

PROAPTing Guide - Asking the Right Questions

PRAY - We read the Bible most effectively in constant communication with God. Before embarking on the investigation of any particular text, intentionally turn your attention to God and to ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom, humility and insight in the process. Ask for an open mind that is quick to learn, change and respond in true obedience, and a soft heart that is quickly transformed by the Spirit's work.

PREVIEW - Make a quick overview of what you are about to read and investigate.

- What book is the passage from?
- Who is the human author?
- What part of the biblical narrative does it arise out of? (biblical context)
- What is the basic occasion for the writing of this passage? (historical context)
- What is the genre of the passage in question? (literary context)
- If it is relevant (and it almost always is), what happened immediately before this passage and what happens immediately after? (literary context)

Simplified: When, where, who, how?

READ - Read the passage at least twice.

OBSERVE - Walk through the following questions

- Who is involved in the passage? What are their roles?
What do you know about them? What questions do you have about them?
 - Who was the passage originally spoken to and/or written to/for?
- What is the tone of the passage? What does that tell you about the meaning of the passage, or how it was intended to be received?
- Are there any key terms (look for repetition of words or phrases)? What do you know about those terms? What questions do you have about those terms?
 - If you are familiar with more of the Bible, do you notice any terms, phrases or themes that remind you of other important moments or passages in the Bible?
How does this passage relate to those?
- Is the passage poetic, or does it use other literary devices like hyperbole, metaphor, repetition, irony, etcetera? If so, what do those images or sentences intend to communicate? How does that affect how the original audience would have heard and interpreted the passage?
- Why was this passage written? What is the point?
What did the author intend his audience to do in response to hearing or reading this passage?

Simplified: Who? What? How? Why?

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APPLY - Work to bring the meaning of the passage to bear on your life today. Some key questions to consider:

- What would it look like to directly apply the original message of this text to our lives today?
 - If that's not possible or appropriate, what makes that impossible or inappropriate?
 - How is our situation like the situation addressed in the passage and how is it different?
 - Beware of ignoring the clear meaning of a passage simply because it feels old-fashioned or difficult. The clear meaning of Scripture should be just that, clear, not necessarily comfortable or easy.
- What key principles in the passage can be taken into our situation, even if the particular applications in the original context are not directly related to our situation?
- How does this passage challenge your current thinking and/or lifestyle?
If you are challenged to change, how will you change or respond?

PRAY - Thank God for the text, for His guidance in interpreting the text and ask for His help in obeying the text.

TELL - Share your experience, challenges, lessons learned, steps for obedience with someone.