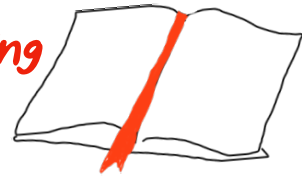


# BIBLE STUDY MADE SIMPLE

*A Guide to Understanding  
Scripture*



**PASTOR CHARLIE SCHAFFER  
CAPERNAUM BAPTIST CHURCH**



*Everything you read or see is from Charlie*

**SECTION 0:**  
**OVERVIEW**

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# Dear Christian,

Thank you for your interest. I promise, your pursuit of God's Word will reap dividends.

Inside this infographic are all the steps you'll need to study the Bible and understand it for yourself . . .

## WHY AN INFOGRAPHIC?

It lets you get the info quicker so you can start the process. Faster, better study? Yes, please!



I hope this serves you well!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Schaffer".

CHARLIE SCHAFFER  
PASTOR, CAPERNAUM B.C.

P.S. Don't forget to check out the essential resource list at the end!

Hello, my friend! Welcome to:

## BIBLE STUDY MADE SIMPLE— A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE.

My name is Charlie Schaffer, the pastor of Capernaum Baptist Church in Hammond, Louisiana. I really did write all the words and draw all the pictures you'll see here, so I hope they help you get the concepts—fast.

I know you've read a book before that bored you to tears, but this won't be one. My goal is to give you as much value in as few words (and pictures!) as possible . . .

Think of this like a picture book, but for adults.

### HERE'S HOW THIS BOOK WORKS:

I'll explain ALL 3 FRAMEWORKS in it four ways:

1. A nifty drawing (don't judge my drawings too harshly)
2. A [video](#) (handy if you're a visual person like me)
3. An audiobook on our podcast (I like to listen to those while I drive)
4. A text summary

These will work together to help you on your journey to understand the Bible for yourself.

If you spend the time—I really do mean *spend* the *time*—not just skimming but intentionally saturating the material in here, you'll do great things in no time at all.

### HERE'S A BREAKDOWN OF THE VALUE I'LL TEACH YOU:

#### **FRAMEWORK 1: What does it mean?**

It may sound simple, but reading the Bible means really READING. With a little help, your reading [comprehension of the Bible will improve quickly](#).

#### **FRAMEWORK 2: Why does it matter?**

Has someone ever taken something you've said out of context? We probably should avoid doing that to God's words, too. That's where interpretation comes in—[what did the Bible mean to the original readers, and what are the "big rocks" principles we can grab from that?](#)

#### **FRAMEWORK 3: What do I do with it?**

We've all heard instructions before, but do we always follow them? No, but sometimes it's not because we're stubborn; it's because the instructions are unclear. This framework will help you to [live out what you learn](#).

**INSIDE EACH FRAMEWORK ARE 2-3 BONUS FRAMEWORKS.**

On that note . . .

Check out these COMPLETELY FREE RESOURCES to help you grow as a Christian:

Our church website: [capernaumbaptist.com](http://capernaumbaptist.com)

For locals around Hammond, Louisiana, this is where you can get plugged into a church family. It's *actually* like a family, and it only takes an hour (how long is an episode of your favorite show?) to find out whether we're the place for you.

Our [podcast](#)

This serves as an archive for all of Capernaum's sermons.

Our [Youtube channel](#)

This has all kinds of helpful topics for life, leadership, and Christianity. Maybe some fitness content in the future, too—stay posted.

Thanks for spending your attention on this.

I promise to do my best to make it worth it—so share your victory with me, yeah?

Send me your story by emailing me at [pastorcbc@protonmail.com](mailto:pastorcbc@protonmail.com)

**Let's get to work!**

# 3 FRAMEWORKS FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE THE RIGHT WAY

*Right away!*

1 What does it mean?

A What lens to use?

B What questions do I ask?

C Where can I get help?



2 Why does it matter?

D What kind of writing?

E What rules to follow?

A B C



α β γ

3 What do I do with it?

F How will I understand?

G Is it clear? Kind of...



**SECTION 1:**  
**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

# 1A WHAT LENS TO USE?



Versus





## WHAT LENS TO USE

Nothing else in this infographic will help if you don't understand this concept, so read slowly . . .

