

HOW TO READ YOUR COMPASS



THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Why should I study the Bible, and how do I do it?

BIG IDEA

The Bible's truth exposes the spiritual realities of our own hearts and of the world around us. Being immersed in God's Word and seeking His glory lights up our life so we can live wisely and share the light with others.

SCRIPTURE USED

Matthew 4:4

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Isaiah 40:6-8

A voice said, "Shout!"

I asked, "What should I shout?"

"Shout that people are like the grass.

*Their beauty fades as quickly
as the flowers in a field.*

*The grass withers and the flowers fade
beneath the breath of the LORD.*

And so it is with people.

*The grass withers and the flowers fade,
but the word of our God stands forever."*

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

OPENER

For the opener you will need:

- Magazines for cutting
- Scissors to share
- Glue sticks or tape (optional)
- A timer or stopwatch (optional)

[Leader's Note: If you do not have easy access to several appropriate magazines for cutting—a minimum of one per each student—an alternative is to construct or download your own “silly story.” Have one person read the story and the others fill in the blanks in the story with nouns, adjectives, verbs without any clue as to the greater meaning. MadLibs is the trademarked version of this alternate activity, and is available as a free phone app. There are also free templates online. In this case, you can still ask many of the same discussion questions noted below about words out of context after the silly stories have been read.]

Gather students in a circle and explain that you are going to ask them to “define a phrase” with pictures they select from a magazine. The group will vote on the best “definition” after everyone has had a chance to share (or funniest, or most creative—just let your group decide what needs to be acknowledged!). Explain that when you say “go” everyone can pick up their magazine and start searching for how they will illustrate what they interpret the special phrase to mean. Students are permitted to cut a piece of a picture and paste it to another one if they so choose, but remind them that this is a timed activity (90 to 120 seconds works well). Assure they are ready to begin and then say:

Show me the meaning of “Out of Context,” GO!!

Leader's Note: Students are full of surprises with their creativity. This could be as simple as a car cut out and hastily taped to a picture of a pool: the car is definitely out of context. Your group is bound to come up with some unique—and often quite humorous—examples of their own!

Call time, and ask students to hold up, and then briefly explain their choices. Your questions can be relevant to what your students come up with, but they should focus on getting students to verbalize the potential dangers of understanding something or someone out of the intended context. Then, you can shift the discussion....

TRANSITION

ASK

- **So, we have talked about some of the problems that arise when things are taken out of context in our examples. But now, let's transition a bit. What do you think it means to take Scripture out of context?**
- **Why do you think this happens from time to time?**
- **What happens when we do that to God's Word?**
- **Why is it so important we talk about how to study the Bible correctly and understand its meaning? If it helps us in our situation, isn't that good enough?**

LESSON

EXPLAIN

Of course, God is always eager to speak to us through His word. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, and helps us not to misunderstand or misuse parts of Scripture we may not fully grasp yet. However, Jesus is clear that we are also responsible for trying to correctly read and study our Bible—not just “cherry pick” it for what is helpful or seems to immediately speak to our own situation. In fact, when Jesus was being tested by the Devil and challenged to turn stones into loaves of bread, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3. He tells the Devil that it is clear in Scripture that people don’t live by bread alone, but by the words that come from the mouth of God! Food just fuels mere existence; God’s Word provides real life! In fact, throughout His temptation Jesus quotes the Old Testament and He clearly understood the situations in which the verses were used! Jesus knew His Bible, and that helped Him not to give into temptation! We need the same type of good solid Scriptural understanding in order to live life well, in a way that is glorifying to God.

We have to remember that the Bible was not originally written to us! It was written in a different time, language, and completely different culture that had a unique way of sharing stories and history. To understand and interpret all these differences, we do need to seek to understand the authors and the audience more clearly, so that we can grasp why God wanted us to know these things too!

ASK

- Is it hard to think of the Bible as what helps to guide our choices in life? Why or Why not?
- Have you ever felt like it was too hard to study the Bible or “more trouble than it seems worth?” Why, or what helps you not to feel like this?

EXPLAIN (with illustration, leaders need a flashlight or can simply stand near a light switch)

The Psalms are full of praises about the Word of God. If you ever need inspiration on how to love the Word, head straight for the middle of your Bible. Psalm 119:105 explains that God’s word is like a *“lamp to our feet”* and a *“light to guide our path.”* (Switch you flashlight or room lights on and off over the next few statements as a visual.)

