



It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.

- Seneca

We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are.

- Max DePree

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.

- Raymond Lindquist

## What This Might Look Like

You can experience God daily and grow in your relationship with Him through regular time set aside to interact with Him through prayer and through His word. This in turn carries over into your day where you can continue to experience Him by considering what He has spoken to your hearts already and what He thinks about situations you face throughout the day. Here is how this works on a very practical level:

- ~ Daily or regular Bible intake - Each time you read and meditate on a Bible passage there will usually be one key verse, concept, word or idea that seems to stand out. It may hit you like a ton of bricks or an "ah-ha" experience. Or it may just be a slight impression that there is something more here or that this is an important idea that God would like you to consider further.
- ~ God shows the application of His word - It may be that the day you read something you know how to apply it- it might change a decision you are going to make or it answers a prayer you have prayed, or something else. However, it may be that God may use it in the days ahead and you do not see that right now. It may be for you or a circumstance you will face or it could be for another person of faith or someone struggling with their faith. It might simply be a scripture that you pray for yourself, that God would make it real in your life.
- ~ God leads and guides - Over time, God will actually bring certain themes up through different passages and circumstances that you will begin to see as guidance items - that God is actually using them to lead and guide you in a certain direction or toward a certain decision.
- ~ You experience intimacy with God - This habit lived out over time creates the intimate experience of God that our souls long for. We truly will experience Him in a personal way.
- ~ Journal - People are forgetful. Keep a journal of what God has shown you, how He has made Himself real to you, and how you have experienced Him. This will provide you a deeply meaningful record of growth that you can reflect back on. It will also serve as an anchor for the storms of life as well as an encouragement that the God of the universe loves you deeply.

## Further Action Steps You Can Take

If you are interested in more information on integrating faith and work, becoming a next generation leader, or making an impact with your life, please visit us at [www.priorityassociates.org](http://www.priorityassociates.org) or email us at [info@priorityassociates.org](mailto:info@priorityassociates.org). You may also be able to get help from the organization or individual who provided you this resource.

### PRIORITY ASSOCIATES

*A worldwide movement of young professionals, established professionals and next generation leaders*

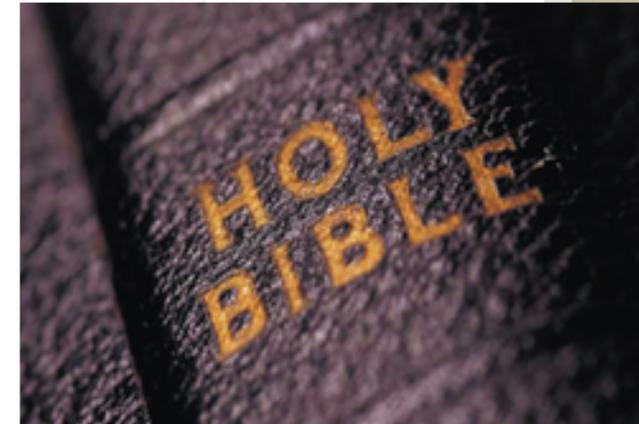
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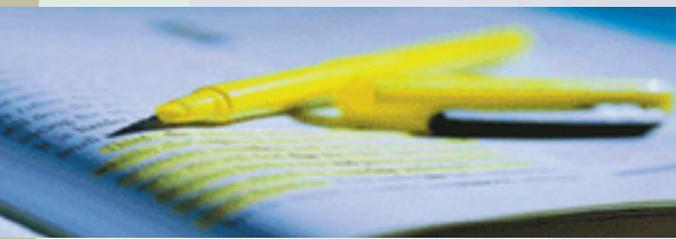
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# How to Study the Bible for Yourself



An effective approach to reading and understanding the world's all time best-seller



## Welcome to Adventure

Congratulations on your interest in wanting to know how to study the Bible for yourself. The Bible has been called the most remarkable book in the world and there are powerful reasons why.

As literature, it is unsurpassed in its collection of history, poetry and wisdom. As to historical accuracy, archeology continues to uncover new findings that prove the Bible's authenticity. As to prophecy, predictions made hundreds of years earlier than their fulfillment have systematically come true. As to inspiration, it has transformed men and women, young and old, rich and poor, nations and cultures for centuries.

There have been almost 20 concerted efforts to rid the world of the Bible, and yet it has survived them all. The Bible has been called the Living Word. No wonder it has become the global best seller of all time. Welcome to the adventure of exploring and knowing it for yourself.

## A Good Heart Condition

The first thing you will need is a good heart. Everyone must rigorously and honestly ask this question: "What is the condition of my heart?"

Do I want the God of the Bible to speak to me through a proper understanding of His word? Or am I really more interested in positioning myself as "God" over the Bible and taking my preconceived notions or personal beliefs and making the Bible bend and submit to what I want it to say?

