

Sample Study Questions

Overview (Big Picture) Questions:

- Who is the author? How does that help understand the book/passage?
- Who is the author writing to? What do we know about them?
- Who are the characters in the book/passage?
- What is the purpose of the book I'm studying and how does that give insight into this particular passage?
- When and where was the book written?
- When did this book, event, or passage happen in relation to other events?
- What is the context? (ie: What is happening before and after the passage?)
- What genre is this? (ie: biography, prophecy, narrative, parable, poetry, proverb, exposition/epistles, etc).

The Classic Journalist Questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Background Questions:

- Is there any cultural background that would be helpful to know?
- Is there any historical background that would be helpful to know?

Old Testament Questions:

- How does this Old Testament passage reveal Jesus Christ?
- How does the passage/concept find its fulfillment in the New Testament?

New Testament Questions:

- Does this New Testament passage or verse show up in Old Testament? If so, how does the original context give insight into the New Testament passage?
- Can this New Testament passage be illustrated from the Old Testament? If so, how?

Word Questions:

- What is the meaning of this word in its original language?
- How can I properly understand this word in light of its context?
- Does the original language give any pictures or illustrations that help me understand the word better? (ie: The Greek word baptizō – baptism – gives the picture of a cucumber being immersed in the vinegar solution and turning into a pickle)

Sentence Questions:

- What are the key words in this sentence? Should I do a word study on them?

- Is there any repetition of words, phrases, concepts? (repetition often shows importance) (ie: God is holy, holy, holy)
- Is there a contrast? (things that are different)
- Is there a comparison? (things that are alike)
- Is there a list given?
- Is there a cause and effect? (note: sometimes the effect is given before the cause)
- Is there a conjunction? (ie: and, but, for, therefore, since, because ...)
- What is the main verb?
- Who is the subject of the sentence?
- If there are pronouns, who do they refer to? (ie: he, she, them, they, you, me, etc)
- Are there any figures of speech or idioms?
- English Examples: it's raining cats and dogs, he's in a jam, underdog ...
- Bible Examples: lamp unto my feet, harden your hearts, white-washed tombs, a double-edged sword

Paragraph Questions:

- What are the key words in this paragraph? Should I do a word study on them?
- Is there any repetition of words, phrases, concepts? (repetition often shows importance) (ie: "In Christ" shows up 30 times throughout Ephesians 1-3)
- Is something stated generally or specifically? (ie: general: "I like desserts" | specific: "I like chocolate cake")
- Are there questions asked ... or answers given? (note: sometimes you have a question without an answer, an answer with a presumed question, or both a question and its answer)
- Is there dialogue? If so, who is speaking? Who are they speaking to?
- Is there a purpose statement given?
- Does the means by which something is accomplished mentioned? (ie: "in the power of the Spirit")
- Does the author give actions or roles of people?
- Is there actions or roles of God mentioned?
- Are there any emotional terms?
- What is the tone of the passage? (ie: affection, chiding, discipline, instruction, reproof, correction)

Grammar Questions:

- What can the grammar of the passage tell us? (ie: examine each word and its contribution to the whole — nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, direct objects, etc)
- Should I diagram this passage? (remember 6th grade sentence diagramming? Sometimes this can help see how a passage breaks into its pieces)
- Other Great Questions and Things to Look For:
- Is the passage prescriptive or descriptive? (ie: prescriptive: tells you what to do, a command | descriptive: tells what someone else did, narrative, story)
- Is a location mentioned? Where is it? (use a Bible Atlas) Is there any significant to the mention of it?
- Do other Bible translations use a different word or phrase? If so, why? (eg: Philippians 2:5 — "let this mind/attitude/lifestyle be in you")
- Is there a logical order or progression in the passage?
- What do we learn about God's character and nature?
- What do we learn about people? (ie: character, nature, attitude, behavior, etc)
- What do we learn about how to relate with God and/or others?
- How would you describe the before and after of an event or encounter?
- How long did something take?
- Look for key words

- Look for commands
- Look for warnings
- Look for comparisons — things that are alike
- Look for contrasts — things that are different
- Look for illustrations
- Look for causes and effects and reasons for doing things
- Look for promises and their conditions for fulfillment
- Look for progression from the general to the specific
- Look for progression from the specific to the general
- Look for steps of progression in a narrative or biography
- Look for results
- Look for advice, admonitions, and attitudes
- Look for connectives, articles, and prepositions
- Look for explanations
- Look for Old Testament quotes in the New Testament
- Look for paradoxes
- Look for emphasis through the use of space — proportion
- Look for planned exaggerations or hyperboles
- Look for the use of the current events of the times
- Look for the force of the verbs
- Look for anything unusual or unexpected
- Look for anything that is emphasized
- Look for things that are related
- Look for things that are alike or unlike each other
- Look for things true to life