

The Main Idea of the Passage

In general, whether it's assigned readings from school, readings you do on your own, or the Bible for that matter, you should always get an idea of what the main idea of the passage is. Try not to get bogged down by small details. Sometimes they're important, but many times, they may distract you from the main idea if you focus on them too much.

Here are some questions to ask when you want to find out what the main idea of the passage is:

- (1) Under what circumstances was this passage (or book of the Bible) written? (Historical Context)
- (2) Who wrote this? (next week's lesson)
- (3) Why was this book written? (many contexts)
- (4) To whom was this passage directed towards?

Sometimes, it helps to ask in historical books what the speaker of the passage was trying to say. For example, suppose in a passage where King David said something, don't zoom in on one nice-sounding sentence. Read it in its entirety to get the main idea of the message King David's trying to get across.

Example 1: Leviticus 4 Many don't like reading Exodus-Deuteronomy because it's "boring". However, those who say that don't read it with the main idea of the passage in mind. What is the purpose of Exodus-Deuteronomy? In Leviticus 4, you see the rules regarding sin offerings. What is God trying to say to Old Testament believers? What does that have to do with us, who believe in Jesus' saving grace?

In literary books, like the Psalms, try and get the picture of what the author's trying to get across.

Example 2: Psalm 23 When you read literary books, don't try to look for some lesson that must be learned. Try painting the picture that the word is describing. The Chinese have a saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words." This is true! Sometimes, God reveals something about himself to us through painting a picture using words. Here, in the famous Psalm 23, what picture is God painting? What does it tell you about God?

Main ideas are important. It's easy to misinterpret the Bible if you don't get the main idea straight.

So, today's main point is this:

Get the main idea of the passage.

Instructions: circle any word or phrase that you have questions about. Underline the sentence(s) that you think is/are the main point of the passage

John 3: 13-21

[Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about being “born again” in the middle of the night.]

“... No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

What is a very common lesson we learn from this passage?

What is the main point of this passage? In other words, what is the message that Jesus was trying to get across to Nicodemus? It’s NOT God loves the world (even though it’s true that He does love the world). You have to read it in within its context. Read John 3: 13-21. What’s the main point of the passage?

Instructions: Circle any word/phrase that you have questions about. Underline the sentence(s) that you think captures what God wants to show us in this passage.

John 21: 15-19

[Simon Peter and his buddies were fishing. They saw Jesus on the shore and Peter quickly dived into the water, swam to shore, where Jesus had breakfast all ready for them.]

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again, Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. " Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

What is a very common lesson we learn from this passage?

~~What should be the lesson we learn from this passage?~~

What does God want to show us in this passage?