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CHOSEN SEMINARY

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, RESEARCH & CHAPLAINCY

Formally Known As: Chosen Christian Theological Seminary

(AN AFFILIATE OF TRIUMPHANT CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA & LPMV

Contact address: +2348149039396/ +2347017325091, Email: info.chosenseminary@gmail.com

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COURSE: BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS - BTP102

COURSE OUTLINE

- ✓ WELCOME! WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOU
- ✓ THE THREE WORLDS OF EVERY BIBLE PASSAGE
- ✓ YOUR FIRST JOB: OBSERVATION (OPEN YOUR EYES!)
- ✓ UNDERSTANDING GENRE: WHAT KIND OF BOOK ARE YOU READING?
- ✓ BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM THEN TO NOW
- ✓ PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: A PRACTICAL WALK-THROUGH
- ✓ FINAL CHARGE: BECOME A FAITHFUL WORKER
- ✓ PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK

THIS IS THE OFFICIAL HANDOUT PRODUCE BY CHOSEN SEMINARY

MOBILE PHONE: ***08149039396, 0903627195, 07017325091***

E-MAIL: info.chosenseminary@gmail.com

This Copy of Handout belongs to:

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BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

1. WELCOME! WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOU

Welcome to class! You are holding this paper because you want to understand the Bible for yourself. No more shaking your head when you read. No more just copying what your pastor says. No more confusion when you see "contradictions."

This handbook is your key. We call this key **HERMENEUTICS** (say it: Her-men-NEW-tics). Big word, simple meaning: **THE ART AND SCIENCE OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION.**

Think of it like this: If the Bible is a treasure box filled with gold, silver, and diamonds (God's promises, instructions, and wisdom), then hermeneutics is the ***master key*** to open it. Without the key, you can only look at the box. With the key, the wealth inside becomes yours!

The Big Problem: Many of us read the Bible like a newspaper from London or like a motivational quote on Instagram. We take one verse, pull it out, and paste it on our problem. This is dangerous! It is called **EISEGESIS** (say it: Ice-uh-GEE-sis) – forcing your own meaning INTO the text.

What We Want: EXEGESIS (say it: Ex-uh-GEE-sis) – drawing God's meaning OUT OF the text. We want to hear what GOD said to them then, so we can know what God is saying to us now.

Your Starting Point: Come with a humble heart. Come ready to learn. Come with the help of the **Holy Spirit** – our Senior Teacher. This is not just head knowledge; it is spiritual food for your life's journey.

2. THE THREE WORLDS OF EVERY BIBLE PASSAGE

To understand any Bible passage, you must visit three "worlds." If you miss one, you will misunderstand.

A. THE WORLD BEHIND THE TEXT (HISTORY)

This is the ***original setting***. Think: *Where? When? Who? Why?*

· **Example**: 1 Samuel 17 (David and Goliath). If you don't know the world behind it, you might think it's just a story about bravery. But the world behind tells us: The Philistines were Israel's bitter enemies. Goliath was over 9 feet tall! Saul's army was terrified. David was a young shepherd, not a soldier. God's reputation was at stake.

· **Your Job**: Ask: Who wrote this? To whom? When? What was happening? Use Bible dictionaries, maps, and introductions.

B. THE WORLD WITHIN THE TEXT (LITERATURE)

This is the **words on the page.** The grammar, the structure, the genre, the flow. Think: What is it *SAYING*?

· **Example**: Psalm 23. The world within is poetry. It uses metaphors: "The LORD is my shepherd." It has a flow from provision (green pastures) through danger (valley of death) to victory (a table before enemies).

· **Your Job:** Look closely. What words repeat? What contrasts? How are the sentences connected?

C. THE WORLD IN FRONT OF THE TEXT (OUR WORLD)

This is **you, the reader**. Your culture, your situation, your life. Think: What does this mean FOR ME TODAY?

· **Example**: That same Psalm 23. In your world, "green pastures" might mean God giving you a job. "The valley of the shadow of death" might be a sickness, a loss, or depression. "My cup overflows" might be His abundant grace in your family.

· Your Job: Pray. Ask: "Holy Spirit, how does this timeless truth apply to my life in Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, or my village?"

THE HERMENEUTICAL SPIRAL: We don't move in a straight line. We go from our world (C) to the text (B) to its history (A), then back to the text (B), and then to our world (C) again. Each time, we understand more. It's a spiral going deeper into truth!

3. YOUR FIRST JOB: OBSERVATION (OPEN YOUR EYES!)

Many of us read the Bible with closed eyes! We see the words but don't observe. Observation is asking: "**What do I see?"**

Become a Detective. Put on your magnifying glass. Look for:

· **Repetition**: What words or ideas repeat? In 1 John, "love" repeats over and over. That's the main point!