Have you ever had someone read into your conversation? You definitely didn't say what they think you did, but they still get mad at you.

It seems like they made your words say what they wanted them to say, and they tossed all the goodwill in your relationship to the wind.

That's called *deductive reasoning*.

The word *deductive* means that you fit facts into an already-established belief.

Just like your friend assumed something then made your words fit that assumption, sometimes we do the same thing. We assume something about the Bible and make its words fit our premade, preconceived, belief. Most people use the word *assumption* here.

Instead...

We should use the opposite: *inductive reasoning*.

Let the Bible speak for itself, and we can learn so much more.  
*Instead of proving us right, we let the Bible teach what is right.*

Inductive Bible study means that when we read the Bible we promise only to believe what *it* says.

Of course, we can use other resources or ask our pastor questions.

But this just means that sometimes we read into the Bible a little too much, so we need to be careful to let it speak for itself.

So, commit to study the Bible *inductively*.

# 1B WHAT QUESTIONS DO I ASK?

2/1



## WHAT QUESTIONS DO I ASK?

### WHO'S WRITING THIS?

Everyone writes for a different reason. Your favorite author is probably different than mine. And that's because we like different things.

The Bible is no different... The author of a Bible book had a life story, a perspective, and a reason.

If the author isn't apparent from the passage, you can check your copy of the Bible to see if it has a background info section. It's usually just before the book begins. Or, a quick Google search will do.

Try to learn a little about the biblical author before diving into a book. It'll add that nice honed edge to their words.

### WHO'S DOING THE STUFF?

If you figure out the key players in any story, it'll help add the meaning to what's happening.

The characters fall into three categories:

1. Speakers (say the words)
2. Doers (do the actions)
3. Takers (receive words, actions, or both)

Figure out who's who, and the story will be much easier to understand.

PRO TIP: Try explaining the story out loud to someone else. If you're not sure who did/said what, go back and learn.

"Teaching is the best teacher."

—Me

### WHO'S SUPPOSED TO READ THIS?

Now that you know who's writing and what they're writing about, make sure you know the intended audience.

Matthew's storytelling about Jesus assumed a Jewish audience would be reading it. That's why he didn't explain some of the verbal expressions or ritual activities.

On the other hand, Mark went back and explained some of those things. He knew the people reading his book wouldn't understand because he wrote to Romans.

Again, check the info page in your Bible to see if it has the author. If you need, use Google.

# IC WHERE CAN I GET HELP?



## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

### THE BIBLE

Sometimes your passage will be easy to understand.

But, life isn't easy and sometimes the Bible is confusing. When that happens, try using the Bible to explain itself.

Most prints of the Bible nowadays have some sort of cross-reference system built in. Little letters or numbers direct you to another passage somehow relating to the verse you just read.

Think of the confusing passage as a film picture. It's dark and unclear at first. Use the cross references, and it gets a little clearer.

Sometimes you just have to let the Bible develop itself.

### YOUR PASTOR

Your pastor's job is to understand the Bible. He gets paid to know and teach it.

Let him.

I promise you, if you want to make a good pastor happy, just say you want his help with a difficult passage.

Either:

- He'll know how to answer you
- OR he won't... But he'll find out.

He might even have a book, video, sermon, or podcast to refer you to.

PLUS, a lot of pastors I know have some sort of Bible study software that lets them access a whole library, sort it by verse, and spit out relevant info within one second.

Oh, and the most important part—pastors often have a perspective about your life that nobody else has...

They don't just care about answers, they care about you.

## COMMENTARIES

I saved this one for last because it's the most costly.

In fact, I considered not even including it. But I felt like that would be like holding valuable information hostage from those who can use it most.

So, let me ask you a question...

Who do you think will understand a passage better—you or someone more experienced than you?

Right.

That's why I use commentaries.

Any *good* commentary (note the distinction...) will come from an individual who has read the whole Bible many times, who believes in solid doctrine (core Christian beliefs/values), and who wants to help other people see what the Bible means.

