

Name: _____

Date: _____

Interpreting the Bible: Lesson 2

How to Know God, Do His Will, and Empower Others

Lesson 2: Seeing the Word (Day One) Inquiring of the Lord

(Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)¹⁰ "Good," Saul said to his servant. "Come, let's go." So they set out for the town where the man of God was.^{NIV} 1 Samuel 9:9-10

Read 1 Samuel 9:9-10 and answer questions 1-4:

1. In the time of the prophet Samuel, how did people seek information about or from God?

2. What did Saul and his servant want to ask the "seer"? (1 Samuel 9:4) _____

3. Define a "seer" and a "prophet"? _____

4. What is the first job of a Christian leader, teacher, parent or artist? _____

A "seer" (to see) in the biblical sense is one who saw and observed in the spiritual realm. He had access to the Lord and could declare or announce God's will and purposes to others. The announcements could be for current or future events, and for an individual (even for Saul's lost donkeys) or on a far grander scale for nations. As time passed from Saul and Samuel's day, the word "seer" was replaced by the term "prophet."

Today in Christ and through His Holy Spirit, we also have the opportunity to have communication from God, to know Him and to do His will. We don't know how God opened the eyes of the "seers" and "prophets" in Old Testament times, but we do know that today God has communicated much through the Bible. His Holy Spirit quickens or stirs our minds and hearts to understand what God intends through His Word.

Christians don't need to go to a "seer" or "prophet" to inquire of the Lord for we have the ability in Christ to inquire ourselves. But yes, the "seeing" may be difficult at times. We tend to think that God spoke directly to these particular men and women so that there was no mistake about what God was saying. In the case of Moses (Exodus 33:11) He did but perhaps He wasn't as direct with other prophets. Nevertheless, true prophets always seemed to understand what God wanted them to do even if they didn't want to comply (Jonah).

As Christians we may miss or not fully understand what God would have us do simply because we have preconceived (predetermined, fixed) notions of what He should say or do. For example, my husband Anders and I traveled to Costa Rica in 2007. We had heard many good things about the country and knew a lot of people took vacation there. I had imagined a tropical paradise. I thought of the warm sun beating down, the sweet smell of exotic flowers, the local people in colorful clothes smiling and moving slowly about their business. However, we arrived in the capital city San Jose where the weather was cool and I needed a sweater. It was also a busy and noisy city with cars and trucks speeding along. The people did not have any kind of special clothes on and all of the houses and businesses had iron bars on the windows and doors.

5. Share an example of something that you had imagined that didn't fit the reality of the situation. _____

What I had imagined or dreamed about, was not the reality of what we found in San Jose. All people have a mind with an active imagination for dreaming up all kinds of things. We can imagine things about God that really are not correct. If every person designed God in his or her own imagination, then we would be like those following the Hindu religion with thousands and thousands of gods or idols.

There is a lighthearted saying, "God created man in his image and man returned the favor." In other words, we try to imagine and create God in our human image. We want the control of deciding who God is and how He should relate to the world.

This is why the Bible and Bible Study are critical to every living soul. Our faith must be based on real events or it becomes a fabrication (invention, lie) of someone's imagination. The Bible claims to be the words of God that He gave to human authors. Neither the authors of the Bible nor the Bible itself have ever been proven false.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
^{NIV} 2 Timothy 3:14-17

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Paul is writing to Timothy. Read and answer questions 6-9:

6. What had Timothy known from infancy? _____

7. Who were Timothy's first teachers (2 Timothy 1:5)? _____

8. How much of the Bible is God-breathed or inspired by God? _____

9. How are you equipped for every good work? _____

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ^{NIV} Exodus 24:4

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. ^{NIV} Exodus 34:29

Read Exodus 24:4, 34:29 and answer questions 10-12:

10. Who told Moses what to write down? _____

11. Did Moses miss something that the LORD told him to write down? Yes No (Circle One)

12. How is Moses' face described after speaking with the Lord? _____

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.' ^{NIV} Jeremiah 30:2

Read Jeremiah 30:2 and answer questions 13-14:

13. Who gave the prophet Jeremiah the words to say and write? _____

14. Why should we believe Moses, Jeremiah and all the other authors of the Bible?

The people with whom Moses, Jeremiah and the other biblical writers lived recognized that God was with them. The Israelites especially saw and heard all the miracles that God preformed through Moses. These men also lived in a way that confirmed their relationship with God. Their words were written down and accepted throughout generations as God's words.

