

04 – THREE IMPORTANT STEPS

- ✓ When you study a passage, there are three steps you need to go through: Observation, Interpretation and Application. (Each one asks a question. Observation asks, “What do I see?”. Interpretation asks, “What does it mean?”. Finally, Application asks, “How does this apply to me?”.)

1.) Observation – (“**What Do I See?**”)

- ✓ In this first step, you’re not concerned with the meaning of the passage. (*Forget the meaning for now!*) Get a pen and paper and write down everything you notice in the passage. Everything.

Mark 5:1-4 - “And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”

- Jesus and His disciples crossed the sea by boat.
 - Gadarenes – Gentile area, explains the pigs.
 - Jesus stepped out of the boat & was immediately met by this man.
 - (I wonder if that demon sensed that Jesus was coming?)
 - The man lived in the tombs and couldn’t be held with chains.
 - They’d bind him with chains, and he’d just rip them off.
 - (If he was that strong, how did they bind him in the 1st place?)
- ✓ If you’re reading a story from the Gospels, look for that same story in the other accounts as well. (Many of the stories are found in more than one Gospel.) Many times, the authors recorded different details. When you put them all together, you get the full picture.

2.) Interpretation – (“**What Does It Mean?**”)

It’s amazing how we read the Bible sometimes! There can be *several*

things we don’t understand, yet we go on to the next verse.)

James 1:21 – “Wherefore, lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness, the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.”

- ✓ What is “superfluity of naughtiness”? What’s “meekness”? What’s the “engrafted” Word? (And how does the *engrafted* Word differ from the “spoken” or the “written” Word?) He tells us to “receive” the engrafted Word. How do we do that? He’s writing to Christians, telling them that the Word can save their souls. Aren’t their souls already saved? **You may not be able to answer all of those questions but you should at least ask them**, and give it some thought. (Years ago, I put a sign above my desk that said, “What does it mean?”)

Roadblocks to Discovering the Meaning

- ✓ Unfortunately, time and distance have placed barriers between us and the writers of Scripture. The first roadblock we come across is the “language barrier”. (The Bible was written in three different languages, and most of us don’t speak *any* of them. But there are study tools available that can help us dig into the original languages, even if we don’t know a word of Hebrew or Greek.)
- ✓ Idioms (or “expressions”) can also get in the way of understanding. In our culture, we might say that a person is a “pain in the neck”. But there’s no real pain, and it has nothing to do with your neck. That can be a problem for someone of another culture or language.
- ✓ Years ago, we had a young man from Quebec in our youth group. His mother-tongue was French, but he had a good grasp on the English language. He understood English *words*, no problem. It was our *expressions* that confused him. (One time, as we were leaving a room, I asked him to “kill the light”. He looked at the bulb with confusion and said, “Ees not possible!”)
- ✓ Here are a few more examples of how language barriers can cloud meaning: “The name ‘Coca-Cola’ in China was first rendered as ‘Kekokela’. Unfortunately, the Coke company didn’t learn until *after*

thousands of signs had been printed, that the phrase meant, 'Female horse stuffed with wax'. When translated into Chinese, the KFC slogan 'finger-lickin' good' came out as 'eat your fingers off'. When General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova in South America, it was apparently unaware that 'no va' means, 'It won't go'."

(<https://www.lytho.com/blog/translation-fails-advertising/>)

- ✓ Not only do we face *language* barriers, but there are *cultural* barriers to overcome as well.

Bringing Truth Across Culture

- ✓ Some ideas in Scripture transfer from culture to culture easily. "You shall not commit adultery" means the same thing today in North America that it did in Israel in Bible times.
- ✓ But *other* verses address situations that you and I will probably never encounter. 1 Cor. 10:27 tells you what to do if you visit someone's home, and they tell you that the food you're about to eat has been offered to an idol. Has that *ever* happened to you? (No, and it probably never will!) So, what do you do with that Scripture? Just ignore it? No. You look for a principle that might apply to *your* life.

Steps for Bridging the Culture Gap

a.) Understand the Text in "Their Town" – (What did the verse mean to the original audience?)

b.) Measure the "River" You Have to Cross – (How much has changed since then? Some things translate easily into our culture – like adultery. If it carries across easily, do it.)

c.) Cross the "Principle Bridge" – (If the culture is different, look for a principle that will apply in our setting.)

d.) Apply the Principle in "Our Town" – (How can I put this principle to work in my life?)



A. Hats in Church

1 Cor. 11:3-7 – "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the wife is her husband; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head (God). But **every wife that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered** dishonors her head (her husband)."

i.) What Did it Mean in "Their Town"?

Another Translation – "... the head of a woman is her husband. Therefore she should be subject to his authority and should have **a covering on her head as a symbol of her submission.**" (Amp.)

- ✓ A hat in Corinth, in the time of Paul, was a little bit like our wedding rings today. A ring communicates, "I belong to someone!" Now, just for the sake of illustration ... suppose my buddy and I were going into a bar to have a couple of drinks. (Of course, that would never happen. It's just an illustration.) But before we walked into the bar, I said to my friend, "Wait a minute!" And I slipped off my wedding ring and put it into my pocket. Then I said, "Okay, let's go in". If I did that, what would I be saying? I'd be saying that I'm trying to hide the fact that I'm married, and I'm *probably* getting ready to cheat on my wife. Such an action would dishonor my wife, whether she found out about it or not. That's kind of what a hat meant in Corinth! A married woman who appeared in public without a head covering would be either be saying, "I'm open to other men's advances" or "I don't submit to my husband". Either way, she'd be dishonoring her husband.

ii.) Measure the River You Have to Cross

- ✓ Do hats mean that in our culture? (If a woman wore a hat to church, would people say, "Wow! She really respects her husband!"? Or, if she *didn't* wear a hat, would anyone say, "Oh, that poor man!" No!)

iii/iv.) Find the Principle Over and Bring it Into Our Town

- ✓ What *principle* do we bring over? Spouses ought to respect each other and there should be submission in the relationship. (We need to understand submission Biblically. Submission and obedience are not the same thing. Obedience means “do what you’re told”. God tells children and employees to *obey*. But wives are told to *submit*. Submission is a yielding attitude. Wives have the right to speak their minds, and plenty of times, God took the wife’s side – Gen 21:10-12.)

B. Keep Silence in the Church

*1 Cor. 14:34 – “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for **it is not permitted unto them to speak**; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And **if they will learn any thing**, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church ...”*

- ✓ When he said, “Keep silent”, does that mean she can never utter a word? No. (The last passage said she could pray and prophesy – 11:5). The context is clearly talking about “learning” and “asking questions”.

i.) What Did it Mean in "Their Town"?

- ✓ In that day, women were completely uneducated. If they learned anything as an adult, they’d have to learn it from their husbands.
- ✓ It’s also important to know that in a Corinthian church, the men sat on one side and the women sat on the other. If a woman wanted to ask her husband a question, she’d have to holler across the room. Rather than interrupt the service, Paul says she should wait until they get home. (OJB – “For it is a shame for women to **blurt out** in church.”) The Principle – Order in the house of God.

3.) Application – (“How Does This Passage Apply to Me?**”)**

- ✓ Too many people try to start on step three. They read a passage and immediately try to apply it to their lives. But until you’ve done the first two steps, you’re not ready to apply it to your life. -