

This guide is meant to be a guide only, not a definitive or prescriptive way to study scripture. This method is a favourite of mine because it helps me to read a passage “anew” since the passage is set out without verse numbers, headings, paragraph breaks, or any other added notes. Reading a passage of scripture prepared this way aids a reader to see the text in a way similar to that which the first readers would have received it.

Most old manuscripts were produced by scribes or copyists who were careful to produce an accurate copy without accretions or emendations, including paragraph settings or other notation that we would consider to be necessary. Not all documents followed this style because some writers used some modest “breaks” in the text but most were set out as in our copy. Thus we read a letter or document or text in a way similar to the first readers.

However, we are removed from the first century culture, language, faith, and personalities too. We have to work at understanding as much as we can about these things when we read a text written then. Naturally we cannot interpret easily since we are so far removed from the first Christian readers, yet one of the wonders of the Bible is that a reader from this century can interpret much of the bible as it is written ***if the translation is well done.***

Here are a few guiding principles that will help to read and understand this text.

- Take note of the language of the text by marking words, phrases, repeated phrases, ideas, and any other things that you see. Circle, underline etc. as you see things.
- Look for linked ideas, reasoning, “code” words like “therefore” --If there is a “therefore” what is it there for?--conjunctions like, and, but etc. Look for arguments and “trains of thought” and note these as well.
- Expect that you will have questions about things that you read. Consider this principle—when you don’t understand something in the text or when you have a question, reserve that question. One of the delights that many people discover is that the bible writers answer questions that we may have, yet it takes time to find those answers. Noting questions is a great way to keep reading and searching for the answer.
- Keep asking this question “What would I think if I was a first century Hebrew reading this for the first time?”
- Finally, “How do we apply this understanding to our lives today?”

I will have this text printed for you so you don’t need to print it beforehand. Looking forward to next Tuesday.

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