A true learner really wants to see what God has to say. There is even a Bible promise that says: "God rewards those who earnestly seek Him". - Hebrews 11:6

People with hardened hearts will seek to impose their agenda on the Bible so it fits their view of the world. Which kind of heart are you? Pray that God gives you a seeking heart!

## A Good Bible Translation

The next thing you will need is an understandable translation. If you are making a Bible purchase now, it is recommended that you get a "Study" Bible. This is a translation that offers additional tools like; book introductions, helpful footnotes, appendices with further reading, as well as a helpful scripture index and cross-reference in the back called a concordance.

Some recommended translations that are very understandable and readable would include the New International Version (NIV) or the New American Standard (NAS). A sales associate can help you.

## Structure of the Bible

The Bible is actually not just a single book but a compilation of 66 books, written by over 35 authors over 1,500 years time. What is particularly remarkable about this set of books is that every book carries pretty much the same themes in some fashion:

1. God the creator, designer, or primary agent
2. Humankind's brokenness and separateness from God
3. God's redemptive purposes
4. Peoples' opportunity for intimacy with God

Additionally, the Bible communicates the four themes above through four different literary styles: 1) Historical Narrative, 2) Poetical and Wisdom Literature, 3) Prophetic proclamations, 4) Theological letters. Knowing what literary style you are reading, aids your understanding of what God is saying.

Finally, the reliability of the original manuscripts is significant. The Bible has more written and archeological evidence supporting the veracity and accuracy of the scriptures than any other ancient writings. Moreover, many of these books were communicated by eyewitnesses of those who experienced it. This gives the reader great confidence that they are reading something that has been accurately translated from the original manuscripts.

## Where to Start ?

If you are just beginning to take a look at the Bible for yourself, a great place to start is the book of John in the New Testament. You can find it in the table of contents. This book provides a great basis for understanding Jesus' life and purpose on earth and serves as a foundation stone for understanding the rest of the Bible.

If you are already familiar with the book of John and want to start with a smaller book to build your Bible study skills, some good choices might be 1 John, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, Philippians or Galatians.

## Tips to Maximize Your Bible Study

Here are some helpful tips to begin with that lay the ground work for using all the other Bible Study tools that are described in the next panel:

- Say a short prayer - "God I want to know you and your word. Speak to my heart and help me to understand it."
- Mark your Bible - This may seem awkward at first but the benefits are huge. Underline, circle, asterisk, write notes in the margin, write what is going on inside you as you read it and insights you are gaining. This will be a gold mine of learning and growth that you will use over and over again.
- Apply any truth you discover - Apply what you learn and see if it works. Write down and/or memorize a meaningful passage. Keep a journal on what you are learning and applying and what God is saying to you through His word.

## The Bible Study Toolbox

The basic framework for understanding the Bible and seeing it come to life can be outlined into four primary disciplines: Background, Observation, Interpretation, and Application. In each of these areas there is a toolset of activities and questions to be mastered.

### BACKGROUND

Start by reading the introduction to the specific book that you are wanting to study. In a Study Bible, this will usually be right under the name of the book and before the scripture text actually begins. You are trying to learn the who, what, where, when, and why of the writer, audience, and location.



What was their relationship? What was the size, culture, and emotional atmosphere of the city or region they were in? What was going on in that culture at that time? See if you can mentally place yourself in that environment as you prepare to read.

### OBSERVATION- WHAT DOES IT SAY?

It is helpful to read a whole chapter all at once or even better 3 or 4 chapters at once to get an overview of the situation. Write down a note or two as you do this. Then go back through the primary chapter you are looking at and underline what you think are key words and phrases. Continue to use your key investigative questions: who, what, where, when, and why.



Is there a clearly stated purpose to the writing? What is being emphasized? What words or phrases are being repeated? What comparisons, contrasts or questions is the writer raising? Summarize what you think the main points are in your own words.

### INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

If enough time is dedicated to good observation skills, then 90% of the time your interpretation will agree with others who are earnest in Bible Study. In interpretation, you take what you have found in observation and study it further.



What is the context? What is happening before and after this passage I am studying? What do other Bible passages have to say about this topic? (In the back of a Study Bible you can look up other places a word occurs and you can read those passages). Is what I see here consistent with these other passages? Asking these questions should cause the meaning to become more and more clear.

### APPLICATION - HOW DOES IT WORK?

Now comes application. This is where God's word can become dynamic in your life. With what you have learned, pose the question to yourself "how does this relate to my life, relationships, work, culture, etc...?"



What is God saying to me specifically? Is he challenging me? Instructing me? Guiding me? Encouraging me? Is there an example for me to follow? A promise to claim? A command to obey? A prayer to pray? A sin to avoid? An attitude to adjust?