It is also important to recognize that God moved the people to accept certain books as His words and reject others. The accepted books are known as the **canon of Scripture**. Today it "is most often used to designate the collection of biblical books that Christians accept as uniquely authoritative for defining Christian faith and practice."¹ The 'canon' "designates the boundaries of God's inspired Word or written revelation, which are not the same for all Christian traditions."²

The canon (standard, rule) was accepted gradually and throughout history until the completion of the New Testament. Early on the Israelites accepted writings as from God through his human agents. Later the Christians did the same thing with the New Testament writings. The Gospels

¹ Hernando, James D., Dictionary of Hermeneutics, Gospel Publishing House, Missouri, 2005, p15.

² Ibid, p.15. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy accept some of the books of the Apocrypha as part of the inspired Canon of Scripture. Apocryphal or "hidden" books include: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, 1,2,3 and 4 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel, Susanna, Song of the Three Children, Bel and the Dragon, 1 and 2 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, and Odes.

and letters by Paul, Peter, James etc. were being used as Scripture by the early church. Thus, by the time the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D. made an official statement about the canon, these church leaders were really just putting a stamp of approval on what was already being used as God's Word in the church body.

Personal Application: Read and ask (inquire) the Lord for a message from Matthew 5:17-18, John 10:35, 17:17 and 2 Peter 1:16-21.

Write what God said to you: _____

Lesson 2: Seeing the Word (Day Two) Revelation

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."^{NIV} Matthew 16:16-17

Read Matthew 16:16-17 and answer questions 1-3.

1. What did Peter say about Jesus? _____
2. How did Peter know Jesus was the Son of God? _____
3. What makes it possible for men and women to experience God? _____

Jesus told Peter that it was God the Father who had revealed His divine identity to him. In other words, God had disclosed the truth about Jesus that others could not see or comprehend. This unveiling of truth about God is known as revelation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw-- that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.^{NIV} Revelation 1:1-2

Read Revelation 1:1-2 and answer questions 4-8:

4. Who does the book of Revelation unveil or make known? _____
5. How was this revelation made known? _____
6. Who received the revelation and wrote down every thing he saw? _____
7. How do we have access to this truth about Jesus Christ? _____

8. How can you personally make this truth about Jesus Christ known to others?

In Greek, one of the words used for revelation is apokalupsis (Ἀποκάλυψις). In regard to literature, the book of Revelation is considered apocalyptic. Apocalyptic literature is a “type of Jewish and Christian religious writing that developed between the testaments and had its roots in Old Testament prophecy.”³ It is given the name apocalyptic because the literature contains alleged revelation of the secret purposes of God, the end of the world and the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.”⁴ The book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic literature contained in our Bible and therefore, the only one recognized as the word of God.

Take care in interpreting the book of Revelation for yourself and others. It does have prophetic content, plus not all of it is to be taken literally. The challenge is to discern through the Holy Spirit what is symbolic (figurative) and what is not, what has happened and what is yet to come and what the message is that Christ intends through his apostle John.

In Hermeneutics or Bible Interpretation, we recognize two types of revelation: General and Special. **General revelation** is the way in which God reveals Himself through nature, history and actions. **Special revelation** is particular or exacting and is recorded for us in the Scriptures. In this way God’s revelation of Himself is primarily redemptive (deliverance from sin) and personal.⁵ In our study, we are concerned with **special revelation** and how we as Christians can gain a deeper knowledge of God through His Word and teach others to genuinely seek Him in the sacred Scriptures.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people-- everyone whose name is found written in the book-- will be delivered.² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."^{NIV} Daniel 12:1-3

Read Daniel 12:1-3 and answer questions 9-14:

9. During end times, who will be delivered (escape, rescued)? _____

10. How do you know Daniel is prophesying about end times? _____

11. What kind of literature is Daniel 12:1-3? _____

³ Douglas, J.D. and Tenney, Merrill C. New International Bible Dictionary., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1987, p.67.

⁴ Ibid, p 67.

⁵ Butler, Trent, Holman Bible Dictionary, p.1181-1182.

12. According to the prophet Daniel, what will happen to those who are wise and lead many to righteousness? _____

13. How does one become righteous and lead others? _____

14. How does this prophecy inspire you? _____

Daniel, along with Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are prophetic books, also known as **prophetic literature**. The prophetic books of the Old Testament are divided between the four major prophets listed above, and the twelve minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The classification of major and minor have to do with the length of the book and not its importance.

