



## LESSON 1

# HOW DID THE BIBLE COME INTO BEING?

### **Purpose**

***To be amazed about the uniqueness of the Bible***

Why should we have some understanding of how the Bible came to us?

- to realize that the Bible, like creation, is an \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Why do we say that?**

- although it was written on three continents (\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_),
- in three different languages (\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_),
- over a period of about \_\_\_\_\_ years,
- by more than \_\_\_\_\_ authors (from all walks of life),
- the Bible as a whole forms a \_\_\_\_\_.

This unit makes the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ among all books.

The Bible did not just simply drop from the sky, but it came into being through a fascinating, but complicated \_\_\_\_\_.

### **To best understand the process we need to be aware of:**

- The \_\_\_\_\_
- The \_\_\_\_\_
- The \_\_\_\_\_



## LESSON 4 THE GPS-METHOD

### **Purpose**

#### ***To master the GPS-Method***

It is not always easy to understand the Bible.

The reason is that between us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the people of the Bible there are many \_\_\_\_\_. There are differences of

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

The original receivers (first readers) best understood the Bible. Let us illustrate it with Romans 12:20.

***“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink;  
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”***

*New King James Version*

***“If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a  
drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame.”***

*Good News Bible*

It is clear that the Good News Bible conveys the \_\_\_\_\_ as the original receivers understood it.

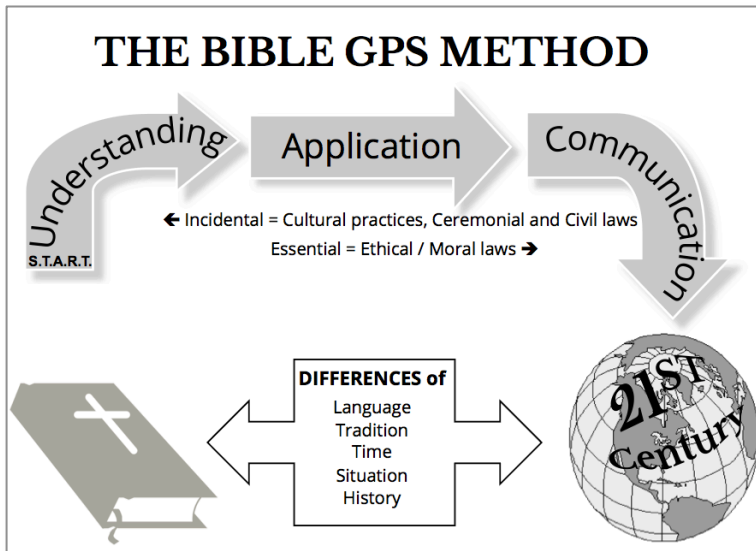
To the original receivers “heap coals of fire on his head” was an \_\_\_\_\_ meaning “to burn with shame”.

## How can the message to the original receivers speak to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

We follow \_\_\_\_\_ processes which we call the Bible GPS (**G**od **P**ositioning System).

It includes the processes of

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



The **Goal** of the process of **UNDERSTANDING** is to understand the message as well as or almost as well as the \_\_\_\_\_ receivers did.

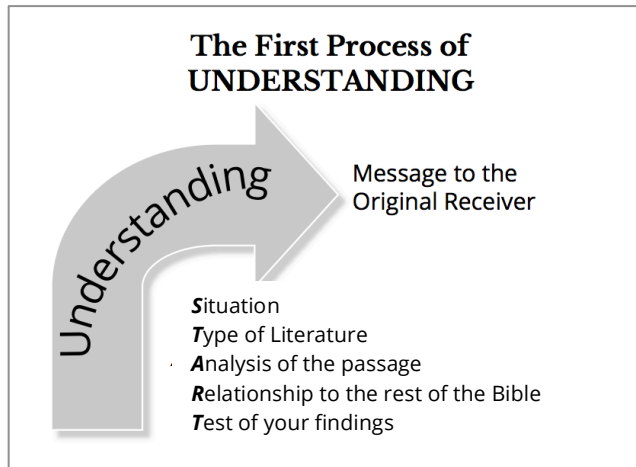
The Process of UNDERSTANDING consists of \_\_\_\_\_ steps. These steps form the acronym \_\_\_\_\_.

- P 1. **S**ituation
- R 2. **T**ype of Literature
- A 3. **A**nalysis of the passage
- Y 4. **R**elationship to the rest of the Bible
- E 5. **T**est of your findings
- R

We do this process prayerfully under the guidance of God's Spirit.

