

# Understanding the Bible

## Part 3

### *Finding the Big Idea, Applying the Bible*

#### *What's the Big Idea?*

Within a context there is a single idea or concept that the biblical author is seeking to communicate. An idea answers the question "What is being communicated?" Apart from understanding what the author is trying to communicate, a correct interpretation is impossible. Therefore, it is very important to find the "Big Idea."

The Big Idea Has Two Basic Elements:

1. Subject – answers the question "What is being talked about?"
2. Supplement – answers the question "What is being said about the subject?"

Note: The second question cannot be answered until the first question is answered. That is, we can't know what is being said about the subject until we know what the subject is!

Example from Jm. 1:2-8

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."

The Subject – How my faith matures while I'm going through trials

The Supplements:

- by maintaining a joyful attitude
- by recognizing tests develop perseverance
- by realizing perseverance is the road to maturity
- by seeking God's wisdom in trials
- by believing He will give His wisdom

The Big Idea – "Maturing faith has the right perspective when tested."

Read Eph. 6:10-18 and list the following:

The Subject:

The Supplements:

The Big Idea:

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### *Applying the Bible*

The goal or aim in Bible study is applying the truths from Scripture. God's Word was written not only to be understood, but lived out in our lives (Jm 1:21-25). The major difference between wisdom and foolishness is whether we're understanding and applying God's Word.

What is "application?" Application is a noticeable difference in how we think about God, how we obey God, or both.

### Guidelines for Applying the Bible

Ask God to give you insight, so you can clearly see what you're to change (Ps. 119:18).

Recognize that not all knowledge can be applied immediately. Don't be too hasty. Take time to reflect. Be patient to understand first before applying a passage.

If there's a command to obey and it applies to you, obey it! If God says you ought to do or not do whatever, that means you can do or not do whatever. God is not unreasonable and He will give you the strength you need to avoid sin (1 Cor. 10:13).

Be specific about what must be changed in your life. Read Phil. 2:5-7. Rather than say: "I need to be more of a servant like Jesus," you should say "I realize I haven't been serving the people in my home/church/school and I'm going to begin by . . ."

Strategize to optimize. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Be reasonable. If a pattern of sin exists (such as a sinful attitude toward a friend, family or church member), start with just two or three areas that you can change.

Establish a system for accountability. Motives for accountability include:

- because we love God and want to please Him (Mk. 12:30; Jn. 14:15, 21, 23; 1 Pt. 1:15)
- because we need others to help us in our Christian walk (Jm. 5:16-20; Heb. 10:24-25)
- because we believe that honesty and openness is the road to maturity (Ps. 32:3-5)

Methods of accountability could include:

- asking more mature believers to pray for you and check with you on your progress
- writing down what needs changing, then refer to it each day for prayer
- remembering the purpose of communion (I Cor. 11:28-32)

Remember: The major difference between wisdom and foolishness is whether we're understanding and applying God's Word.

Jesus said "everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Mt. 7:24-27).