

A JUDE 3 PROJECT CURRICULUM

# THROUGH EYES OF COLOR

A CONTEXTUALIZED GUIDE TO HELP YOU KNOW  
WHAT YOU BELIEVE AND WHY.



JUDE 3 PROJECT

## Introduction

“I’m going to change everything you thought about Jesus.” Those were the first words that signaled that my New Testament course at the University of North Florida was not going to be like Sunday school. I grew up in church and knew the Bible, so I didn’t expect this class to be a challenge, but it was. Thankfully, my father connected the dots for me by introducing me to an apologetic ministry called Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. Apologetics was a foreign concept to me as it probably is to many of you who are starting this curriculum. You may be thinking, “are we about to apologize for our belief in God?” I get it. In the Bible, Peter instructs believers in 1 Peter 3:15 to be able to give a “defense” for the hope they have. That word “defense” is a translation for the Greek word “apologia”. This is where we get the word apologetics. Apologetics is simply explaining why you believe what you believe with gentleness and respect.

This strikes at the core of the mission and vision of the Jude 3 Project, which is to help black Christians know what they believe and why they believe it. You cannot defend a faith you cannot define. Before you can go into the world and give a defense for your faith, you need to think critically about what you believe and why. I did not realize the importance of this until I was challenged in college. Being challenged was not the end of my faith, it was the beginning of it being strengthened. As my Old Testament professor used to tell us, “God is big enough for our questions.” I’ve come to believe that God is not only big enough for our questions, but He gives us the freedom to ask them.

One of the initial ways we have been able to help black Christians become equipped in defending their faith is through our podcast. We were excited to learn that pastors across the country were using our podcast in their Bible studies and small groups. To further equip them, we decided to create a curriculum around some of our more popular episodes and provide a more structured way to engage in relevant topics for black Christians.

As you begin this curriculum, you or your group, will embark on a six-week journey into apologetics through the eyes of color. The first chapter will help you with Bible study basics. The Bible is our guide and it's important that we know how to handle it correctly. The second chapter will explore black figures in the Bible. This helps us as black people to see ourselves in the faith that we hold near and dear to our identity. The third chapter will explore early African Christianity. The connection between black people and Christianity did not start in the era of slavery and it's important that we know our history to engage those who think it does. The next chapter will be focusing on black Christians in America and their contributions to the black church. Chapter five will provide some helpful tools to address black cults like the Nation of Islam and Hebrew Israelites. The final chapter will address several places of contention within the Bible that are hard to understand and may raise eyebrows. We want to give you some helpful tools to address some of those challenging passages, including those concerning women and slavery.

We pray that your faith will be strengthened once you have completed this curriculum and you will be better equipped to contend for the faith, not for argument's sake but for the sake of transformational and courageous conversations. Remember, apologetics is not about winning arguments but winning people. Apologetics is not just about an intellectual exercise, it's also incarnational. What good is it to give intellectual reasons for why skeptics should trust the Bible if you don't live under its authority? In addition to equipping yourself with this curriculum, we challenge you to embody the message. Giving a defense falls on deaf ears if our lives don't back it up.

We hope you enjoy this six week journey through the eyes of color!

Grace & Peace,

Lisa Fields  
Founder & President  
Jude 3 Project

# Chapter One

## WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

### I. What is Hermeneutics?

In order to effectively “contend for the faith”, you must know it. In this chapter, we are going to build a foundation for how to study the Bible. Scholars refer to this laborious yet fruitful process as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the art and science of biblical interpretation. It is an art because, like skilled artists, we must know which “brush” to use to enhance our understanding of a biblical passage. It is a science because, like scientists, we must follow a careful method of observation, interpretation, and application.

However, we do not engage in hermeneutics for the sole purpose of contending for the faith. We practice hermeneutics to know and worship God by bringing our lives into harmony with His character and will. Once the word of God has a hold of us, we are in a better position to interact with the world around us.

