etc. Jesus is referred to as “the child” 9 times.

Time: After Jesus was born, when the wise men left, etc.

Where: places that are mentioned – Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Egypt, etc.

Action Words: Angels, dreams, obedience from Joseph, Herod ordered mass infanticide.

Repeated words: Fulfilled 4 times, worship 3 times, rose or rise 6 times.

Step 2: INTERPETATION – Pause video and ask your questions.

Good questions are **TIGHT** – Text dependent, Interesting, promote **Good** discussion, **Highlight** the tension, **Tie** observations together.

Questions you might ask: Who is Herod? Who are the Wise Men? Why does baby Jesus threaten Herod? Etc.

Pause video again as instructed.

Step Three: APPLICATION

What does this passage mean to me?

Pause video when asked and write down a few questions of your own.

Discussion Questions: Do these if you have time after doing the study.

1) Can you see yourself doing something like this every day? Do you have the time or energy to do this?

2) Did you notice that Laying the Foundation in last week's video plays right into Inductive Study this week?

3) Were you surprised at some of the details she observed in this study? Did you find details in this well known story that you hadn't noticed before? What does that say about our need to really study God's Word so that we don't miss things?

Closing Share & Prayer Time

After taking prayer requests and praise reports, close out your group by spending some quality time in prayer. We encourage you to practice Conversational Prayer if you know how to do that.



Upon This Rock Small Group Lesson #5 Inductive Bible Study Pt. 2

Open with Prayer:

Introduction:

Who do you rely on to keep you on the right path spiritually? Can you rely on a person or persons too much? In the end who's responsible for my spiritual growth anyway?

START VIDEO

"¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV)

Study of God's Word is directly connected to our spiritual growth.

"¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:1–3, ESV)

Three Rules of Bible Study

1) OBSERVATION

- What do I see?

2) INTERPETATION

- What does it mean?

3) APPLICATION

- How can I apply this to my life?

Let's Try It: OBSERVATION (mark up the text along with the video)

"⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 4:6–7, ESV)

INTERPRETATION: (mark up the text along with the video)

1) I should not worry about things, and when I feel anxiety I need to pray and pray passionately, remembering to be thankful to God as well.

TAKE THE SIMPLE MEANING OF THE PASSAGE – DON'T COMPLICATE IT!

APPLICATION: (mark up the text along with the video)

- I don't need to be anxious.
- I need to address everything in prayer
- I need to be thankful
- I need to pray on a regular basis
- I can't understand everything, but trust in Him
- God will guard my heart and mind in Christ – He'll take care of me and it as well!

NOW LET'S TRY IT ON OUR OWN! The video is over, take as much time as you can to apply what you've learned to this passage:

"⁴³You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:43–48, ESV)

When you are done:

Discuss your OBSERVATIONS

Discuss your INTERPRETATIONS

Discuss your APPLICATIONS

Discussion Questions: (If you have time discuss the following).

- 1) How'd it go? Did you see some new things in the Matthew passage that you hadn't noticed before, or did you realize some new application to yourself?
- 2) Is this fun to you? Do you enjoy it? Can you see the challenge as well as the benefits from doing this?
- 3) Do you think you are ready to try this on your own? If not, why not? What can the church do to help?

Closing Share & Prayer Time

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Upon This Rock Small Group Lesson #6 Some Bible Study Principles

Open with Prayer:

Introduction:

Since this is out last Upon This Rock Small Group why not take a few moments and share what you've gained so far from this study? Have you been able to put any of this into practice in your life?

START VIDEO:

1) Be ready and eager to hear God.

"¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103, ESV)

2) Deal with attitudes that prevent me from hearing God. (Luke 8:4-15)

*"¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then **the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts**, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience." (Luke 8:11–15, ESV)*

- **A Closed Mind:** Is fear, pride or bitterness preventing me from hearing God?
- **A Superficial Mind:** Am I really serious about wanting to hear God speak?
- **A Preoccupied Mind:** Am I too busy and concerned with other things to concentrate on what God has to say?

3) Confess any sin in my life.

"²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21, ESV)

4) Take notes on what I hear.

"²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22, ESV)

"²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing." (James 1:25, ESV)

5) I should read God's Word EVERY DAY!

"¹⁹And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them," (Deuteronomy 17:19, ESV)

How Should I Read It?

- **Systematically**
- **Use a Bible without notes**
- **In different versions – NIV, NASB, The Message, Living Bible, ESV**
- **Read it aloud quietly to yourself**
- **Underline or color code key verses**
- **Choose a reading plan and stick to it**

6) Some Bible Study Tips

"¹¹Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11, ESV)

A. Guidelines for *individuals*

- a. No outside sources
- b. No other books or passages
- c. Entire process will answer three questions
 - 1) What does it say? *CONTENT* Observe
 - 2) What does it mean? *DISCOVERY* Interpret
 - 3) What does it mean for me? *APPLICATION* Apply

B. More about observation

1. Principles
 - a. Don't rush through the observation phase
 - 1) Can you see? (Mk 8:23-25)
 - b. Will for observation (detective looking for clues)
 - c. Exactness in observation
 - d. Persistence in observation (Don't jump ahead)
2. What do I look for?
 - a. **Literary form**
 - 1) Prose/narrative (Jn 2:1-11 Wedding at Cana)
 - 2) Parables (Mt 13, Mk 4)
 - 3) Poetry (Psalms)
 - 4) Logical discourse (Romans)
 - 5) Apocalyptic literature (Daniel, Revelation)
 - 6) Drama (Job)
 - b. **Literary structure**
 - 1) Relationship of thoughts, ideas, phrases, etc.