They are classified prophetic books because they contain prophecy. Prophecy “refers to the proclamation of the revealed will of God to his people by an inspired prophet who is acting as his mouthpiece or spokesperson.”⁶ Keep in mind that although prophetic literature contains future predictions, that is not its main function. The prophet’s main function was to make Israel aware of her sin or disobedience and that she was in danger of God’s wrath and judgment. The prophet was to help the people of Israel know how to stay in a right relationship with God.

15. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to bring anything to mind that is keeping you from having a right relationship with God. If so, repent and ask for help to sin no more. If you would like prayer in this area or another that has kept you from being rightly related to God, write request:

Personal Application: Memorize the next three books of the Bible:

6. Joshua (Leader of Israel who followed Moses and took Israelites into the Promised Land.

Name means: The Lord saves or The Lord gives victory)

7. Judges (Name of Israel’s leaders at this time)

8. Ruth (One of main characters; name suggests Friendship)

Lesson 2: Seeing the Word (Day Three) Literary Tools

In Lesson One we learned that **Bible Interpretation** is getting at the true meaning of the biblical text with the ability to explain its significance. It means that we want to get to the plain meaning of the Scriptures in order to know the one, true living God, do His will and empower others to do

⁶ Butler, Trent, Holman Bible Dictionary, p.102-104.

the same. We are not looking for unique ways of interpreting Scripture for that leads to pride. That is, a person will think he or she knows something that no one else had seen or discovered throughout the entire 2,000 year church history. Now God may give you great wisdom and you may see things never seen before, but be cautious in how you handle His Word and the revelation contained therein.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.^{NIV} 1 John 4:1

1. Read 1 John 4:1. What warning does the apostle John give us and why?

Review Luke 3:21-23 and the following outline from Lesson 1:

Title: Son of God Proved Genuine

Jesus, the Son:

I. Submits to John's baptism and identifies Himself with man's sin. 3:21a

- A. He was supportive and encouraging to John's work.
- B. He affirms His humanity and the substitution to come.

II. Prays to God during His baptism. 3:21b-22a

- A. He gains immediate access to God.
- B. He receives the sign of the Holy Spirit

III. Affirmed by God as His divine Son. 3:22b

- A. He is assured of God's love.
- B. He is assured that He is on the right track.

IV. Has a Genealogy of divinity and humanity 3:23-38

We already looked at the truth of Luke 3:21a (Roman numeral I), now let's look at the truth of Luke 3:21b-22a (Romans numeral II).

2. What happens while Jesus is praying? _____

When Jesus prayed He gained immediate access to God and received the sign of the Holy Spirit. You might have written questions on your Step 2 form (Observations and Questions) regarding

the Holy Spirit. When I was studying this passage I wondered if the Spirit actually appeared in the form of a dove. The Scripture also made me consider the questions others might have about their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove .^{NIV} Luke 3:22a

3. Read Luke 3:22a and fill in the blanks. The Holy Spirit _____ on him in _____ form _____ a dove.

Notice that it does not read the Holy Spirit descended (to come or go down) on him in the bodily form of a dove. Instead it has the Greek word hos, (ὡς) which is translated like. We need to understand and be able to use a few literary tools in order to understand what Luke, the inspired author is telling us.

4. Describe the Holy Spirit of God: _____

Most likely we did not give you enough room to describe what you know about the Holy Spirit. He is God. He omnipotent (all powerful). He is omnipresent (all present, present everywhere). He is Creator. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, like God the Father (John 4:24), is spirit. He is a non material Person. The Hebrew word, ruach (רוּחַ) and Greek word, pneuma (πνεῦμα) that are used to translate Spirit or spirit also means “breath” and “wind”. Breath and wind are also symbols of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 2:7, Job 32:8, 33:4, Ezekiel 37:9-10 and John 20:22).⁷

5. Describe a dove: _____

Luke and other biblical writers use a literary technique know as the figure of speech. A **Figure of Speech** is “word or phrase that describes one thing in terms of another and that is not meant to be understood on a literal level. It always involves some sort or imaginative comparison between seemingly unlike things.”⁸

We use figures of speech when we are talking and writing ourselves. “They fought like cats and dogs,” “She is as mad as a hornet,” and “He sings like a canary.” These may be old fashioned figures of speech, but you get the idea.

The “**literal**” meaning of a word is the exact meaning of the words. It avoids exaggeration or figures of speech. For example, the literal way of expressing the sentences above: “They fought with their hands and feet,” “She is very angry,” and “He sings beautifully.” These are the same ideas, but not nearly as poetic and dramatic.

