

would Luke get all of that information?

He would ask questions. Which questions? Who, what, where, why, when - and how are the questions he is likely to have used. These would relate to the kind of questions a Doctor would ask as he is taking a history of a patient.

Finding out all of this shows why it is a good idea to find out who Luke is. This gives you a major clue to understanding the passage.

That is all that you do. Keep asking simple questions. Write your answers down.

Recognise that God didn't just inspire the writers of the Bible.

He has not just inspired the wonderful prophetic interpreters. God has given you the Holy Spirit to inspire you. As you read, research, take notes and pray, God is rushing His research staff to work with you to equip His saints through the words He wants to give you.

To recap. Read your text aloud several times. Read the whole book if you can. Ask the simple questions of the text. Don't try to ask the hard questions. Seek the answers from the passage and from as close to the passage as you can. Use your concordance.

Peter Jeynes

pjeynes@necadventist.org.uk

Pulling a passage apart

and putting it back together again

Have you ever had a lightbulb moment?

During the Preaching Training course at Scunthorpe we all realised that we were simply learning how to present thoughts in a sensible manner. The message that was being presented was, "make sure that the Bible is the source of all your sermons.

What was missing was – 'how on earth do we get the thoughts in the first place?' Here is a suggestion for you, based on a real series of events at Newark. This will help you find the theological truths in a passage.

Monday night at Newark is Bible Study night. We really do study the Bible, after putting a few of the world's wrongs to rights.

Marilyn had been praying for her son's partner for a long time. We joined in when we started praying that the young lady receive healing for a physical problem she has. We prayed. The problem has not been resolved, but the lady has started attending the prayer meeting. It has taken years to get this far. God gets His timing right.

We were going through Revelation at my speed – which is REAL-
LY slowly. A theme was developing, "Pastor, where do you get all this information?"

There came the day when I thought I ought to tell all. What follows is what we shared together at Bible study, and comprises my way of working out what a Bible text says.

Step 1

Take a passage of the Bible. Don't take part of a passage, take the whole lot! Read it out loud to yourself. Do it again. Read it in another translation – out loud.

Now write the passage out by hand, don't use cut and paste on the computer. You are trying to get your brain to work with the text using your eyes, your ears and your hands.

If you want to be really sensible then read the whole book through at one sitting. Do it again. Do it 5 times on successive days. Don't take notes, just read.

Jon Dybdahl, the eminent Seventh-day Adventist mission specialist asked a class of students to do this with the book of Ezekiel. The results were spectacular. God spoke to us using this wonderful method. I have used that method for years.

Step 2

Ask questions of the text. Don't think big, hard questions. Don't think of trying out the hard questions the Sabbath School teacher took out of the quarterly. Ask simple questions. The questions you should ask are these: Who, what, where, why, when - and how.

Write out your questions.

Step 3

Begin to answer the questions using the book of the Bible you are studying. Don't head far away from your passage. The Bible is definitely its own interpreter. The book of the Bible you are looking at is shouting the answers at you. Whispers come from other books.

Write the answers down.

How about a trial of the method?

We were looking at Luke 1:1-4, a real favourite text of the Bible for me.

Read that text in several versions. We were lucky in that one person had a copy of the Living Bible which was read out loud. That opened people's eyes because it was obvious what the passage was all about. We did not rely on the one version of the text.

After we read the passage I asked the group what questions they would ask. The best one was the following, "Why did Luke want to write another version of the same story?" That question came from Jade, the lady who has only just started to study the Bible. The answer came from our Bible Study group.

The questions came quickly, there were lots of them. We should have written them down.

One question was, "Who is Luke?" That simple question was simply answered. "He was a fisherman." Actually he wasn't. We looked at the concordance. To answer the question, "Who is Luke?" you check the following verses. If you look in Colossians you can see that Luke is not a fisherman. We thought things through and began to realise the way that a Doctor worked and began to picture him at work. We began to think how he would take his doctoring skills and apply them to his writing task.

We realised that he was going to many people to ask questions of them. The people he focussed on were eye witnesses.

We asked another question. Which eye-witnesses? We looked at a verse that was shouting out to be heard, "look at me". We saw that Luke's first witness could well have been people who knew Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. Take a look at Luke 1:5-7. How