· **Contrasts**: "But," "however," "yet." John 3:16 says "God so loved the world…" John 3:36 says "but whoever rejects the Son…" Big contrast!

· **Comparisons**: "Like," "as." "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed…" (Matthew 13:31).

· **Lists**: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience… (Galatians 5:22-23). Don't miss one!

· **Cause and Effect**: "If… then…" "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves… then I will hear from heaven…" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

· **Connections**: Words like "therefore," "so that," "for." They link ideas. Why is there a "therefore"? What is it there for?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE:

Take Philippians 4:4-7.Read it slowly. OBSERVE.

1. What is the command that is repeated? "*Rejoice!*" (v.4).

2. What is the "therefore" there for? (v.5). It connects gentle attitude with the Lord's nearness.

3. What are the "do not" and "but" statements? "Do not be anxious… but… present your requests to God." (v.6).

4. What is the promised result? "The peace of God… *will guard your hearts*…" (v.7).

You have just done the first key step! You didn't interpret yet, but you saw the raw material. Well done!

4. UNDERSTANDING GENRE: WHAT KIND OF BOOK ARE YOU READING?

This is **CRUCIAL**! You don't read a love letter the same way you read a maths textbook! The Bible has different "kinds" of writing called **GENRES**. Each has its own rules.

A. NARRATIVE (STORY): Genesis, Exodus, Gospels, Acts.

· **What it is:** Story of God's work in history.

· **How to Read:** Look for the main point of the whole story, not just pulling out one character's action. Not every action is for you to copy!

· **Example:** In Judges, Samson touches a dead lion (Judges 14:8-9). That was against the Nazirite law. The story records his disobedience, it does not command you to touch dead lions! The point is God's strength despite Samson's flaws.

· **Life Application:** See how God works in the mess of human lives. Find principles of His faithfulness, justice, and redemption.

B. LAW: Leviticus, Deuteronomy.

· **What it is:** God's covenant rules for ancient Israel.

· **How to Read:** Ask, "What does this teach about God's character and His desire for a holy people?" Then find the timeless moral principle.

· **Example:** Law: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain" (Deut. 25:4). Principle: Workers (including pastors!) deserve to be paid from their work (See 1 Cor. 9:9-10).

· **Life Application:** Don't avoid the Old Testament law. It shows you God's heart. It leads you to Christ who fulfilled it.

C. POETRY & WISDOM: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs.

· **What it is:** Emotional, metaphorical language expressing truth to the heart.

· **How to Read:** Look for ***parallelism*** – where the second line repeats, contrasts, or expands the first.

· **Example:** "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). The second line explains the first: Because God is my caretaker, I lack nothing good.

· **Life Application:** Use Psalms to pray when you're happy, sad, or angry. Use Proverbs for daily, practical wisdom for decisions.

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D. PROPHECY: Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.

- **What it is:** God's message for a specific time, often calling people back to the covenant. It includes ***foretelling*** (future) and ***forthtelling*** (speaking truth to power).
- **How to Read:** First, ask what it meant for the original hearers. Then see how it points to Christ and God's ultimate plan.
- **Example:** Jeremiah 29:11: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you…'" This was spoken to Israelites in exile in Babylon. Principle: In times of dislocation and suffering, God has a good future for His people. It is not a blanket promise of wealth to everyone.
- **Life Application:** Hear God's call to justice, faithfulness, and hope in Christ.

E. PARABLES: (In the Gospels)

- **What it is:** A story with ***one main point*** to challenge thinking.
- **How to Read:** Find the surprise or punchline. Don't allegorize every detail (making each thing a symbol).
- **Example:** The Good Samaritan (Luke 10). The shocking figure is the hated Samaritan who helps. The main point: Your "neighbour" is anyone in need; true obedience is to show mercy, not just talk about it.
- **Life Application:** Let the parable's main point confront your attitudes and actions.

F. EPISTLES (LETTERS): Romans, Ephesians, etc.

- **What it is:** Occasional letters to churches or people about specific problems.
- **How to Read:** Read the whole letter in one sitting if possible. Reconstruct the situation from clues.
- **Example:** 1 Corinthians deals with division, sexual immorality, lawsuits, marriage, spiritual gifts, love. Paul is addressing a messy, gifted church!
- **Life Application:** These are direct teaching for the church. Apply the teaching directly, but understand the cultural forms (like head coverings in 1 Cor. 11) to find the principle (appropriate gender distinction and order in worship).