⁷ Douglas, J.D. and Tenney, Merrill C., New International Bible Dictionary. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, p. 447.

⁸ WWW.COUGAR.ISSAQUAH.WEDNET.EDU/TEACHERS/WANGEMAN/HANDBOOK_OF_LITERARY_TERMS.HTM

In biblical interpretation, we want to get at the true meaning of the text by understanding what the author is communicating to us. When Jesus said "I am the gate," He did not literally turn into a physical entrance or entryway (John 10:9). He wanted to emphasize that there is only one way to salvation and He is that spiritual gateway. When Jesus called Herod a fox, the man did not literally turn into a fox (Luke 13:32). Jesus again was emphasizing Herod's bad character.

"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."^{NIV} Matthew 16:6

*How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.^{NIV} Matthew 16:11-12

Read Matthew 16:6-12 and answer questions 5-9.

5. In verse 6, what did Jesus tell His disciples to be on guard against? _____

6. What did the disciples initially think Jesus was talking about? _____

7. In verse 12, what did the disciples come to understand about the "yeast" and what Jesus meant? _____

8. What important warning would the disciples have missed if they continued to think Jesus was talking about the yeast in bread? _____

9. What do you have to be on guard against? _____

Jesus explained to the original disciples what His words meant. As His disciples, we also must seek His explanation through His Holy Spirit. If they had continued to think Jesus was talking about bread, they would have missed an important warning against certain religious leaders of the time. If we are not careful to learn figurative language, we also may miss warnings and important lessons necessary for our spiritual health.

Caution: Don't "spiritualize" or look for meaning that is not in the text. When the literal sense seems right and appropriate to the context of the passage, accept it unless there is a good reason not to. We want to get the clear meaning of Scripture using the rules and tools of grammar.

Figures of Speech in language⁹ are many, but here are a few:

Anthropomorphism – an-thro-po-mor-ph-ism (àn'thre-pe-môr fîz'em) *noun*

Attribution (to assign or ascribe) of human motivation, characteristics, or behavior to inanimate (lifeless) objects, animals, or natural phenomena.¹⁰ Walt Disney began his film studio by giving Mickey Mouse a name and a human personality. It is also attributing human characteristics to God. It is used in the sense of comparison so that the reader might understand an attribute or condition about God. For example: *Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.*^{NIV} Isaiah 59:1

Hyperbole - hy-per-bo-le (hî-pûr¹be-lê) *noun*

A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect, as in *I could sleep for a year* or *This book weighs a ton.*¹¹ Biblical example:^{NIV} **John 21:25** *Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*

Irony - i-ro-ny (î re-nê) *noun*

1. a. The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning.

b. An expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning.

c. A literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect.¹²

Biblical example:^{NIV} **Job 12:1-2** *Then Job replied:² "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!"*

Metaphor - met-a-phor (mèt¹e-fôr[˘]) *noun*

A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison, as in "*a sea of troubles*" or "*All the world's a stage*" (Shakespeare).¹³ Biblical example:^{NIV} **Luke 13:32** *He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'*

⁹ An expression in which words are used in a non literal way to achieve an effect beyond the range of ordinary language

¹⁰*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹¹*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

Personification - per·son·i·fi·ca·tion (per·sòn´e·fî·kâ¹shen) *noun*

Occurs when personal qualities or activities are attributed to something that is impersonal such as animals, things or ideas. Biblical example: ^{NIV} **Psalm 24:7** *Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* This literary technique is used to create vivid and colorful images and is sometimes referred to as “figures of humanization.”

Simile - sim·i·le (sîm¹e-lê) *noun*

A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by *like* or *as*, as in “*How like the winter hath my absence been*” or “*So are you to my thoughts as food to life*” (Shakespeare).¹⁴ Biblical example: ^{NIV} **Luke 3:22a** *and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.*

Personal Application: Familiarize yourself with figures of speech so that you are alert to accurate interpretation.

How does understanding figures of speech help you understand the Bible better?

How does learning and understanding that the Bible is literature help you to defend the Bible against critics and cynics of God’s Word?_____

Lesson 2: Seeing the Word (Day Four) Checking Reliable Resources

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession-- to the praise of his glory. ^{NIV} Ephesians 1:13

Read Ephesians 1:13-14 and answer questions 1-2.

