How to approach studying the Bible

1. *Read the book: Establish author, audience and context (completed)*
2. Read the chapter: Identify the message being communicated
3. Identify questions that you want to have answered: Use resources to find answers.
4. Read the chapter: Identify the message being communicated
5. Map the audience & message: Apply the message to your life
6. Compare your conclusions with others: Trace back any differences to the text

Session 7: Understanding Chapter 6

Objective: Identify the message of Chapter 6 and apply it as God's word spoken into our lives.

Step Two: Read the chapter and identify the message Paul is communicating to Timothy

The instruction that Paul began in Chapter 5 continues into the first couple verses of Chapter 6. In his original copy, the chapters did not exist, so the text simply flowed without interruption. Several indications point to the continuation:

1. Verse 1 begins with the word "Let" – just as 5:9 and 5:17. This introductory pattern has the effect of creating a list.
2. He continues to focus on honoring as in a family. This continues the implied honor of dealing with older believers, widows and elders.
3. He continues to emphasize teaching "these things". This is another pattern that flows through the entire section.

Key Point: Bondservants are not to use their faith as a way of redefining the social order. If their masters are also believing, they should server harder because they are motivated by love as well as expectation.

The goal of this is to not cause outsiders to "revile' the church as being disruptive in society.

Upon reflection on Chapter 5, Paul's charge to Timothy in 5:21 seems now to be more focused on following the rules regarding elders (charges and rebuking) rather than a charge relating to the larger set of "family relations" topics he has been addressing. The end of 6:2 summarizes "Teach and urge these things" – which appears now to relate to the entire list. This harkens back to 4:11 where Paul makes similar exhortation around teaching what is true.

6:3 seems to come around to the same topic introduced in 1:3 – the issue of those who teach a "different doctrine." Paul makes several points about these people

- They are puffed up with conceit to think that they can speak on equal footing with Jesus and are making their teaching all about themselves.
- They thrive on conflict. This breaks down and weakens the church's ability to deal with them and gives them space to work.

- Their ultimate goal is profit from their words. Paul counters this to say that godliness and contentment (not striving after material gain) are a worthy end of themselves, and should not be used as a means to another goal.

Paul makes an application of this instruction to say that pursuing riches is a dangerous path.

- It is a temptation
- It is a snare, a trap
- I leads to harmful desires
- It brings about not wealth but ruin and destruction
- It is a gateway to all sorts of evil
- Because of the pursuit of money, some people have drifted away from the church and endured unnecessary trouble

Paul then focuses on Timothy's life – specifically with respect to the immediately preceding teaching on false doctrine and riches. He commands Timothy to flee these things. Run away from them but run toward other items:

- Pursue (righteousness)
- Fight (the good fight) – Interestingly this is the same claim Paul made about his own life in 2 Timothy 4:6
- Take hold/Grasp/Cling (to the eternal life)

Paul charges Timothy one last time to "keep the commandment" until Jesus comes again. He then flows into a benediction of praise regarding the gloriousness of Jesus.

Following the benediction and amen, Paul seems to add two Postscripts:

- Revisiting the issue of riches, he lays a framework for the behavior of those who are already rich in the currency of the current age (money). Paul offers a redefined definition of what it means to truly be rich.
- A final command to Timothy to guard the "deposit" that had been entrusted to him and not be distracted by the babblers in his church who offered an alternate "knowledge" (deposit?) because such will pull Timothy off course.

Step Three: Identify and write down any questions that arise out of the chapter. - Use resources to research and answer the questions you've written down.

What does Paul mean by Contentment in 6:6?

- [BLB.org] Looking at the Greek word translated Contentment. This is an infrequent word that occurs only a couple times in scripture and has the meaning of "a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed" or "a mind contented with it's lot." This seems to point to a lack of striving for something or more of something. A receiving and an acceptance of what is provided as sufficient for all needs.