G. APOCALYPTIC: Daniel 7-12, Revelation.

- **What it is:** Symbolic, visionary literature about God's ultimate victory.
- **How to Read:** Look for the big picture of hope, not a secret code for newspaper headlines. Symbols (beasts, horns, numbers) stand for larger realities (empires, power, completeness).
- **Example:** The beast in Revelation represents oppressive political power against God's people. The main point: No matter how bad things get, **GOD WINS.** Worship Him.
- **Life Application:** Gain courage and hope during persecution and hard times. Stay faithful.

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5. BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM THEN TO NOW

This is the most important step! How do we take a text written 2000+ years ago in a different culture and apply it to our lives in 21st-century Nigeria?

Follow This Bridge:

1. GRASP THE ORIGINAL MEANING: What did it mean to the first readers? (Use all you've learned: historical context, genre, observation). This is the **ONE TRUE MEANING**.

2. FIND THE TIMELESS PRINCIPLE: What is the underlying, cross-cultural truth about God, humanity, sin, or salvation?

- **Ask:** Is this tied to a specific cultural practice (like foot-washing) or a moral command (like "do not murder")?

3. SEE HOW IT FITS IN THE WHOLE BIBLE: Does the rest of Scripture confirm this principle? How does Jesus fulfill or shape it?

4. APPLY THE PRINCIPLE TODAY: How should this truth change my thinking, character, and actions in my specific context?

EXAMPLE: GREETING WITH A HOLY KISS (Romans 16:16)

1. Original Meaning: A common cultural sign of greeting and fellowship among first-century Christians (like a handshake or hug).

2. Timeless Principle: Christians should express genuine, affectionate, and holy fellowship with one another.

3. Whole Bible: Hebrews 13:1 says "Keep on loving one another." 1 Peter 5:14 says "Greet one another with a kiss of love."

4. Application Today: In Nigerian culture, we can express this through a warm handshake, a holy hug, a smile, and sincere words of peace. The **principle** (express loving fellowship) remains; the **cultural form** (the type of kiss) can change.

WARNING: AVOID THE "PRIVATE INTERPRETATION" TRAP!

God gave us the ***community of believers*** (the Church) for a reason. Check your understanding with mature Christians, pastors, and sound teachings from across history and the global church. If your interpretation makes you the only "wise one," it is probably wrong.

6. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: A PRACTICAL WALK-THROUGH

Let's interpret **James 1:2-4** together: "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*"

Step 1: Observe the Text (World WITHIN)

- **Command:** "Consider it pure joy…"

· **Situation:** "whenever you face trials of many kinds."

· **Reason/Connection:** "because you know…"

· **Process:** Testing of faith -> produces perseverance -> leads to maturity/completeness.

· **Key Words:** Joy, trials, testing, faith, perseverance, mature, complete.

Step 2: Historical Context (World BEHIND)

· **Author:** James, the brother of Jesus, a leader in the Jerusalem church.

· **Readers:** Early Jewish Christians scattered outside Palestine, facing poverty and oppression (see James 2:6, 5:1-6).

· **Genre:** Wisdom Letter (like Proverbs). Practical advice for living.

Step 3: Interpret & Find the Principle

· **Meaning Then:** James tells persecuted, suffering believers to have a radically different attitude—joy—not because pain is good, but because of what God is doing through it. The trial is a test that builds spiritual endurance, which leads to wholeness.

· **Timeless Principle:** God uses the difficulties of life as a necessary training ground to develop Christlike character and spiritual maturity in His children.

Step 4: Apply to Your Life (World IN FRONT)

· **Ask Yourself:** What "trials" am I facing now? Academic stress? Family problem? Sickness? Unemployment? Temptation?

· **Change Your Thinking:** "God sees this. This is not meaningless. He is using this to build something in me—perseverance."

· **Change Your Attitude:** Choose joy—not a happy feeling, but a deep, trusting confidence that God is at work. Pray: "Lord, I don't like this, but I trust you are making me complete through it."

· **Change Your Action:** Instead of just complaining, actively look for what God wants to teach you. Rely on Him. Support others going through trials.

See? From text to life!

7. FINAL CHARGE: BECOME A FAITHFUL WORKER

Class, you are now equipped. You have the tools. Don't just be a hearer of the Word who forgets (James 1:22). Be a ***doer***. Be a faithful worker who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

1. Read the Bible for Yourself. Start small. A paragraph a day.

2. Observe. Ask questions. Be a detective.

3. Respect the Genre. Is this a story, a poem, a letter?

4. Find the Bridge. What did it mean then? What is the principle? How does it apply to me now?

5. Pray Always. The Holy Spirit is your Teacher. Ask for light.

6. Share with Others. Discuss in your fellowship. Iron sharpens iron.

The goal is not to become a scholar, but to know God more, love Jesus deeper, and live by the Spirit's power. Go and open the treasure box. The wealth inside is for you.