I haven't found a perfect commentary yet, but I have a few go-to's. I'd ask your pastor for his recommendations. Here are mine:

- [John Phillip's commentary series](#)
- [Warren Wiersbe's "Be" series](#)
- [Willmington's Guide to the Bible](#)
- [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)

If you clicked those links, you saw the prices. They're not cheap. That's why I hesitated to write this section.

Since this will be an investment over time, and not everyone will be able to afford that investment, here's a few suggestions:

- Don't buy entire sets at first. Just buy the individual books you need from the sets.
- Grab Kindle versions if possible. They go with you everywhere, and they're searchable—super handy.
- Check out the [Logos app](#) for your phone or computer. It's free. You can buy most of the above commentaries and *millions* of other Bible study resources... and usually they're cheaper. PLUS it already comes preloaded with a few resources to get you started for free.

## BONUS: FREE RESOURCES

This is a list of all the excellent free resource I know of. Maybe some of them can help you :)

<http://www.textexcavation.com/texts.html#paracanonicalchristian> (Ancient text library)

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/> (Search Bible topics. Quick reference guide.)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/> (Search a word or passage. Multiple version comparison tool is helpful for a quick glance, and it has plenty of cross references.)

<http://biblehub.com/> (Look here for commentaries)

<http://www.ccel.org/> (Lots of classic Christian writings, including commentaries)

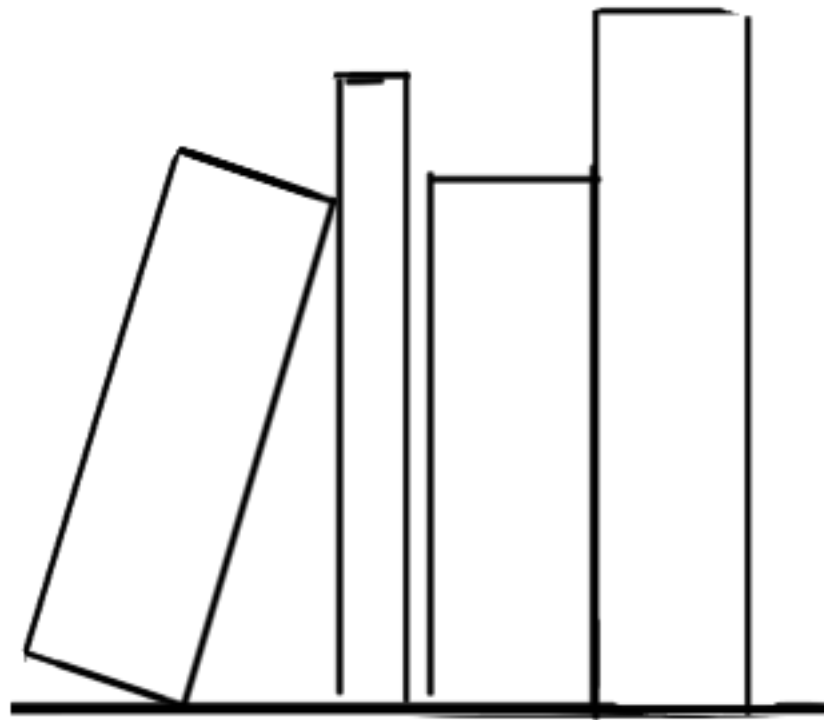
<http://www.e-sword.net/> (More commentaries. Also very easy to use. A classic resource. This one's an app, not just a website.)

<http://preceptaustin.org/> (SUPER helpful for study. Great sidekick for both quick references and deep dives into the Bible.)



**SECTION 2:**  
**WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

# 2D WHAT KINDS OF WRITING?



## WHAT KINDS OF WRITING?

### STORIES

Most of the Bible contains stories. These include conversations, actions, memories, miracles, blessings, curses, failures, wars, creation, law, and anything else that could have happened in the past.

A few keys when reading stories:

- Make sure you know the key players, like we talked about.
- Know who's right and wrong in God's eyes. Sometimes the story isn't upfront about that, so you'll need to do a little study on occasion.
- If you're reading lots of rhetoric (people talking), keep up with the speaker changes.
- Take things literally. Of course there are figures of speech or other flourishes throughout the Bible, but the stories are true.