One illustration that jumps to mind is the powerful effect of total darkness in contrast to light. You cannot accomplish much of anything when you have no light, but with it, you have so many options! Turning the light off and on is a good example, but it might take a few very important things for granted. In Biblical times, there was NO electricity. A lamp or a source of light was not just a nice thing to have or a convenience; it would provide a completely different way of doing your life and getting things done if the sun was not up! A light source could literally guide your life. In fact, the Hebrew word for “light” used in Psalm 119:105 was also used to explain the light of all the heavens, the light of the sun, the light of life, the light of prosperity, and the light of instruction. It’s not just a “light”; God’s Word is full-life illumination! We need to treat the living Word of God as not just a switch we can flip on as needed, but a source of light that changes our lives and impacts how we respond to God and others!

ASK

- What are some practical examples of how the Bible can illuminate your path or literally light up the way of your life?
- What is the danger in treating God’s Word like a switch you can flip on or off?
- How does it feel when someone flips on a bright light when you have been sleeping in a dark place? What is the correlation here to Scripture?

EXPLAIN

So, if we agree that God’s Word is precious and that Jesus described it as the very sustenance of our life, and our guide—or light—for our life, how do we study it?

You may have had many different experiences with Bible Study or none at all. Actually, our focus tonight is not on the numerous methods you can use to study God’s Word (there are so many great tools and resources out there). What we need most is to be mindful of the Holy Spirit at work and open to His leading us in Scripture—no matter what particular way of studying we choose. So tonight we are going to build a compass. It is a guide that we can use and take with us into any kind of Bible Study situation to keep us on the right track!

Remember that the Bible did have an original audience! That does not mean that we are not all intended receivers of all of God’s Words; He does not make mistakes! Still, we have to be mindful of the original context of what we are reading. Sometimes we try to go to the Bible with a specific question in mind seeking a direct answer. But we have to be careful with that type of approach which usually puts “me” above all the other beautiful truths and treasures in Scripture.

The prophet Isaiah was literally commanded to “shout” to the people that while they were withering and fading fast, God’s Word would endure forever. Forever often makes us just think of all things past, but it is important to remember that “forever” means all before and all that is after our own lives too!

So, let’s construct a compass to guide us as we read so that we are more mindful of the great wealth of wisdom in God’s Word. Whether you use the very helpful steps of observation, interpretation, or application or another approach, these big ideas should help us to uncover the Truth!

CREATE

You will need:

- Enough “compasses” for everyone (handout template can be found at the end of this lesson).
- Some colored pencils / crayons or markers

Pass out the compass half sheet templates. We recommend you “personalize” your own compass ahead of time. Color it, draw icons or small pictures for each letter, and then encourage students to do the same or take more notes as you talk.

EXPLAIN

“N” is for Not Yet! When you are studying your Bible, think about the phrase, “Not Yet!” This is a reminder that God is the author of a huge story. It starts way before us, and might go just as long beyond us! What is the “big picture” of the passage? There are still things in our Bible that have not yet happened (think of Revelation!). This type of mentality helps to remind us that the Bible is the LIVING Word of God; it does not just record and report things that happened in the past. It does do that, but it also informs our present lives and provides insight into the future!

“W” is for the five “W” questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Sometimes answering all these questions about a passage or a verse seems overwhelming and like too much work! You do not have to have “all the answers” to really grasp what a passage is about. Do your best to answer these questions, and as you get comfortable with where to find the answers you will likely be inspired to dig deeper and deeper!

“S” is for Salvation and Savior. Think about how what you are reading is a part of the scope of Salvation. Does the passage specifically teach about Christ? If not, can you find anything that is similar to His character or something God might want to reveal about Himself?

“E” is for Embrace. Reading Scripture with a “me” first attitude is not a healthy approach, but that does not mean it is not personal. In fact, how you respond to what you read is incredibly, specifically unique to you as an individual. Scripture is a great encourager; when we embrace its truth, it empowers us to go forth and do what God has called us on mission to do. Examine the need in what you read. How does this relate to you? What is the passage saying about your role?