God bless you as you study!

Amen.

This handbook is a living tool. Write in it. Underline. Use it until the pages are worn. Understanding God's Word is a lifelong journey. Enjoy the journey!

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PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK

Biblical Hermeneutics

"Test Yourself to Grow Yourself"

HOW TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

My brother, my sister, this is not an exam to frighten you! This is spiritual exercise. Just as you exercise your body to grow strong, exercise your mind with God's Word to grow wise.

Instructions:

1. Get your Bible, a notebook, and a pen.
2. Pray before you start. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes.
3. Work through each section. Don't rush. Think deeply.
4. Be honest with your answers. There's no shame in "I don't know."
5. Discuss your answers with your fellowship group or pastor.

Time: Take 1-2 hours for this assessment. You can do it in parts.

PART 1: OBSERVATION SKILLS – OPEN YOUR EYES!

Passage: Philippians 4:4-9 (Read it slowly 3 times)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Exercise 1: The Detective's Eye (Answer in your notebook)

1. Repetition: What word or phrase is repeated in verse 4? Why do you think Paul repeats it?

2. Commands: List all the direct commands Paul gives in these verses (e.g., "Rejoice...").

· Command 1:

· Command 2:

· Command 3:

· Command 4:

· Command 5:

3. Contrast: Find a strong contrast using the word "but." What is being contrasted?

· "Do not be _____ about anything, **but** in every situation, by _____..."

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4. Cause and Effect: What is the promised result in verse 7? What causes it?

· **If I do this:** (Look at verse 6)

· **Then this happens:** (Verse 7)

5. Connections: What is the connection between verse 5 ("The Lord is near") and verse 6 ("Do not be anxious")? How does one truth help with the other?

6. Practical List: In verses 8-9, Paul gives two lists. What are they?

· List 1 (verse 8): Things to **think about** (write them down):

· List 2 (verse 9): Things to **put into practice** (what are the four actions?):

PART 2: GENRE IDENTIFICATION – WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Read each passage below and answer:

A. 1 Samuel 17:32-37 (David volunteers to fight Goliath)

· What genre is this? **Narrative / Law / Poetry / Prophecy / Parable / Letter / Apocalyptic**

· How should you read it? (Circle the CORRECT approach)

a) Find every detail to copy literally in your life.

b) Find the main point of the story about God and His people.

c) Look for secret symbolic meanings in every name and weapon.

· What is one **wrong** application someone might make from this story?

· What is one **right** principle or lesson about God you can learn?

B. Psalm 1:1-3 (Blessed is the one...)

· What genre is this? **Narrative / Law / Poetry-Wisdom / Prophecy / Parable / Letter / Apocalyptic**

· What is the main literary feature you see? (e.g., story, command, parallelism, symbolism)

· Write out the contrast between the blessed person and the wicked:

· Blessed person: (What does he NOT do? What DOES he do? What is the result?)

· Wicked person: (What is he like?)

C. Luke 15:11-24 (The Prodigal Son)

· What genre is this? **Narrative / Law / Poetry / Prophecy / Parable / Letter / Apocalyptic**

· What is the one main point Jesus is making with this story? (Hint: Look at verses 1-2 to see why He told it).

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· **Danger**: Someone says the "fattened calf" represents the Holy Spirit, the "ring" represents authority, the "sandals" represent the gospel of peace. This is called over-allegorizing. Why is this dangerous?

PART 3: BRIDGING THE GAP – FROM ANCIENT TEXT TO MODERN LIFE

Case Study: 1 Corinthians 8 (Food sacrificed to idols)

Background: In Corinth, meat sold in the market often came from animals sacrificed to pagan gods (idols). New Christians were confused: Is it a sin to eat such meat? Some said, "Idols are nothing, so the meat is just meat." Others, with a weak conscience, thought it was participating in idol worship.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 (especially focus on verses 7-13).

Step 1: What was the original meaning for the Corinthian church?

· What was the specific problem? (v.7, v.10)

· What was Paul's instruction? (v.9, v.13)

· What principle was more important than "knowledge" or "rights"? (v.1, v.9-12)

Step 2: Find the Timeless Principle

Complete this sentence:"Christian freedom must be limited by _____ for the sake of _____."