### POETRY

Poetry runs all throughout the Bible. The most obvious place would be in Psalms, but you'll find it all over.

FYI #1—Hebrew poetry is not quite like what you think of. We English-speakers focus on rhythm and rhyme. Hebrew poetry focuses on repetition of thought.

Basically, every thought build on the previous one.

FYI #2—Hebrew poetry has figures of speech. Sometimes we won't catch on the first time, so it's worth at least looking up your passage to see if it contains any of these word pictures.

### PROPHECY

The third type of literature in the Bible is prophecy. This stretches from entire books devoted to end-times foretelling (Revelation) to sections of books talking about the (then-)coming Messiah (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Even Jesus speaks prophetically quite often (Matthew 16:20-21).

Let's define prophesy so there's no confusion...

Prophesy is saying what God says.

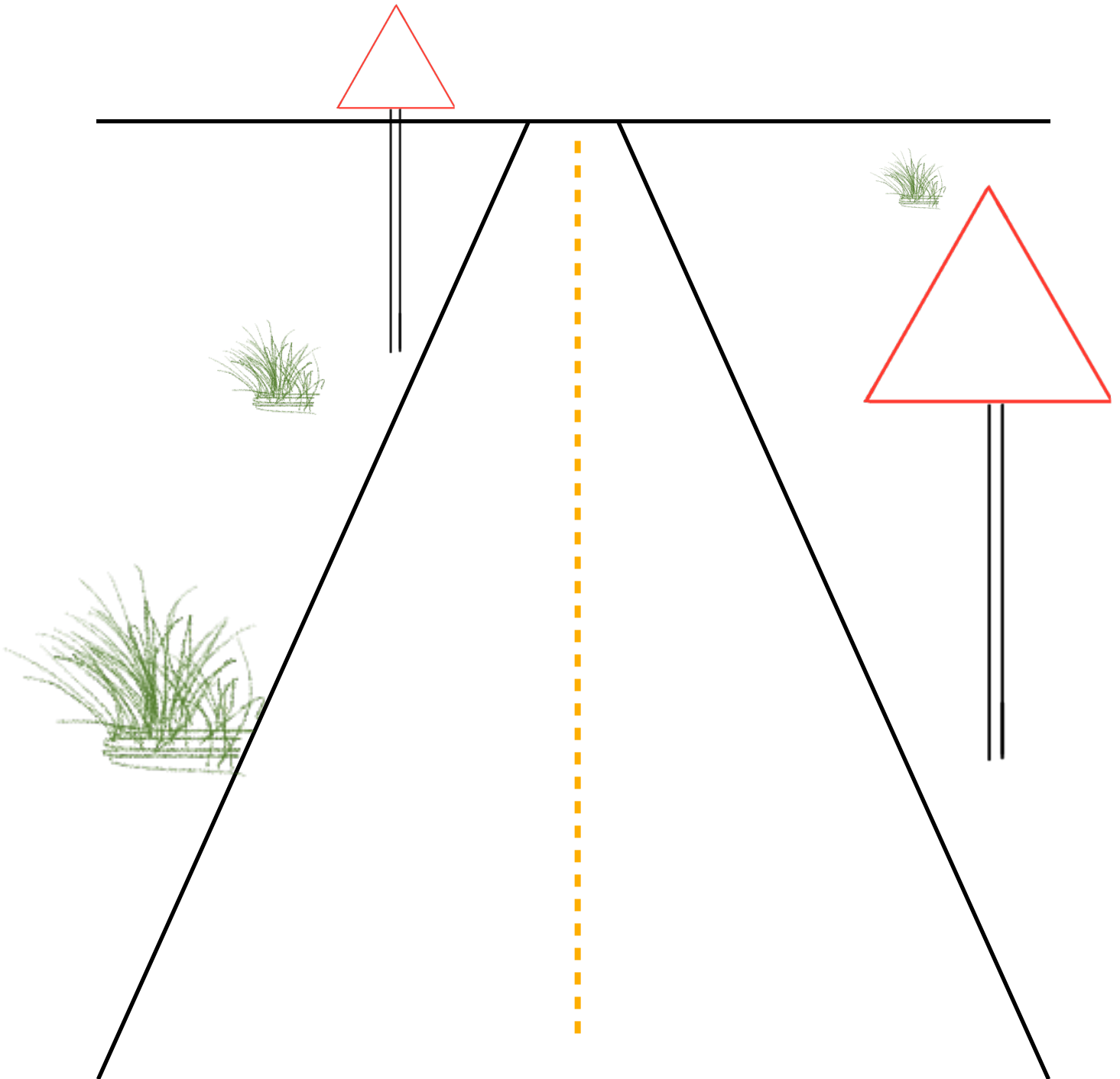
That means, anytime God wants a message spread, He uses a human mouthpiece to speak. We call those humans prophets.

