

INTRODUCTION TO S.O.A.P.

Step One: SCRIPTURE

The first step is to decide what passage of scripture you are going to study. It is important to read a passage that is long enough to contain a completed thought or idea. Reading an isolated verse or two rarely achieves this. For our reading of Matthew we have broken the gospel up into passages for you. Read the passage carefully and out loud if possible. Research has shown that reading out loud improves focus and memory! Write down any verses or statements that stood out to you.

Step Two: OBSERVATION

Before we can derive meaning for ourselves from any given passage of scripture we must first understand what it meant to its original audience. In this step we direct our attention backward to discover what it meant at the time the passage was written.



During this step you are answering the "What?" question. What actions were described? What did God do? What did people do? What was communicated? Was the speaker God, Jesus, or a human? Was the human speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit or was the person expressing their own thoughts or opinions? Who were the intended recipients of the communication? Try and summarize the main thoughts or ideas expressed in the passage in one or two sentences. Write down any questions you have which require further study to understand.

Step Three - APPLICATION

The application step has two parts to it. We want to answer the "So What?" and the "Now What?" questions which arise from our reading. So What? What lessons should I learn from this passage?

The first question to ask is, "What does this passage tell me about God?"



Then ask, "What does this passage tell me about man?"



Now What? How should the truth of this passage change my attitudes, affections and actions towards God, others, myself, and my circumstances?



Step Four - PRAYER

Thank God for the truth you have learned in your reading. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the wisdom to understand anything that was unclear to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the wisdom, courage, and power to apply what you learned. Ask God to meet your personal needs and the needs of others.