Step 3: Modern Nigerian Equivalent

Think of a similar issue in the Nigerian church today.It's not about meat to idols, but something where:

· You have the knowledge/freedom to do something.

· But it might cause a weaker brother/sister to stumble in their faith.

Examples to get you thinking:

· Drinking alcohol in moderation (when you know it's not a sin for you, but it might destroy someone recovering from addiction).

· Dressing in a certain way (when you know your heart is right, but it causes lust or gossip).

· Watching certain movies or listening to certain music.

· **YOUR EXAMPLE:** Think of one from your own church or life:

· Issue: _____

· Why is it a matter of "knowledge/freedom" for some? _____

· How could it cause a "weaker believer" to stumble? _____

Step 4: Personal Application

Think of a situation in your own life where this principle applies.

· What is my "right" or "freedom" in this situation?

· Who might have a "weaker conscience" around me regarding this?

· Based on 1 Corinthians 8, what would the most loving action be?

PART 4: SPOT THE ERROR – FALSE INTERPRETATION QUIZ

Read each scenario and identify the hermeneutical mistake (what they did wrong).

Scenario 1: Bro Joshua reads Joshua 6 (the fall of Jericho). She prays, "God, as you made the walls of Jericho fall when the people marched and shouted, make the walls of my problem fall when I march around my house seven times and shout!" She marches around her compound every morning for a week.

· **Mistake:** Treating a unique _____ event as a guaranteed _____ for today.

· **Why is this wrong?** (What is the main point of the Joshua 6 story?)

Scenario 2: Brother Kola reads Psalm 37:4, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." He claims this is God's promise to give him a new car, a mansion, and a wife this year. He gets angry when he doesn't get them.

· **Mistake**: Ignoring the _____ of the verse (delight in the Lord first) and turning a promise about transformed desires into a _____ for material things.

· **What is the correct focus of this verse?**

Scenario 3: Pastor James preaches from John 21 where Jesus tells Peter to "feed my sheep." He says, "The three times Jesus asked means we must have three services every Sunday. The '153 fish' represent the 153 nations we will evangelize. The 'net not torn' means our church unity."

· **Mistake:** This is called excessive _____. He is finding secret meanings in every _____ instead of focusing on the _____ _____ of the story.

· **What is the simpler, main point of John 21:15-17?**

PART 5: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER – FINAL PROJECT

Your Task: Write a One-Page Bible Study Guide for a small group or a friend on James 1:19-27.

Follow this exact structure in your notebook:

1. OBSERVE (5 minutes): Read the passage aloud twice. List:

· Commands you see.

· Contrasts (e.g., "not this... but that...").

· A vivid metaphor/word picture (e.g., "looks at his face in a mirror").

2. INTERPRET (10 minutes):

· **Genre:** What is it? (Hint: James is a wisdom letter).

· **Context:** What comes right before this passage (James 1:2-18)? What is the main theme so far?

· **Meaning:** In your own words, what is James teaching about:

· a) How to listen and speak?

· b) What real religion looks like?

3. PRINCIPLE (5 minutes): State one timeless truth from this passage. Complete: "God values _____ more than just _____."

4. APPLY (10 minutes): Create 3 discussion questions for your small group:

· **Head Question:** (About understanding) "What does it mean to be 'quick to listen, slow to speak' in practical terms?"

· **Heart Question:** (About attitude) "When is it most difficult for you to control your tongue? Why?"

· **Hands Question:** (About action) "What is one specific 'orphan or widow' in your community (a vulnerable person) you can practically 'look after' this week? What will you do?"

5. PRAYER POINT: Write a one-sentence prayer based on this passage that your group can pray together.

· **Example:** "Lord, help us to not just hear your Word today, but to do what it says. Amen."

SELF-EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

Check your understanding:

I can now:

· Observe key elements in a Bible passage.

· Identify different Bible genres and know how to read them.

· Explain the difference between "meaning then" and "application now."

· Spot common interpretation errors.

· Create a simple plan to study a passage for myself or others.

My biggest "Aha!" moment from this assessment was:

_____

The area I still find most difficult is:

_____

My Action Plan:

1. This week, I will practice observation on my daily Bible reading (just 5 verses).

2. This month, I will study one short book of the Bible (like Philippians or James) using these steps.

3. I will find a "hermeneutics partner" to discuss with: _____ (name).

Final Encouragement:

"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."(Hosea 4:6). But you, my friend, are **seeking knowledge**. You are building your house on the rock of God's true Word. Keep going! The journey is lifelong, but every step brings more light, more freedom, and more joy.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." – 2 Timothy 2:15

Take this assessment to your pastor or Bible study leader. Discuss your answers. Keep learning!

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