Moses was a prophet just as much as Jonah, and Jonah was just as much a prophet as John the Baptist. Pastors today preach what God has already said, so—by our definition—you could even call pastors prophets (although some people mistake their “revelations” for the already-revealed Word of God).

Prophecy can be the most confusing type of writing in the Bible. Especially in the Old Testament, prophecies used seemingly obscure word pictures. This is where phoning a friend may be handy.

One quick caution: Don't look for hidden symbols, messages, or numbers in the Bible. God wrote the Bible to be understood, not to mislead. Sometimes prophecy can be confusing, but that doesn't mean it can't be understood by normal people. You got this.

# 2E WHAT RULES TO FOLLOW?



## WHAT RULES TO FOLLOW?

### **RULE #1: THE BIBLE IS MEANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD**

Why write a book if you don't want people to understand it?

God reveals Himself through the Bible, which means He didn't write it to confuse you. He wants you to understand Him (as well as your human self can).

What's cool to me is that He backs up what He says by showing you in your own life. You believe the words of the Bible? He guides you, gives peace when there shouldn't be any, helps you make wise choices, gives you escapes from temptation, and even blesses you. It's not like God loves keeping Himself secret!

That said, if God wrote a plain book for plain people, then understand it plainly.

It's not a spell book or some other kind of cipher.

It's literal. It's clear. It's accessible.

So access it.

### **RULE #2: THE BIBLE NEVER CONTRADICTS ITSELF**

You do. Because you're imperfect.

God doesn't. Because He's perfect.

When you come up to what seems like an impasse, don't give up. Because of Rule #1, you can understand the Bible—even when it seems like it argues against itself.

In my experience, there are two reasons people can't solve Bible contradictions:

1. They're missing perspective. They haven't understood something fully, so they assume the Bible is arguing against itself.
2. They haven't kept reading. This one's more common. It happens because people see something that doesn't make sense, then they stop to ponder it. If this happens to you, keep reading a little to see if it clears up. Paul's letters are notorious for this—he says something kind of confusing, but he explains it right after. As a side note, sometimes you'll need to look at Rule #3 to solve apparent contradictions. More in a moment.

Either of these two reasons are perfectly normal. You're human... which means you don't know everything and you haven't done all the study.

Final note on this rule: You will never arrive. The more you know, the more you learn how much you don't know. The apparent contradictions never go away, no matter how long you've studied the Bible (from what I'm told by people way older than me). So just keep at it. It gets faster, promise.

### **RULE #3: THE BIBLE REVEALS TRUTH IN STAGES**

You don't open a storybook up to the first page and read the conclusion. You have to walk through the journey with the characters in order to get the full story and context.

It's the same with the Bible.

God doesn't give all the answers right away... Sometimes you have to keep reading, reading, reading until you reach the next verse on that particular topic.

For instance, God gave Adam and Eve one rule, He gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and then He gave Israel a list of 600+ rules... Oh, and then He raised the bar *and* lowered it at the same time in the New Testament. God's rules for life didn't all pop up at once.

