

**TheWordWorks**

# **General Bible Handling Training**

## **Module 1**

### **Bible Handling Training Part 1**

# Why is it so important for us to read the Bible well?

4 reasons:

1. There is a right way to read the bible

2 Tim 2:14-18 = Paul is writing to Timothy about instructions to church leaders. In Vs 15 – there is a way to correctly handle the word of truth i.e. Not everyone’s opinion/interpretation is equally valid.

2. Reading it right brings life and immortality

As the word is correctly/accurately taught/read, people hear the gospel clearly. They understand what God has done for us in Christ and how God calls us to respond to that.

2 Tim 1:10 - When people believe the gospel, it brings life and immortality

3. Reading it wrong way can have unhealthy consequences

2 Tim 2:14-18 - Hymenaeus and Philetus – deviated from the truth i.e. didn’t rightly handle the word of truth. Results of their teaching = gangrene. Disease. Rotting.

Truth brings life/immortality. Swerving from truth brings death/disease.

But, why don’t we just rely on our preachers/bible study leaders to teach us? We trust that they’re right handlers. We just take in without questioning

4. When we make it our aim to read the bible well, we recognise that the ultimate authority is the bible, not the bible study leader/preacher

Preachers/bible study leaders certainly have a responsibility to read correctly.

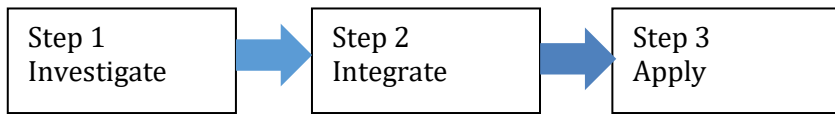
But their role is to bring you to the bible. They want you to submit to bible’s authority, not to their own authority.

So, without the ability to read the bible for yourself, how will you be able to judge whether what someone says comes from the bible and so carries the bible’s authority OR comes from their own authority (“I’m the Pastor so you must listen to what I say?”).

The bible is our ultimate authority.

So, we make it our aim to read it well for ourselves.

# The process of reading the bible



3 steps to reading the bible:

1. Investigate
  - a. Slow reading to finding out what's there
  - b. Like walking into a forest...noticing the trees, animals, strange undergrowth
2. Integrate
  - a. Putting it together
  - b. Trying to see the big picture. See the forest as a whole. How do the various parts fit together? What does the whole thing mean?
3. Apply
  - a. Applying it to your life
  - b. Reading the bible without applying is to misunderstand the purpose of bible

## Step 1: Investigate

Use bible reading tools. They help you know where to look and what to look out for.

What we should get at the end of Step 1:

Sub-sections with broad titles

- Author's purpose

Most important tool. Why did the author write this? What effect does he want his writing to have on his hearers/readers?

Example:

1 John 5:13 (give assurance)

Tests:

trust Jesus is king;

genuine love for fellow Christians.

obedience to god's commands

These are for assurance. Not to cause doubt.

John 20:30-31 (show that Jesus is the Christ)

Ezekiel 43:1-12 (shame the adulterous Israelites)

- Context

Getting the meaning of a particular verse/paragraph/chapter/book by looking at what is around it. What comes before and after?

“I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13)

It’s about contentment

<sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:32-33)

Lifting up Jesus here has nothing to do with praise & worship but with his death.

- Structure

How do you approach a whole chunk of text? Where to begin?

Work out the structure of the passage. Sub-divide the passage into smaller, more manageable sections.

The main question here is:

How has the author broken down his material into sections?

Like looking for the grooves in a chocolate bar

Here’s how to spot the grooves:

Epistles:

- a. Author’s own “First, Second, Third” e.g. 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1
- b. Changes in subject matter  
e.g. 1 Peter 2:11-3:7 = Submit to human institution/Submit to masters/Submit to husbands. Structural marker “Be subject to....”
- c. Progression in argument  
e.g. Romans 1:13-19  
Vs 13-15 = Paul’s keen to preach the gospel to those in Rome  
Vs 16-17 = For the gospel is God’s power for salvation  
Vs 18ff = Why people need saving: God’s wrath at sin

Narrative:

- a. Change in scene e.g. Different day, different location, different speaker
- b. Literary devices e.g. Inclusios (Mark 3:20-35; Matthew 1:1-12)

Giving a title to each section.

Helps you get a feel what the content is in each section.

This will help later in Step 2: Integration.