## A. THE PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING

Let us apply the process of UNDERSTANDING to **Ephesians 2: 1-10** (page 53)



- **The FIRST step of understanding: Ephesians 2:1-10**

### 1. Situation

The situation or context of a passage will help you better understand the text. Think of a teacher who was very surprised when one of her top students failed. Once the student explained to his teacher that his father had passed away the night before the exam, the teacher understood why her top student did not perform well.

You understand a passage much better if you have insight into the circumstances in which the text was written.

## **How can we get a better understanding of the situation?**

You get a better understanding of the situation by asking the following questions:

- **Who was the Sender (Author) and Receiver (Reader)?**

Paul wrote the letter from prison (Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, 6:20) to the believers in Ephesus and Asia Minor.

- **Where does the passage fit in the structure (division) of the book and Bible?**

Study Bibles often gives a complete description of a Biblical book. Ephesians is part of the Epistles of the New Testament.

- **What was the purpose of the letter?**

To remind the believers what a privilege it is to be part of the body of Christ as a Jew and a non-Jew.

- **What was the political situation?**

Rome was the world power and they allowed the Jews to practice their religion across the Roman Empire.

- **What was the cultural background?**

The Greek culture flourished. Greek was the common language.

- **What was the economic background?**

Ephesus was very strategically located, and was as major a port city as Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria. It is located to the west of Asia Minor (where Turkey is today) and was on the main route between Rome and the East.

- **What was the religious background?**

At that time there was a religious heresy called "Gnosticism". "Gnosticism" comes from the Greek word "gnosis" which means "knowledge". Gnosticism teaches that salvation is reached through special knowledge (gnosis) of a Supreme Being. They make a clear separation between the material and spiritual world. According to them, the visible (material) does not have an effect on your mind. So they continued to live immorally and still believed that they were spiritually pure.

**Where can you get all the information?**

- Study Bibles
- Bible commentaries
- Internet (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/ephesians/>)
- Your church

- **The SECOND step of understanding: Ephesians 2:1-10**

## 2. Type of Literature

It is important to determine what kind of literature the passage is. You can not, for example, read a poem as a story is read (see page 33).

Paul's message is in the FORM (genre) of a LETTER.

- **The THIRD step of understanding: Ephesians 2:1-10**

## 3. Analysis of the passage

**This is where we spend the most time.**

The following steps will help you to read the letters of the New Testament.

### **3.1 Break up the passage into smaller \_\_\_\_\_**

Because what the writers wrote was very compact and loaded, I have broken the verses into smaller sections (see page 65).

It is easier to understand directions to someone's house if the steps are written like a list rather than in sentences. It just makes it easier to read.

### **3.2 Mark the main \_\_\_\_\_ (zoom in)**

How do we mark the main themes? You first **zoom in** to the passage by marking everything that relates.



## Hint

- You can use colored pens to mark words. You can also use a pen or pencil to mark words with triangles, squares, circles or ticks or anything else that is noticeable. This is called **meaning indicators**.
- Indicate at the beginning of each verse an "**E**" for explanation and an "**I**" for instruction. It helps us to see how the author developed his thoughts. (You will notice that this section is not instructional at all.

## Exercise

Let us **zoom in** to Ephesians 2:1-10. Go to page 53.

Mark all the negative words and phrases in verses 1-3 with the same meaning indicator (*See Introduction 1, page 3*).

Mark all the positive words in verses 4-9 with a different meaning indicator (*See Introduction, page 4*).

In verse 10 the focus switches back to humanity's responsibility. Mark everything people need to do in verse 10 with a different meaning indicator (*See Introduction, page 4*).

## Ephesians 2: 1-10

<sup>1</sup> As for you,  
you were **dead** in your **transgressions** and **sins**,

<sup>2</sup> in which you used to live  
when you **followed the ways of this world**  
and of the **ruler of the kingdom of the air**,  
**the spirit** who is **now at work**  
in those who are **disobedient**.

<sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time,  
**gratifying** the **cravings** of our **sinful nature**  
and **following** its **desires** and **thoughts**.

Like the rest, we were by nature **objects of wrath**.

**But** because of his great love for us,

God, who is rich in mercy,

<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ

even when we were dead in transgressions—  
it is by grace you have been saved.

<sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ  
and seated us with him

in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

<sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages  
he might show the incomparable riches of his grace,  
expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved,  
through faith—and this not from yourselves,  
it is the gift of God—

<sup>9</sup> not by works,  
so that no one can boast.

<sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3.3 Explain difficult words and phrases (if necessary)

This section does not really have difficult words. It does have words that are loaded with rich meaning like "grace."