1. When a person hears the truth of the gospel and trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord, how is that person marked in Christ?_____
2. Have you been marked by God with the promised Holy Spirit? Yes No Not Sure (Circle One)

¹⁴The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

At Jesus' baptism God gave those in attendance a visual sign of His Spirit. As soon as Jesus began to pray He gained immediate access to God. Not all of us will receive a physical sign of the Holy Spirit descending into our lives, but spiritually we can be assured of His presence.

3. How are you assured of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life? _____

We can be assured of the Spirit's presence in our lives in the changes in our lifestyle, thoughts and desires. One of the ways that I knew that the Spirit was active in my life was in my choice of reading. I had always been a fiction reader, I loved a good story. However, after being saved I began reading Christian non fiction. I wasn't interested in fiction anymore but seriously desired to know and learn more about God. This is not to say that Christian fiction is not edifying, but as a whole, it did not appeal to me.

God has led many Christians to write books both for encouragement and deeper study. One kind of book that is helpful with studying the Bible is the **Bible Dictionary**. A regular dictionary will have little information if anything at all on biblical subjects. The Bible Dictionary has a thorough listing of definitions of words, doctrines and even geographical places found in the Bible.

For example, one could look up Holy Spirit in a Bible Dictionary and find appropriate and helpful information about the third Person of the Trinity. For example, I looked up Holy Spirit in the *Holman Bible Dictionary* by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee and found useful information on page 662. After the author gave a definition of the Holy Spirit, he summarized other facts under the headings of Old and New Testaments. Under the New Testament section, the author Paul Jackson wrote:

“All apostolic writers witnessed to the reality of the Spirit in the church; however, the apostle Paul, who wrote more than any other author, offers the most theological reflection on the subject. The main chapters to consult are Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 2; 12-14; 2 Corinthians 3; and Galatians 5.”

4. How would this one paragraph help you in preparing to teach and explain Luke 3:22a?

Now go to your form marked (Step Three) **Checking Reliable Resources**. After you have arranged your thoughts, made your observations and listed your questions, it is time to tackle the answers. In addition to Bible Dictionaries, there are other reliable resources that are available either through purchase, a public library, seminary or friend. However, if you are going to purchase an item, the Bible Dictionary would be the most helpful. Still, if you cannot afford any materials, the Scripture with the Spirit's guidance is sufficient.¹⁵

¹⁵ “Sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.: Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, p.127.

It is beneficial to learn this information so if a time comes when you have the funds and means to purchase or have access to a library, you will know what resources to use. As (Step Three) states, list the reference materials (title, author, & publisher) with page numbers and the cross reference Bible chapter and verse where you are getting your answers or notes. You will want to keep this information for future reference when you teach, preach or write on this subject again.

Reading and studying the Scriptures provides acquaintance with and insight into the third person of the Trinity. Yet, a gnawing question may remain: “If the Holy Spirit was not in the actual form of a dove, how did the Holy Spirit descend like a dove?” This is a good question for a reliable Bible commentary.

A **Bible commentary** is a series of explanations and interpretations of the Holy Scriptures. The commentary is organized by chapter and verse in the same order as the Bible. The value and reliability of a commentary depends on the author. He or she may tackle difficult material in an expository (setting forth meaning) manner and completely answer all your questions. Others may not.

5. What is one thing that you should consider in choosing and using Bible commentaries?

The author of a commentary is not infallible. He can make mistakes in interpretation and in his own basic theology.¹⁶ Also, a commentary that tackles all or most of the books in the Bible may be excellent with some of the books and not so good with others. Each book in a series must be judged on its own theological merit. In addition, the author might be “selling” his theological beliefs which may be different than your own. Just as the apostle Paul commended (praised) the Bereans, examine the Scriptures to see if what the commentator is saying is true (Acts 17:11). In addition, you should do your own praying and studying first before seeking insight from other source materials.

Although I used a few other commentaries, these are the two that I found to be the most helpful in preparing to teach on the book of Luke:

1. Bock, Darrell. *Luke*. 2 Vols. BECNT (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
2. Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. NAC (The New American Commentary). Vol. 24. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.

For example, Bock writes on page 338 regarding the Spirit’s descent:

“Depictions of this event tend to overplay the metaphor. Ancient sources retelling the story make this error (Odes Sol. 24:1-2; Greeven, TDNT 6:68 n. 56). What was visible was not a dove, but rather what was seen is compared to a dove, since (ὡς, hos, as) is an adverb of manner

¹⁶ Theology – “That branch of Christian doctrine that focuses on the person and work of God and his relations to the world and creation, especially as revealed in the Scriptures.” Hernando, p. 168.

(Shurmann 1969:190). The manner of the Spirit's descent was like the way a dove floats gracefully through the air."