- Bible timeline

The biggest context → How does the book link to the entire bible story?

Key milestones in bible timeline → Gen 1-2, Gen 3 fall, Gen 12 promises, Exodus, Law, Tabernacle/Temple, Land, King, Temple, Exile, Jesus/Cross/Resurrection, Church age, New creation

How you apply passages depends on where you are on timeline:

Examples:

Temple building in Haggai/Ezra-Nehemiah  
Ruth between Judges and 1 Samuel

- Linking words

Words that help us see the flow of an argument.

- a. Purpose words: "So that", "For this reason"

Eg 1 John 2:1; Luke 1:3-4; 1 John 5:12

- b. For/Because and Therefore

"I was hungry. Therefore I went to Macs "  
"I went to Macs for I was hungry"

Reason...therefore...Consequence  
Consequence...for...reason

Therefore-like words = Consequently/For this reason/So/Thus  
For-like words = Since/Because

- c. Contrast linking words: But, However, Rather

1 Cor 6:11 = shows what they were like before

- d. Conditional = "If.....then...." e.g. 2 Peter 2:4-9

- Repetition

Look out for repeated words/concepts.

This helps with knowing what the author emphasises. It also helps with structuring because you know that verses with the same words/concepts in them likely belong to the same section.

e.g. 1 John 1:1-4 = sense/perception kind of words repeated: seen (Vs 1-3), heard (Vs 1), fellowship (Vs 3)

- Pronouns and pointing words

Pronouns “He”, “She”, “It”

Have to find out who the pronoun refers to. We do this by going backwards and seeing the nearest person named.

Pointing words “This”, “That”,

They refer to a particular thing or idea.

e.g. 2 Thess 1:5. Is the “this” referring backward to Vs 1-4 or forward to Vs 5 onwards?

- Tone and Feel

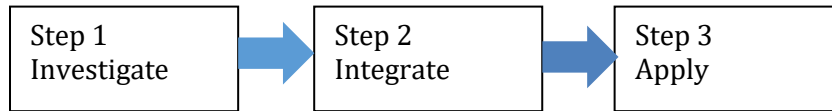
Psalm 47 – psalm of joy. Tone/feel is joy/happiness. The effect on the reader can’t be a sombre/rebuking one.

Ask “What’s the tone of this epistle/psalm/narrative? Gentle? Encouraging? Severe?”

## Questions

## Step 2: Integrate

You've now finished Step 1 of the bible reading process. At the end of your investigative work, you have sub-sections with very broad titles. You might also have some inkling of the author's purpose. You now move to Step 2: Integrate

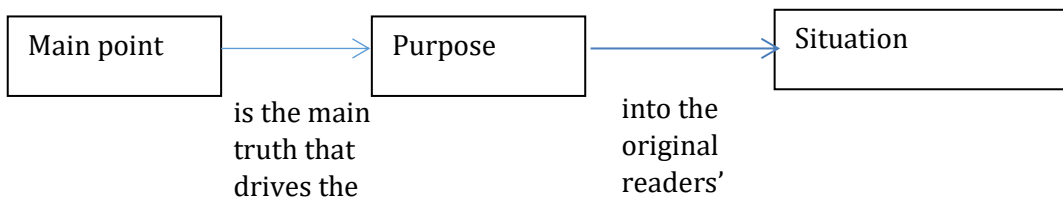


Essentially, in integration work, the end product you're working towards is the **Big idea** of the passage.

The Big idea consists of 3 parts:

Big idea = Main point + Purpose statement + Original situation

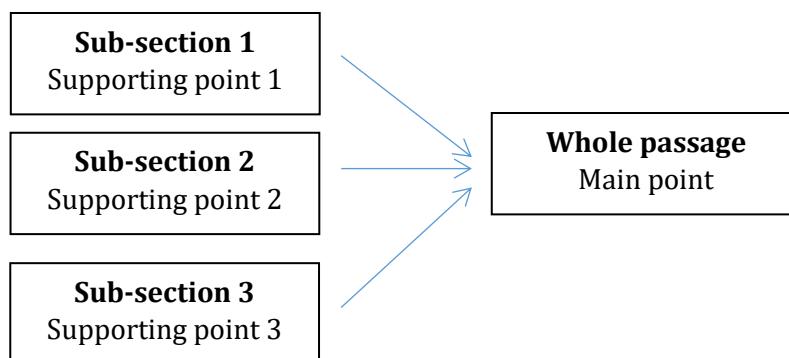
The relationship between the 3 parts of the Big Idea can be summarized in the diagram below