### 3.4 Summarize the main sections in your own words (zoom out)

After you have marked Ephesians 2:1-10, you **zoom out** to see how the author had arranged his thoughts.

- **Verses 1-3:** Paul uses many words which refer to a big mess (e.g., transgressions, sin and wrath).  
*Try to summarise verses 1-3 in one short sentence or one word next to verses 1-3 on page 53.*
- **Verses 4-9:** The word "but" in verse 4 brings a twist in Paul's thought. These verses are about God's goodness.  
*Try to summarise verses 4-9 in one short sentence or one word next to verses 4-9 on page 53.*
- **Verse 10:** Here the focus shifts back to humanity's responsibility to do good works because we are thankful for God's grace.  
*Try to summarise verse 10 in one short sentence or one word next to the verse 10 on page 53.*

In light of the findings of the previous three steps, we now attempt to see how the author arranged the main themes.

- **Verses 1-3:** What a \_\_\_\_\_ (sin or guilt)
- **Verses 4-9:** What a \_\_\_\_\_ (salvation or grace)
- **Verse 10:** What a \_\_\_\_\_ (service or gratitude)

### **3.5 Conclude and summarize the message to the original receiver**

I am saved, not by works, but by faith in Christ. I do good works because I am thankful for what God has done for me (and still does) in Christ.

- **The FOURTH step of understanding: Ephesians 2:1-10**

### **4. Relationship to the rest of the bible**

In this step we determine whether the findings of the previous step (message to the original receiver) relate to the rest of the Bible. If the result of your analysis is that you do not always have to forgive, then you will soon realize that other passages do not proclaim this message. This means that you haven't interpreted the passage correctly.

- **The FIFTH step of understanding: Ephesians 2:1-10**

### **5. Test of your findings**

In this step you test your findings (Biblical interpretation) against those of others (e.g. commentaries and study Bibles). Many others before you have wrestled with this passage. Reading the interpretations of others, will confirm that you understood this passage correctly or that you are off track.

## **B. THE PROCESS OF APPLICATION**

We have seen that the process of **UNDERSTANDING** helps us to determine the message to the original receiver.

The following process, **APPLICATION**, helps us to determine whether or not the message to the original recipient is still applicable to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is clear that we do not follow all the instructions of the Bible anymore. We still believe that we should honor our parents (Leviticus 19: 3), yet we don't believe we should wear clothes only made of one textile (Leviticus 19:19).

**How do you determine when the message to the original recipient still applies to us?**

You need to distinguish the difference between an \_\_\_\_\_ and an \_\_\_\_\_.

**An Incidental (Relative)**

**The message is only applicable to the original receiver**

**An Essential (Absolute)**

**The message is applicable to the original receiver and the people of the  
21st century**

How do you determine when the message to the original receiver is applicable (essential) to us, or not (incidental)?

A good place to start is to distinguish the different laws in the Bible as well as cultural practices. (The author is totally aware that not all church traditions agree on this distinction.)

## The Different Laws and Cultural Practices

Civil Laws	Ceremonial Laws	Cultural Practices	Moral Laws
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### PURPOSE

Regulating the nation of Israel	Animal sacrifices to make atonement for sin. Point to Christ, the true Lamb	Comprise the ways people do certain things	Universal guidelines telling us how to live
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### EXAMPLE

Building regulations <i>(Deut 22:8)</i>	The Passover <i>(Lev 16)</i>	To greet with a kiss. <i>(1 Peter 5:14)</i>	The Ten Commandments <i>(Ex 20)</i>
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**Civil** (Judicial) Laws were \_\_\_\_\_ to the original receivers but are \_\_\_\_\_ to us because our situation is different.

**Ceremonial** (Ritual) Laws were \_\_\_\_\_ to the original receivers but are \_\_\_\_\_ to us because it was fulfilled in Christ's offering on the cross.

**Cultural practices** were \_\_\_\_\_ to the original receivers but are \_\_\_\_\_ to us because our culture, time, situation and history are different.

Behind every civil and ceremonial law is a moral law (a commandment of love). We do not need to bring sacrifices of lambs to the temple anymore. Our whole life is now a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). Those passages, especially the ceremonial laws, will help us better understand and appreciate the sacrifice of Christ.

**Moral** (Ethical) Laws were \_\_\_\_\_ to the original receiver and are also \_\_\_\_\_ to us because they go beyond language, culture, time, situation and history.

It is very important to distinguish between an **INCIDENTAL** and an **ESSENTIAL** message. The danger is to interpret an Essential as an Incidental or to interpret an Incidental as an Essential.