Stein writes on page 140 regarding the same subject:

"The analogy of the Spirit's descent "like a dove" is found also in Mark 1:10, but Luke alone added "in bodily form" and thus intensified the reality of the Spirit's coming upon Jesus. This indicates that, for Luke, Jesus' sonship and anointing go hand in hand (cf.¹⁷ 4:41;22:67,70; Acts 9:20,22). Like Matthew, Luke also had the Spirit coming "upon" Jesus rather than "into" him (cf. 4:19). "Like a dove" is a simile and does not mean that the Spirit actually took the form of a dove to descend upon Jesus."

Personal Application: Go back to your Observations and Questions Form (Step Two) and look for your stars or checks that indicated your questions about the text. Using whatever resources are available to you, find and write down the answers on the form, Checking Reliable Resources (Step Three). * Remember that the Bible is your most reliable resource!

Name one of your questions and the answer that you found. _____

Lesson 2: Seeing the Word (Day Five) Literary Reprieve (temporary relief)

1. How are you feeling in regard to studying the Bible? Challenged Overwhelmed (Circle One)

God wants us to know and love Him. He doesn't want the Bible to be difficult and certainly many passages that we read are easily understood. Certainly the commandment "Do not steal" is very clear. We need to use our common sense so that we do not make Bible Study too difficult nor do we want to make it too easy. In other words, we must make the effort to study and give God's word the attention and focus that it deserves.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.^{NIV} Psalm 1:1-2

Read Psalm 1:1-2 and answer questions 2-6:

2. What do the blessed man and woman delight in? _____

¹⁷ *cf.* is an abbreviation for the Latin word *confer*, meaning "compare" or "consult", and is hence used to refer to other material or ideas which may provide different information or arguments. It is mainly used in scholarly or educated contexts. (<http://www.answers.com/topic/cf-1>)

3. How often do the blessed man and woman meditate on God's Word?_____

4. How do the blessed man and woman know how "NOT" to walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers?_____

5. Are you that kind of blessed man or woman? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One)

6. What in your life needs to change for you to become a blessed man or woman in the sense (meaning) of Psalm 1:1-2?_____

Jesus not only prayed to God during His baptism (Luke 3:21b), but He was continually praying. Jesus gave us an excellent model. Always begin Bible study and devotional reading by praying to God and asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate (clarify, enlighten, open up) the text and meaning of the Scripture. Continue to pray while you are reading and studying so that the meaning will become part of your very essence (core, soul, being, heart).

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory. ^{NIV} Ephesians 1:13-14

Read Ephesians 1:13-14 and answer questions 7-8:

7. When you trusted in Jesus as Lord and Savior, how were you marked as belonging to God?

8. Who do you belong to?_____ For what purpose?_____

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ^{NIV} Acts 2:17-18

Read Acts 2:17-18 and answer questions 9-13:

9. In Christ, who will receive and outpouring of the Holy Spirit?_____

10. How are you assured of receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?_____

11. How are you assured that you are a servant of God? _____

12. How are you assured of prophesying? _____

13. What does the word “prophesying” mean? _____

Prophesying was the job of the “seer” or “prophet”. In the Old Testament, it was their job to reveal the will or message of God. Prophesying is speaking by divine inspiration. Today the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to followers of Christ to study the Scriptures, understand the will of God through the written Word and relate it to other people.

We are assured of the fullness of the Holy Spirit through God’s Word. Scripture tells us that in Christ, we are His servants with His Spirit speaking His message. Always share the importance of the Holy Spirit with other Christians in understanding, interpreting, applying and teaching the Bible. We and they need to pray for the Spirit’s counsel and power.

Jesus began His public ministry with the Holy Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. The Spirit came gracefully and rested upon God’s Son, the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah. Dramatically, Heaven opened for Jesus to be acknowledged as the **genuine** Son of God.

Even in this brief description of Jesus’ baptism we learn about encouraging others who are serving the Lord, praying to God and being in close communion with the Holy Spirit. We can actively make these truths part of our lives and help others to do the same. This is how we will affect others for good and expand the Kingdom of God.

Personal Application: Memorize Psalm 1:1-2 and Acts 2:17-18

Prayerfully read and meditate on these Scriptures. Ask God what He would like you to do in response to these two passages.

Unless uncomfortable sharing, what is God telling you to do in response to these Scripture passages? _____

Next: Lesson 3: Categories of Literature (Genre, pronounced -zhän’rə)

6/3/2010