### a) Main point (main thing the author is saying)

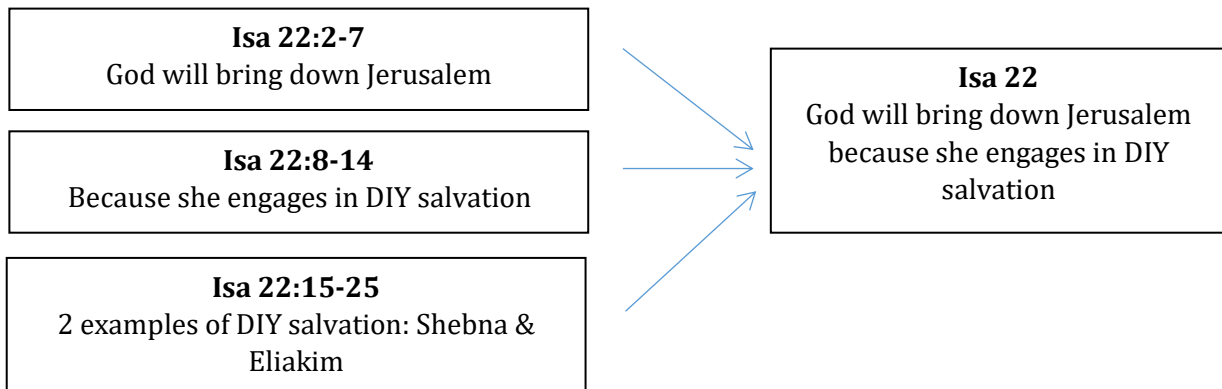
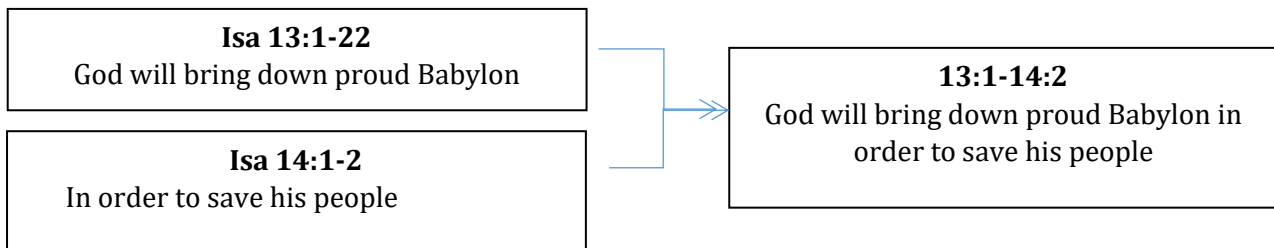
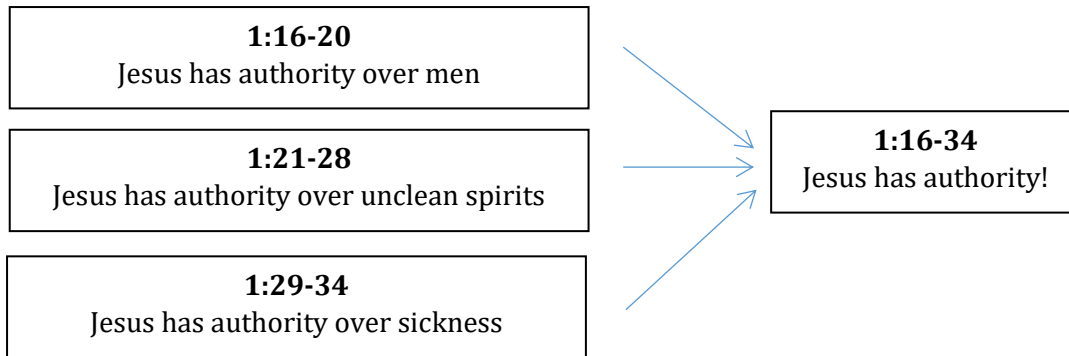
The main point is the main thing the author is saying in that passage, captured in one summary sentence.

The different sub-sections (with its supporting points) that you've worked out above all contribute to the main point. Ask yourself "What is the contribution of each sub-section to the main point"? This will help clarify and correct what you think the main point is.