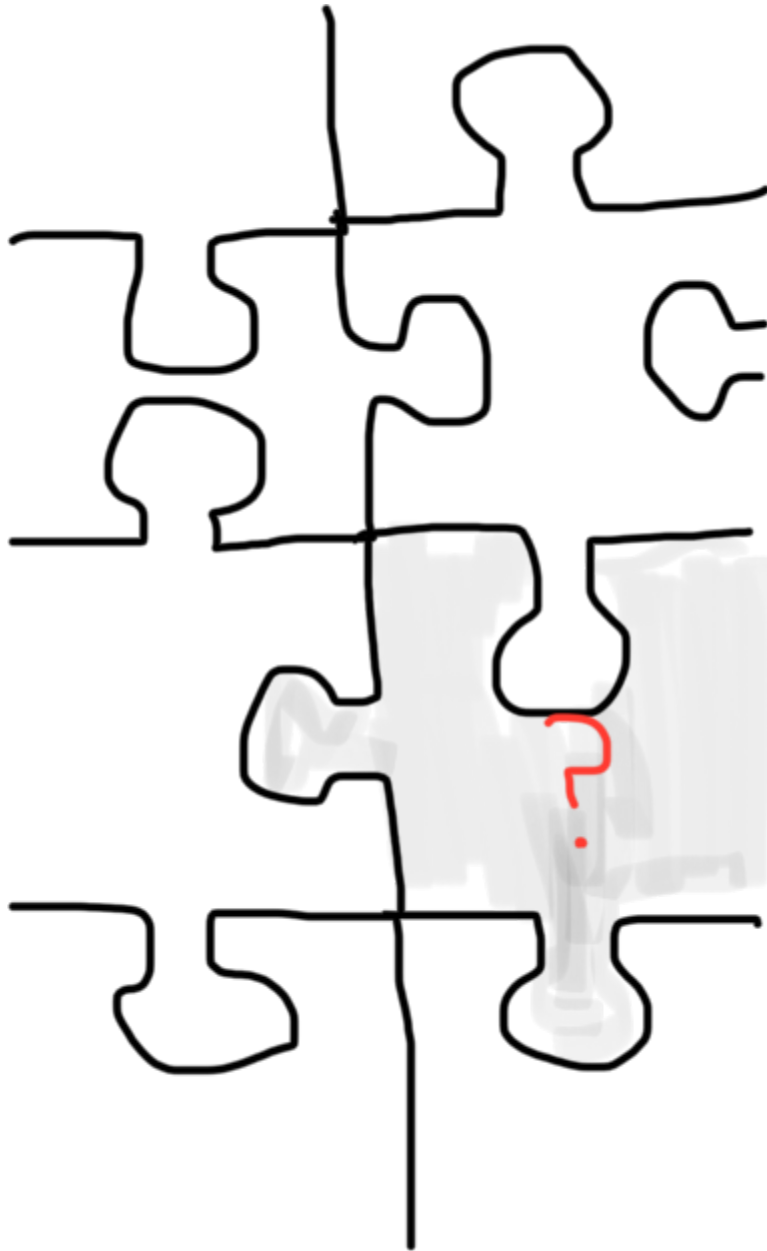
It took time.

Final note on this rule: Time still exists, which means God's plan isn't done yet. Some of what we want to know about the Bible hasn't happened yet, so just be patient. You'll see it someday, one way or another.

**SECTION 3:**  
**WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**



# 3F HOW WILL I USE THIS?



## HOW WILL I USE THIS?

### YOU WON'T UNLESS...

The ONLY way to understand the Bible is if you're a Christian.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit reveals truth from the Bible...

But only saved people have the Holy Spirit to help them.

If you've been saved, then you have the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to help you understand, and do it EVERY time you read the Bible. Without Him you can do nothing.

On the other hand, some people try to read the Bible and aren't saved.

Now, if you're at this point in my infographic, it's because you clearly want to understand God's Word. So far, nothing I've said is off-limits to non-Christians. Anyone can use a commentary, figure out the main characters of a story, and Google the authors of a book. Not hard.

But, all that is just *information*.

*We need transformation.*

"Being saved" just means two things: 1) That you believe Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the grave. 2) That you confess these things outwardly. You must pray to God to acknowledge His love for you and to ask Him to forgive you of your sin.