#### KNOW GOD

In his Jude 3 Project podcast interview, Interpreting Scripture 101, Dr. Luke Bobo said, “One of the ways we know our God deeply is through Bible study.”<sup>1</sup> Though

1. Bobo, Luke Brad. The Jude 3 Project. (2018, September). Interpreting Scripture 101. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from URL.

creation gives us a sense of God's existence and power, it's only through the Bible that we encounter the "nothing-is-too-hard-for-Him" God of Abraham—the "I AM" who delivered Israel and resurrected the Savior, Jesus Christ, who came to take away the sins of the world. Without these historical accounts, we would have little to no knowledge of God's holy character or His love for the world. God's Word (the Bible) is a gift to us.

### WORSHIP GOD

Knowledge of God isn't just information about God that takes up space in our minds. It's supposed to do something (2 Peter 1:5-11). As we become more acquainted with the God of the Bible, He radically changes our lives. We move from being enemies of God to worshippers of Him. Our thoughts, affections, and actions are all made new.

If our knowledge of God only results in us gaining the ability to effectively "contend for the faith" and doesn't change our lives, we have completely missed the point.

*What is the best gift you've ever given a person? Why did you give them that particular gift?*

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*How would it make you feel if they used that gift in a way that you didn't intend for them to use it?*

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*How would you feel if that gift was left unopened?*

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## II. Unwrapping the Gift

In this section, we are going to learn how to properly unwrap the gift of God's Word for the sake of knowing and worshipping Him by using five intentional steps.

### STEP 1: GET STILL

When you open the Bible, you come face to face with God. It is important to open God's Word with a posture of reverence and expectation. Opening your Bible with reverence means doing so with a heart full of thankfulness for the gift of being able to encounter the living God through His Word. Then, expect the eyes of your heart to be enlightened so that you may know with a greater sense of clarity and assurance the hope to which you've been called in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:18).

- Get in a place where you can meet with the Lord undistracted.
- Settle your heart through prayer.
- Ask the Holy Spirit, who has been given to you and lives inside you, to lead you into all truth.

### STEP 2: GET FAMILIAR

The best way to get familiar with a passage you are studying is to read it repeatedly over and over again. As you read, pay attention to repeated words and phrases. This helps you see the main point the author is seeking to get across to his readers. Also, take note of conjunctions such as, "but," "therefore," or others like these. These words usually signify important transitions to help us understand the flow of the passage. Consider the "but" in Matthew 5:21-22:

"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder.

If you commit murder, you are subject to judgement.'

**But I** say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgement!"

*What role does "but" play in this passage?*

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*What are the similar and contrasting elements surrounding “but”?*

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*How does comparing and contrasting these elements deepen your understanding of Jesus’s command?*

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### STEP 3: GET CURIOUS

LifeWay Research reports that although most Americans have a positive view of the Bible, only eleven percent of them have actually read it cover to cover. LifeWay also reports that, regarding our intake of the Bible, thirty-five percent of Americans only pick up the Bible when they need to, nineteen percent stick to only re-reading their favorite parts, and seventeen percent just shake the Bible like an eight-ball and read a passage at random. Then there are the thirty percent who have never read it.

Dr. Cynthia James offers two responses to the question “Why do you think that a lot of people who own Bibles don’t read them?”:

- There are some who have come to view the Bible as a “dead document” that doesn’t have any relevance for their lives.
- To really engage the Bible as a treasure and hold it dear, you have to work.<sup>2</sup>

Though Dr. James admits this is not an exhaustive list of reasons to explain why people don’t read their Bible, it’s clear that many have lost either their interest or curiosity in the Bible. But when we get curious and do the hard work of asking the passage questions, the Bible comes alive. Scholars refer to this process as “interrogating the

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2. James, Cynthia. The Jude 3 Project. (2017, October). The Importance of Biblical Literacy. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from URL.

text.” Here are some helpful interrogation questions to get you started:

*Who wrote this passage?*

This information is usually found at the beginning of the book you are studying. If not, the title of the book often identifies the author.

*Who was the passage written for?*

This information is usually found at the beginning of the book you are studying. When studying the Old Testament or a New Testament book where a recipient is not identified, consider it as a book that was written for future generations of Israelites.

*Why was this written?*

This is an important question to ask because you want to understand the author’s intent in writing the book. (i.e., Why did Paul write letters to the church at Corinth? Why did Moses write down all those laws in Leviticus?)