Your main point has to be broad enough to include all parts of the passage, but specific enough to reflect the particular passage you're studying (and not any and every passage of the Bible).

e.g. Mark 1:16-34





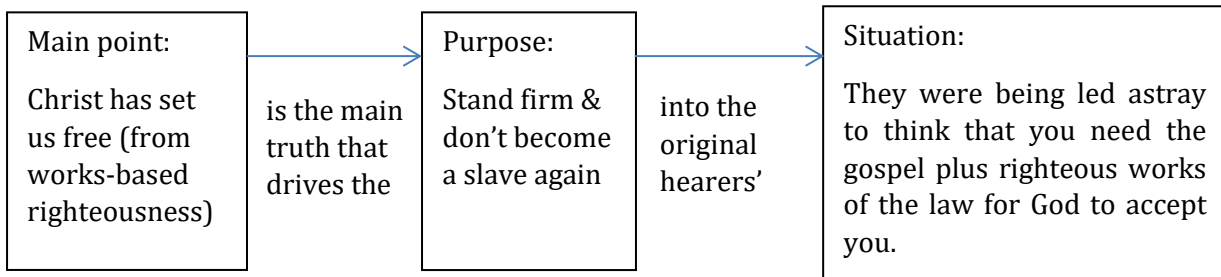
## b) Purpose statement (reason why he's saying it)

When a bible author states a truth (i.e. the main point), he has a specific purpose for doing so. He wants that truth to do something to the original readers. The effect the main point was meant to have on the original readers is called the **PURPOSE STATEMENT**.

Example: Galatians 5:1

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

The BIG Idea of Galatians 5:1



The purpose statement should be an **active sentence** outlining how God wants the readers to respond to what he's said. (Note: The rule is that purpose statements need a verb! Like "Stand firm")

Ask yourself:

- how is this passage meant to shape *their* thinking? Are there truths to be believed? Are there attitudes that need to be fostered?
- how is this passage meant to shape their living? Are there behaviours to be modified?
- how is it meant to make *them* feel? E.g. Psalm 47

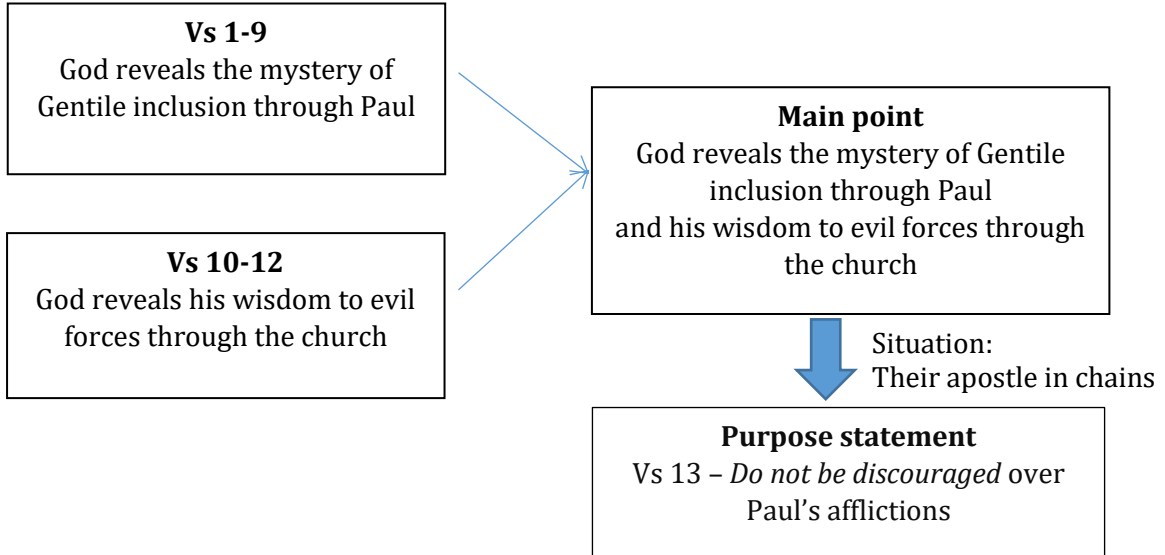
The purpose statement might be quite obvious because it's in the passage itself i.e. the author actually tells the readers how to respond. Mark 1:15 is an example of this.

However at times, there won't be an explicit purpose statement in the passage you're looking at and so you'll need to work it out through a combination of factors.