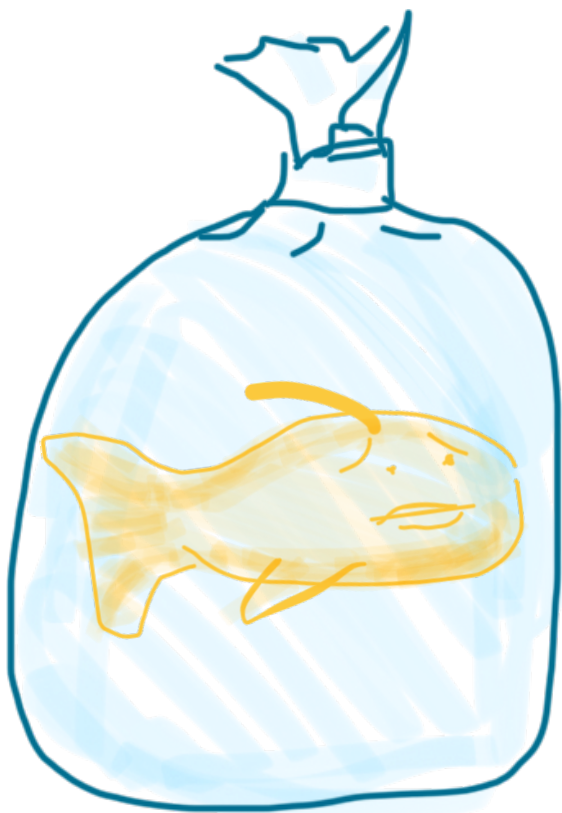
If you do that, the Holy Spirit—God—will live inside your innermost being (we call this the "heart"). He will give you understanding you could not have without Him.

If you've never become a Christian, today's the day you need to. You've read this far because you want to understand...

So, understand.

Let God in.

3G IS IT CLEAR? KIND OF...



## IS IT CLEAR? KIND OF...

### CLEAR COMMANDS

The Bible contains some incredibly direct facts about what to do and what not to do.

Keep in mind, not all of those apply to us. God gave some laws to the Israelites. Jesus gave some instructions to the disciples. The apostles gave some clear direction to early Christians.

Quick-reference rules for you:

- Follow the Ten Commandments. Some people argue whether we have to follow them or not—regardless of what side you're on, ask yourself: "Will these rules help me be a better servant of God or not?" The answer should be pretty obvious.
- Don't follow the Mosaic law. This is the stuff from Leviticus and Deuteronomy, mostly. There's some in Numbers, too. Wherever you find it, just remember that Jesus died to free us from the law—so why bear its burden? See the entire book of Romans for my reasoning.
- Do follow the law of grace. Is it one big list of do's and don't's? No. Is it clearly laid out throughout the New Testament? Yes. Go, find it, and live by it. The easy way to figure it out is this: "Did Jesus die for me so I could do that?"

### CLEAR IMPLICATIONS

Not everything is a direct commandment. For instance, many today debate alcohol—can we drink or not?

Although the Bible doesn't *directly* say either way, I believe the Bible certainly lays out some clear implications that it's at the very least unwise to drink.

Regardless of where you stand on that particular issue, we can all agree that the Bible makes some very clear suggestions about a few topics.

When God speaks, we should listen.

My personal guiding principle for this (and Paul's): Will this be helpful for me to spread the Gospel or not?

### CLEAR PRINCIPLES

Sometimes the Bible doesn't even deal with a topic. For instance, cocaine.

Nowhere does the Bible mention cocaine.

I'm pretty sure we can all agree that cocaine is off-limits, though. That's because we are to be filled with the Spirit, and that is a clear principle to live by.

Plus, principles take the loopholes out of it.

Rules come with loopholes. Principles come with accountability.

As a guiding principle, I like to ask myself, "Would I want my daughter to do this?" Equally helpful, "Would I want my daughter to see *me* do this?"

PRO TIP: If all else fails—you can't find *anything at all* about your topic in the Bible—just remember this:

God gave you a brain.  
Use it.

PRO TIP #2: The Holy Spirit will give you the courage and strength to do what He wants. Make sure to give Him full access to your life. Otherwise, you'll end up doing something you'll regret.

PRO TIP #3: The only way to solve the "gray areas" of the Bible—

Ask God for wisdom. He will give it.  
Then, ask for strength to do what He makes clear.  
Finally, do it.