*What does this mean?*

If there is ever a word, phrase, or statement you don’t understand, ask the question, “What does it mean?” Don’t just brush over it. Make note of it with the intention to find the answer.

### STEP 4: GET UNDERSTANDING

Opening the Bible is like stepping into a foreign country. We encounter unfamiliar language and customs, stories that don’t make sense through our twenty-first century colored eyes, and passages that cause us to question our understanding of God. It can feel a lot like being on the outside of an inside joke. And let’s be real, this is probably the biggest barrier to reading the Bible.

But here’s the good news: God has provided us with everything we need to correctly interpret and understand His Word! He has given us:

#### **His Spirit**

The One who is an insider on all the works of the triune God lives inside of you (John 16:12–15). **FACTS!**

## His Word

Many of the answers to our questions about a passage can be found in the Bible. If you are trying to understand circumcision in the New Testament, for instance, you can find some clarity in the Old Testament. If you read Jeremiah 29:11 and want to know who Jeremiah was writing to and why he was writing to them, you only need to read verses 1–10. Scholars refer to this as the “literary context,” and it is essential to the science of biblical interpretation.

## His People

If you find yourself stumped and unable to find the answer to your questions, go ask someone in your church or your family who you trust. Don’t let pride or fear keep you from growing.

For centuries, brothers and sisters of the faith have studied the Word and written down their findings to help the Church better understand God’s Word. This is a tremendous blessing to us because there will be times when you need to pick up a study Bible or commentary to find answers to your questions. This usually happens when we have questions about the historical and cultural context of the passage.

*What keeps you from reading the Bible?*

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## STEP 5: GET REAL

As stated before, we study God’s Word for the sake of knowing and worshipping Him by bringing our whole life into harmony with His character and will. Now that you have done the hard work of unwrapping the knowledge of God’s Word, it’s time to apply that knowledge to your life. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- How would I summarize this passage in my own words?
- Is there a truth I need to accept and believe?
- Is there a sin I need to confess?
- Is there a person I need to ask for forgiveness or accountability?

- Is there a behavior I need to adopt?
- What do I need to ask the Lord to help me with in light of this passage?

## III. Unwrapping 2 Peter 1:5–9

“In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.”

*2 Peter 1:5–9*

### STEP 1: GET STILL

Pray as a group that God would speak to you through His Word.

### STEP 2: GET FAMILIAR

Read through the passage as a group three times.

- The first time have someone read the passage aloud slowly.
- The second time have each person read it to themselves.
- The third time have someone read aloud slowly, but this time look for repeated words, phrases, and conjunctions.

*What words and phrases are repeated in this passage?*

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*What is the author emphasizing by repeatedly using these words or phrases?*

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*What are the conjunctions in this passage?*

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*What role does each conjunction play in the passage? How is it being used?*

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### **STEP 3: GET CURIOUS**

*Who wrote this passage?*

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*Who is the passage written for?*

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*What is the phrase "In view of all this" pointing back to? How does this deepen your understanding of the passage?*

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*What are some key terms you need to define?*

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*What other questions do you have about this passage?*

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### **STEP 4: GET UNDERSTANDING**

In this section, do your best to find the answers to your questions about the passage by using the Bible and a trusted study Bible. You might also want to use a dictionary or concordance to define the key terms you listed in the previous section. Don't worry if you can't find the answers to all your questions. It's a process. Pocket those unresolved questions and seek out a trusted friend or commentary for help later.

*What is the author's main point in this passage?*

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*How would you summarize this passage in your own words?*

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#### **STEP 5: GET REAL**

In light of your discussion and understanding of the text, consider how God is leading you to respond:

- Is there a truth I need to accept and believe?
- Is there a sin I need to confess?
- Is there a person I need to ask for forgiveness or accountability?
- Is there a behavior I need to adopt?
- What do I need to ask the Lord to help me with in light of this passage?

#### **IV. TOOLS FOR GOING DEEPER**

- New Living Translation: Life Application Bible
- Christian Standard Bible: Study Bible
- Bobo, Luke Brad. *A Layperson's Guide to Biblical Interpretation: A Means to Know the Personal God*. Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2016.
- Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006.