

COMA – How to study the Bible

COMA is an acronym for a Bible study method that allows you to make better sense of what you read while using four core principles.

C: Context

One of the biggest mistakes we can make when reading the Bible is taking a passage out of context, which can drastically give the passage the wrong meaning.

The first step in interpreting the Bible is understanding the context of a passage.

Everybody surely remembers the five W's of journalism: Who, What, Where, When, Why. When reading a Bible passage, try to answer those five W's.

- 1 Who wrote this passage and whom is the audience?
- 2 What is this passage about and what is going on in it?
- 3 Where is the author writing this, and where does this passage take place?
- 4 When was the passage written and when did it take place in the history of time?
- 5 Why was the passage written, for what reason, and why should we heed its

advice?

And you may ask yourself: how do I know this? Buying a good study bible will give you an introduction to each book within it, which will give you the correct context.

O: Observation

When reading a passage, find something that stands out to you.

- Were there unusual commands or decrees given?
- Did something awful happen to somebody?
- Why did that person say that?

And always ask yourself questions.

- What doesn't make sense?
- What doesn't sit right with me?
- Why is that word, phrase, or paragraph there?
- Does something seem odd or out of place?
- Who is that person and for what reason is he or she there?

Feel free to challenge what you read because it feeds your desire to learn truth.

M: Message

This is perhaps one of the most difficult steps in the COMA method.

Trying to understand the message of a passage in the Bible is not sunshine and roses. But do your best to make an educated guess about what the author is trying to persuade the audience to do or believe, and — more importantly — what God is trying to say with his Word.

Every passage has a message; it's just a matter of understanding what that is. With a study bible, you can look in the footnotes for explanation. You can also look online for explanation of various passages from credible bible scholars.

A: Application

Finally, we reach the most important step in the COMA method.

It's not enough to read, study, and learn from the Bible if you don't use that wisdom and apply it to your daily life. Many folks make the mistake of thinking that because the Bible was written over 2,000 years ago, that its teachings are outdated.

That's just plain wrong.

Civil and ceremonial laws of the time are outdated, but moral laws — which include principles of faith, obedience, love, human behavior and decency — are timeless.