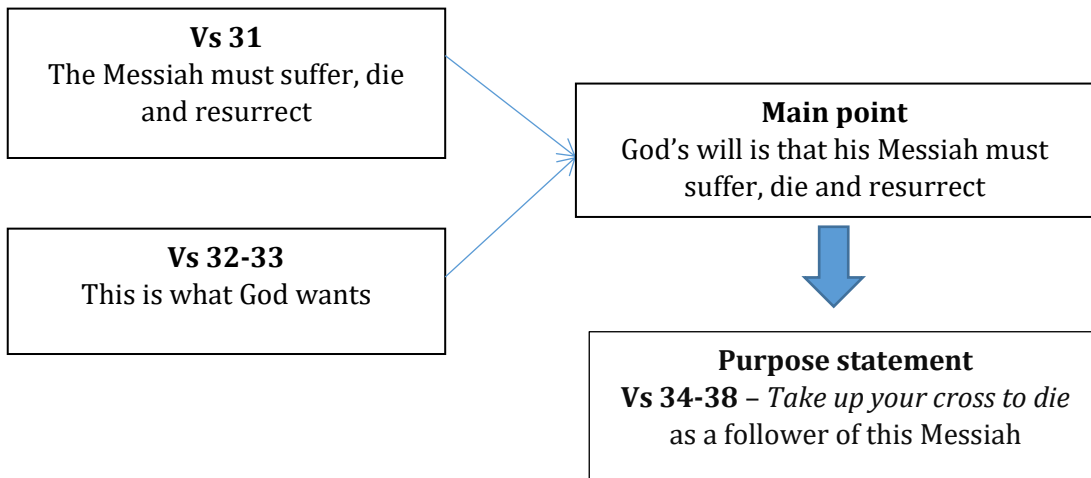
- Is there an explicit purpose statement elsewhere in the book which covers your current passage? (e.g. 1 John 5:13; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Peter 5:12)
- Does the main point itself, combined with the situation of the original readers, imply a purpose? E.g. Romans 8:31-39. MP: Nothing can separate you from God's love in Christ. Situation: Christians suffering (perhaps doubting whether God loves them). Implied purpose: Be assured that nothing can separate you from God's love in Christ
- For narrative: Is the character's response to God one that the author wants his readers to emulate? (e.g. Jonah in Jonah 2, Wise Men/Herod in Matthew 2)
- For narrative: How does this story develop the bible's overarching story of God redeeming the world through his Messiah? (e.g. Ruth, 1 Kings 4:20-25 compared to Gen 12, 2 Samuel 7, 1 Kings 11:1-2)

**c) Examples of integrating to get the Big Idea**

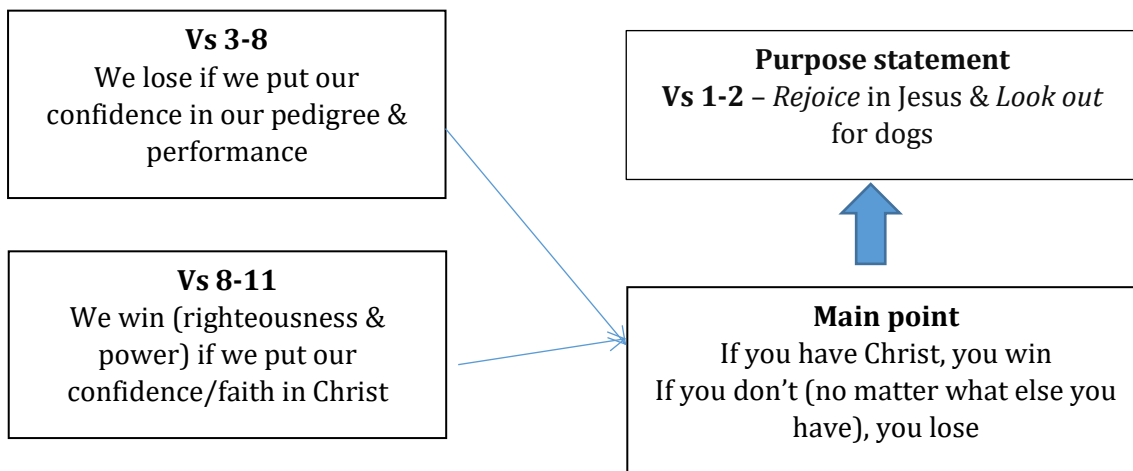
1. Ephesians 3:1-13



2. Mark 8:31-38



3. Philippians 3:1-11



## Questions

### 1. Practice - Try to work out the structure (sub-sections) and then the Big Idea of:

- a. Mark 5:21-43

Structure:

Big idea:

Main point:

Purpose statement:

- b. Psalm 2

Structure:

Big idea:

Main point:

Purpose statement:

c. Mark 8:11-30

Structure:

Big idea:

Main point:

Purpose statement:

d. Hebrews 1:1-2:3

Structure:

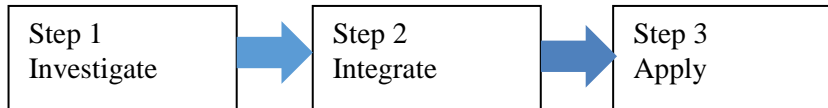
Big idea:

Main point:

Purpose statement:

## Step 3: Apply

You've now finished Step 2. At the end of your integration work, you have the big idea of the passage i.e. the main point and the purpose statement. Now, it's time to see how to apply the passage.



### 1. Apply

So how do we go about applying the passage?

The rule of thumb is this:

We want the passage to have the **same kind of impact** on us as it did on the original readers

Another way of putting this is that we want to be faithful to the author's original purpose for writing. This means that we **start from the purpose statement** we worked out at the end of Step 2 and use that in a current day situation similar to the original situation. These **are purpose-driven, situation-specific applications**.

However, it is not so straight forward as just slapping on the purpose statement to ourselves. After all, our own situations are different from the original readers.

So, here are 2 questions to ask in order to apply the passage to ourselves:

1. Are the original readers living in the BC era or the AD era?

- i) If they are living in the AD era, then they are in the same NT era of fulfilment as us (the structure of the bible is Promise (OT) → Fulfilment (NT)). Like us, they put their faith in Christ and follow Christ. There is nothing more beyond Christ that God wants to reveal to them or us. So, the purpose statements can generally said to apply to us as well.

We just have to work out what specific situations in our lives are similar to theirs and then apply the purpose to our situations.

E.g. For Heb 1:1-2:3, we might be Jews who have an OT religion background but there are other things we are tempted to turn to for spiritual security e.g. spiritual experiences, Christian heritage, religious figures, Christian ritual

The application for us would then be:

*"Pay attention to what we've heard about Jesus and don't drift back to spiritual experiences, Christian heritage, religious figures, Christian ritual etc"*

- ii) If they are living in the BC era, then there is more of God's revelation to come in Christ. And so, we ask: how does the coming of Christ change the main point and purpose statement?

e.g. Psalm 2,

Haggai 1 (MP: God is with his people (Vs 13). PS: Build God's house (Vs 7). Situation: People concerned for their own houses more than God's house)

After the coming of Christ,

MP: God is with his people by his Spirit. PS: Build God's church. Situation: People concerned for their own concerns more than God's church.

2. What are the specific situations in my life where this can be applied?

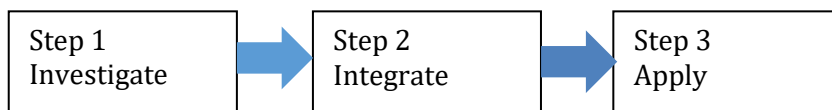
Once you have written out your purpose-driven application (e.g. Build God's church by proclaiming the gospel), then think of the situations in your life where you face the same sort of situation as the original audience

e.g. how are you more concerned for "your own house" in your school, family, office?  
Then apply the purpose-driven application to that situation.

Asking this question keeps our bible studies "real" and achieves the purpose for which God gave us this passage.

## Questions

## Summary



**Practice – What is the application for us from the following passages?**

Mark 5:21-43

Psalm 2

Mark 8:11-30

Hebrew 1:1-2:3

### Helpful resources:

1. Dig deeper – Nigel Beynon & Andrew Sach
2. Dig even deeper – Andrew Sach & Richard Alldritt
3. Dig deeper into the Gospels – Andrew Sach & Tim Hiorns
4. “Teaching the bible” series – various authors.. By PT resources.

e.g. <https://www.bookdepository.com/Teaching-1-Timothy-Angus-Macleay/9781845508081>

5. Unleash the word – Karen Soole
6. God’s big picture – Vaughan Roberts
7. Growth Groups – Colin Marshall
8. Leading Better bible studies – Karen & Rod Morris