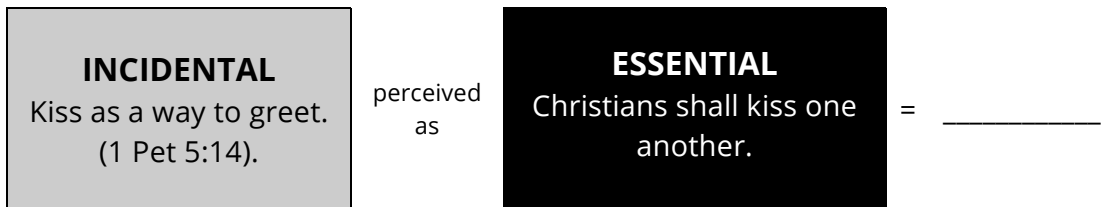


**An illustration of the importance of this process:  
LEGALISM versus "ANYTHING GOES"**

The danger when an **INCIDENTAL** is being perceived as an **ESSENTIAL**



Example



The danger when an **ESSENTIAL** is being perceived as an **INCIDENTAL**

**ESSENTIAL**  
The message is applicable to the original receiver and people of the 21st century.

perceived  
as

**INCIDENTAL**  
The message is only applicable to the original receiver.

= " \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ "

Example

**ESSENTIAL**  
Jesus is GOD.  
(John 20:28)

perceived  
as

**INCIDENTAL**  
Jesus was only a good moral teacher.

= " \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ "

**Determine whether the following passages are applicable (essential) or not applicable (incidental) to us.**

**Check the right answer:**

**Exodus 20:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Leviticus 11:4**

But among those that chew the cud or have divided hoofs, you shall not eat the following: the camel, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalms 100:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>Make a joyful noise to the Lord,  
all the earth.

<sup>2</sup>Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing. (NRSV)

Applicable .....

Not Applicable .....

**Deuteronomy 22:11**

You shall not wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**James 4: 11**

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

(NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 11:6**

For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 29:22**

You shall take the ram of ordination, and boil its flesh in a holy place; (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 21:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death.

<sup>17</sup>Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 6:25**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,” (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 16:16**

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**John 13:34-35**

<sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 22:2**

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.” (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (NRSV)

Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Not Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

## **C. THE PROCESSES OF COMMUNICATION**

In the next process, **COMMUNICATION**, we use creative ways to communicate the \_\_\_\_\_ in the 21st century.

We do this through preaching, drama, art, PowerPoint presentations, puppetry, videos and more. Your life must also communicate the message!

### **Conclusion**

#### **Why are there so many translations of the Bible?**

##### **1. The \_\_\_\_\_ change**

We no longer speak the same language that people spoke generations ago. God wants to communicate with us through his Word and therefore it is only logical that one reads the Bible in a language that is easily understandable.

## 2. Translation \_\_\_\_\_ differ

There are basically three translation techniques.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ **translations**  
(King James Version)

Direct translations translate the \_\_\_\_\_ of the writer directly. The Hebrew and Greek texts are simply replaced with English words.

- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ **translations**  
(Good News Translation & the New International Version)

Dynamic translations seek to bring across more accurately the \_\_\_\_\_. The New International Version will therefore adjust the idioms in order to convey the meaning (see diagram).

The dynamic translation uses shorter sentences and simpler and more modern words.

- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Living Bible)

The Paraphrase is not really a translation. This is actually a \_\_\_\_\_, a description. It writes in a more informal language about what the original text says and conveys the meaning as well as the feeling. It almost reads like a story book.

**Romans 12:20 as illustration**

<p><b>DIRECT TRANSLATION</b> (Word-for-word)</p> <p>King James Version</p>	<p><b>DYNAMIC TRANSLATION</b> (Meaning)</p> <p>Good News Translation</p>	<p><b>PARAPHRASE</b> (Retelling)</p> <p>Living Bible</p>
<p>“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”</p>	<p>“If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame.”</p>	<p>“Instead, feed your enemy if he is hungry. If he is thirsty give him something to drink and you will be “heaping coals of fire on his head.” In other words, he will feel ashamed of himself for what he has done to you.”</p>



**Questions for Group Discussion**

- Did the lesson help you to master the processes of Understanding, Application and Communication?
- Why is it important to distinguish between an ESSENTIAL and a RELATIVE message?
- What touched you the most in the lesson?
- Is there anything in the lesson that was not clear to you? If so, what was unclear?
- Share blessings and prayer requests and pray for one another.