ASK

- **What happens if you don’t have a compass or the light of Scripture in your life?**
- **Can you think of some present day examples of what represents the darkness that you or your friends face?** (This can be as specific as a student sharing something they are going through personally, or a generic or categorical sin / temptations list.)
- **What are some specific, practical steps to overcoming that darkness?**
- **In your own words, how would you explain to a non-Christian friend the difference between being in the darkness and living in the light?**
- **How is this “compass” approach different from ways that you may have come to your Bible in the past? What are some similarities or some differences?**

EXPLAIN

It is not always easy to be passionate about the Bible. Talk to God about that, and honestly ask Him to light your heart on fire for His precious Words. You might also consider seeking out someone who clearly loves Scripture and whose life is definitely impacted by it. You can also come to us leaders and ask for help, for great resources, and for tools that might really help you get started digging into Scripture.

APPLICATION

In the following closing activity you’ll be asking students to spend time reflecting on Scripture. They are welcome to use their compass. Maybe they want to continue to fill it in or draw on it as they use it. One option is to write a short prayer at the bottom of the compass: “Lord, set me on fire for Your Word and teach me to walk in Your ways. Love, Katie.” Remind students to pray about reading these verses in the way that the Holy Spirit intends for them to receive it. Give them enough time to really study the words and “chew on it.” If you are short on time, challenge them to finish doing this at home, and then tell someone about what they discovered! You may consider playing some instrumental praise music in the background. It is also an option to have students work in small groups or partners.

EXPLAIN

Right now, we're going to give you time to "practice" Bible Study. Remember that even though we certainly do not worship a book, we do worship the author of our Bible, who loved us enough to give us His very Word. Use your Bible, your compass and your verse. Take this time to worship Him through Scripture.

For the following time of reflection and Bible Study students will read and study quietly. Encourage them that this is a discipline, a learned skill, but the rewards are worth it, and so tonight we are going to spend time in the Word to get started! If you have a small group, perhaps just select one passage and have everyone do the same verses. If you would like to provide options, these are just a few suggestions:

- Psalm 119:105-106
- Deuteronomy 6:4-6
- Philippians 4:4-6

Remind students to try to read a little bit before their verse, for practice understanding context. This is a time for students to "marinate" in the Word. There should be no pressure to answer all the questions or get everything "right." After all, the compass is meant to be a helpful guide to get students thinking, and this opportunity is a special time to just spend in the Word. If your students don't typically bring their own Bibles, print out copies of the verses.

Give students a few minutes warning before you ask them to wrap up their quiet time. Encourage them to keep up this type of reflection at home this week with other verses!

CLOSING

EXPLAIN

It is hard sometimes to see the value of the light when you are used to finding your way in the darkness. Often it is hard to value having the nooks and crannies of our lives "fully lit" when we are getting by "okay" on our own in the dim lighting. The trouble is, without the source of all light we are missing out—and we cannot even see what all we are missing out on! It will be difficult for us to be a light in the dark world if we do not eagerly run towards the Source.

You may have noticed the words that appear on the back of your compass were written way back in 1898, but they still beautifully capture the specialness of the Bible. I would like to pray these words over each of you right now. I am praying that we all will have this kind of passion for the Word of God.

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

—From "Record of Christian Work," Vol. 17, No. 5, (Fleming H. Revell Company: New York), May, 1898, page 262, Public Domain.

And finally, as we close, if anyone is here today and it's news to you that the Bible is God's clear communication to us about how to live our lives and about His plan of salvation through Jesus, I want to share with you right now about Jesus' gospel message of grace.

You see, God created us to be with Him, but our sins separate us from Him. The bad news is that there's nothing we can do in and of ourselves to "earn" forgiveness for our sins. But the good news is that Jesus came to earth and paid the price for our sin by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Everyone who trusts in Him alone can receive the free gift of eternal life—a life with Him that starts now and lasts forever.

Does that make sense? Is there anything holding you back from putting your faith in Jesus right now to give you eternal life?

With every head bowed and eyes closed, I invite you to put your trust in Jesus right now in the quietness of your own heart. The moment you trust in Him, you enter into an unbreakable relationship with God. Your life will never be the same—both now and for all eternity.