2) How are thoughts connected to each other?

- a) Comparison
- b) Contrast
- c) Repetition
- d) Continuity
- e) Climax

7) PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

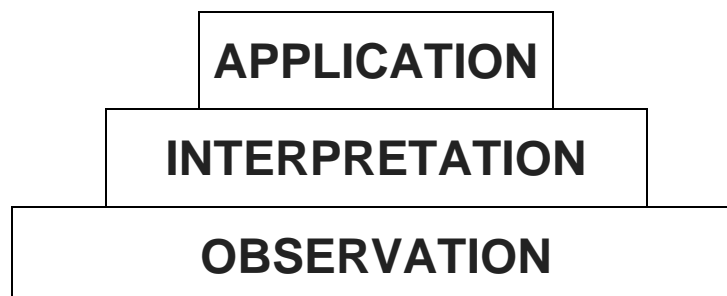
- A. Reflect or meditate
 - 1, Prayerfully, humbly
- B. Interpretive “Why’s”
 - 1, Why is this said
 - 1. Why is it said here
- C. Other interpretive questions
 - 1. Who or what is involved
 - 2. What, where, when accomplished?
 - 3. Principles?
 - 4. Commands?
 - 5. Promises?
 - 6. Characteristics?
- D. Relate text to its context, then to rest of Scripture
 - 1. Trust the unity of Scripture
 - a. 66 separate units
 - b. Written over a period of more than 1,000 years.
 - c. Written against a wide cultural backdrop
 - d. Written by many different people, working independently of each other.
 - 2. The infallible rule of interpretation: **Scripture Interprets Scripture.**

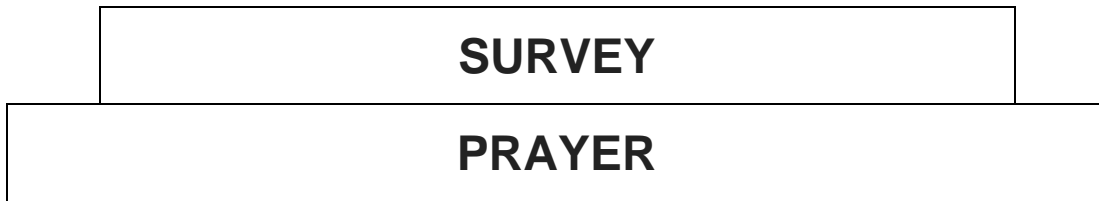
E. Stay In Context!!

Interpretative Context

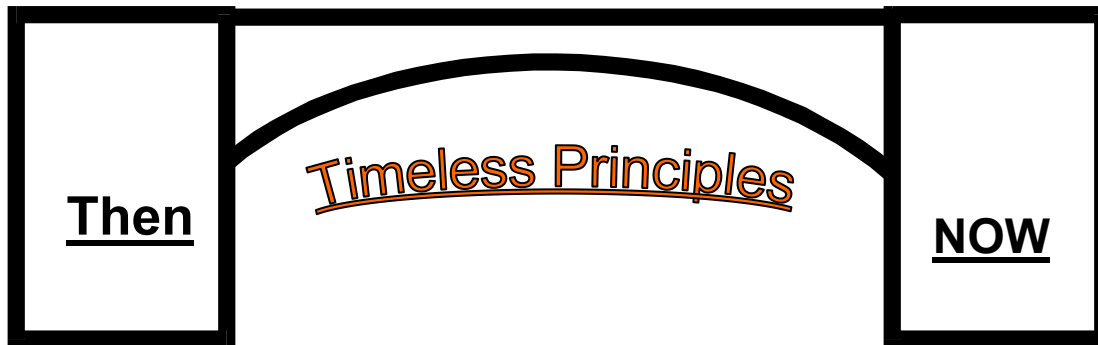
- 1. Immediate
- 2. Book
- 3. Same Author
- 4. Same type (genre)
- 5. Same testament
- 6. Other testament (whole Bible)

Interpretive Pyramid





The Application Bridge



Discussion Questions:

- 1) How important do you think it is to get yourself spiritually prepared *before* you start to read or study the Bible?
- 2) Do I really have to take notes?
- 3) Louie took us through a lot of details in this video. Do all these things seem overwhelming to you? Did they seem to make the task of Bible study easier or harder? How you can take what we've seen and make it work for you?
- 4) Louie said Scripture Interprets Scripture is the "infallible rule" of Bible Study. Why is this so important?
- 5) Why is keeping things in context so vital? What can I do to make sure I'm not taking things out of context? How can I make sure teaching and sermons I'm listening too aren't taking things out of context?
- 6) Did you find the Pyramid and/or the Application Bridge helpful? Why or why not?

Prayer Time

Close this final session of Upon This Rock with personal sharing and praying together. Be sure to give God thanks for this Spiritual Growth Campaign.