- [BLB.org] Looking at the Greek word translated "will be content" in verse 8. This is a different word from verse 6, and one that is used more (but not a lot). It carries the meaning "to be satisfied". This is similar to a lack of striving as well. Interestingly, it's the same word used by Jesus when He said "My grace is sufficient for thee" (Matt 25:9, John 6:7).

What commandment is Paul referring to in 6:14?

- [BLB.org] I was surprised that my study Bible had no explanation of this commandment. However, when I looked up the word in the Greek references of Blue Letter Bible, I discovered a perspective in the Thayer's Greek Lexicon section which pointed to this usage being a collective use, inclusive of all the teachings of Christianity. This seems to harmonize with the understanding of "deposit" below.

What is the "deposit" that Paul refers to in 6:20

- [ESV Study Bible] The notes on verse 20 associate the deposit with the gospel. This makes sense because the gospel includes all of what Paul is including in this book (as a defense of the primacy of the gospel).

Step Four: Read the chapter and refine the message Paul is communicating to Timothy (now that your questions are answered)

Paul instructs Timothy to "teach and urge" "these things"

- Relate to one another as family – in honor and love
- Honor widows and have the right standard for who merits the support of the church and who is able to get support for themselves
- Doubly honor elders but also hold them to a high standard
- Slaves relate to masters out of love, but do not use their common faith to nullify the societal relationship

Anyone who falls out of this teaching and offers a "different doctrine"

- Is puffed up and arrogant, making everything about themselves
- Does not know anything (even if they claim to have special knowledge)
- Craves controversy – when the church is in an uproar, they are more effective, but an orderly church is less likely to fall for their lies
- They think that godliness is an "angle" whereby they can make a buck
- NOTE: It is interesting how Paul commands the people to be generous with their legitimate leaders (elders) but condemns the person who uses false doctrine as a means of getting money.

Godliness with contentment is great gain

- Being focused or obsessed on "more" or "material things" is pointless because we can't take any of it with us when we die

- If we have our basic needs met, we should be satisfied
- Chasing riches leads to a temptation and trap that brings about destruction (now and eternally)
- This lure has led some to leave the church and fall prey to many unpleasant troubles

Paul commands Timothy to flee these things (pursuit of money) and instead:

- Pursue godliness (righteousness, godliness, faith, love steadfastness, gentleness)
- Fight the good fight
- Take hold of (focus on) the eternal live rather than the present
- Keep the gospel pure until you are relieved of your service by the return of Jesus

Last words about riches

- Don't set hopes on uncertain riches
- Place your hope on God who provides everything (that is good and that is enjoyable) – this seems like a reference back to 4:4
- Focus on being rich in good (godly, gospel) works
- Their focus should be eternal gain, not temporal gain

Last exhortation

- Guard the gospel
- Avoid entanglement in false knowledge (babble)

Step Five part 1: Map the Audience (how much and in what ways is Timothy like us today?)
Review and confirm the previous mapping.

As Paul is advising Timothy about matters of the faith, these would apply to me today because I am living in the light of the same gospel as Timothy.

My role in enforcing or rolling out these truths may be different than Timothy based on our differing roles. But the truth of the principles is just as binding on me today as they were on Timothy.

Step Five part 2: Map the message to apply to me today

- What commands must I obey?
    - Flee false doctrine and cling to the truth of the gospel
    - Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, steadfastness & gentleness
    - Live a life that keeps the gospel free of reproach from anyone – especially non-believers
- What truth must I hold dear?
    - Do not fall into the trap of always seeking money – this way lies trouble of many different kinds.
- What error must I flee?
    - Be wary of those who stir up dissention, because that is a tactic of those who are trying to sell a false gospel.

- How is God revealed?
    - We see God through Paul's benediction. Jesus sitting at the right hand of the unseeable Father. We get a list of highly honored names for Jesus.
- How is the gospel made clear?
    - The gospel is not directly explained, but it is presented as something precious that needs to be protected from stains and impurities and error.

- What actions can I take in the next 7 days that will demonstrate what I said above is real?
    - In what ways am I not content? I need to take stock of this.
    - What does my lack of contentment say about what I believe about God?