Invite anyone who put their trust in Jesus to come see you after the meeting so you can follow up with them.



DARE 2 SHARE

© Copyright 2014 Dare 2 Share Ministries. All rights reserved. Reprint permission is given for the attached handout for use in the lesson. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

How to Read Your Compass

N: *Not Yet!* What is the BIGGER picture in God's Kingdom Story? What might these verses have to do with what has not happened yet?

W:
Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?



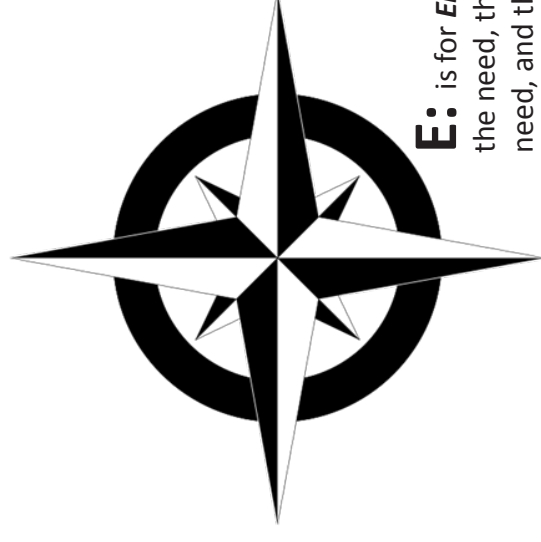
E: is for ***Embrace!*** What is the need, the source of the need, and the fruit of the met need in this verse? How can God use this to refine you? In what ways will you experience more of God's love both for you and for others by properly understanding this passage? What thoughts, words, or actions are being asked of you?

S: What is being said here about ***Salvation*** and the ***Savior?*** Does the passage teach about Christ? Does anything point to Him and His example or show a need for rescue or a Savior?

How to Read Your Compass

N: *Not Yet!* What is the BIGGER picture in God's Kingdom Story? What might these verses have to do with what has not happened yet?

W:
Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?



S: What is being said here about ***Salvation*** and the ***Savior?*** Does the passage teach about Christ? Does anything point to Him and His example or show a need for rescue or a Savior?

E: is for ***Embrace!*** What is the need, the source of the need, and the fruit of the met need in this verse? How can God use this to refine you? In what ways will you experience more of God's love both for you and for others by properly understanding this passage? What thoughts, words, or actions are being asked of you?

The Bible

The Bible contains the mind of God,
the state of man,
the way of salvation,
the doom of sinners,
and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy,
its precepts are binding,
its histories are true,
and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise,
believe it to be safe,
and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you,
food to support you,
and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map,
the pilgrim's staff,
the pilot's compass,
the soldier's sword,
and the Christian's charter.

Here Paradise is restored,
Heaven opened,
and the gates of hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject,
our good the design,
and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory,
rule the heart,
and guide the feet.

Read it slowly,
frequently, and prayerfully.

It is a mine of wealth,
a paradise of glory,
and a river of pleasure.
It is given you in life,
will be opened at the judgment,
and be remembered forever.

It involves the highest responsibility,
will reward the greatest labor,
and will condemn all who trifle
with its sacred contents.

—From "Record of Christian Work,"
Vol. 17, No. 5, (Fleming H. Revell Company:
New York), May, 1898, page 262,
Public Domain

The Bible

The Bible contains the mind of God,
the state of man,
the way of salvation,
the doom of sinners,
and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy,
its precepts are binding,
its histories are true,
and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise,
believe it to be safe,
and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you,
food to support you,
and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map,
the pilgrim's staff,
the pilot's compass,
the soldier's sword,
and the Christian's charter.

Here Paradise is restored,
Heaven opened,
and the gates of hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject,
our good the design,
and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory,
rule the heart,
and guide the feet.

Read it slowly,
frequently, and prayerfully.

It is a mine of wealth,
a paradise of glory,
and a river of pleasure.
It is given you in life,
will be opened at the judgment,
and be remembered forever.

It involves the highest responsibility,
will reward the greatest labor,
and will condemn all who trifle
with its sacred contents.

—From "Record of Christian Work,"
Vol. 17, No. 5, (Fleming H. Revell Company:
New York), May, 1898, page 262,
Public Domain