



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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Reading Our Bible, Methods of Study #2

Method 1: General Approach

1. Plan your study. Set aside a time and place to study. Develop a plan of what you want to read each day in a calendar. Having a plan excites you to discover what you learn from God's Word for that day; it will also keep you organized, keeping track of what passages you have covered and what lessons you have learnt from each.
2. Get a good study Bible. Choose a translation to use during your study. You should select from translations as opposed to simple paraphrases, as this makes sure you are reading the originally translated text not a commentator's interpretation.
 - a. Avoid bibles that have been translated from Latin, rather than the original Greek and Hebrew. These, like a game of telephone, can get incorrectly translated.
 - b. Always ensure your understanding of a passage you have read fits with the entire doctrine of the Bible (which is God's

Redemption Plan of Salvation, 2 John 1:7-10); any revelation you get that does not fit the doctrine of Jesus alone must be cast away. Also, you must look at years of Church history to compare your findings with history. If you discover something that everyone in Church history disagrees with, you are most certainly wrong (heretics don't proceed with caution- they go ahead thinking they are the new prophet in town!) To be thus a good student of the Word, you should research: The Puritan Hard drive is a good place to start as well as Ligonier Ministries and Wretched radio (it has links to great Biblical Christian sites and Church History). Be careful not to be arrogant in the course of studying. It's so easy to boast of your findings rather than prayerfully meditate on them. Studying extensively is good, you should know what the foundations of the faith are but make sure your ability to recall names of people throughout Church history does not exceed your ability to remember the Scriptures Word for Word! (Food for thought, Joshua 1:7-9) Remember even those who are illiterates can have a deeper understanding of the Word and deeper relationship with God than you do because they meditate on it. Simply knowing names and things is not good enough. You must practice and preach what you practice.

- c. Good formal equivalence translations include the New Revised Standard Version or the English Standard Version. Good combination translations include Today's New International Version and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. A good dynamic equivalence translation is the Contemporary English Version, although strictly dynamic equivalence translations are usually frowned on by serious scholars.

3. Study the Bible with an attitude of prayer. This should be the first step in understanding the Bible. Bible study should be approached with a prayerful desire to learn. Discipline yourself to be with the Word. The Bible will come alive for you. It is spiritual food.
4. Pray. Ask God to help you understand his word before you even begin. Take the Bible literally. Don't assume a parable or story just because it seems vague. Don't try to interpret the Bible. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20,21) That's where misunderstandings come from.
5. Focus on the New Testament first. Though the New Testament compliments the Old, and the Old compliments the New, it is better to read the New Testament first if you are a novice. The Old Testament will make better sense if you read the New Testament first.
6. Consider reading John first. It's best to start with John, as it's the easiest Gospel to read, identifies who Jesus really is, and prepares you for the other 3. It would help to read it 2 or 3 times to get a good understanding of the author, topic, context, and characters. Read 3 chapters per day. Concentrate on your reading. and be patient.
 - a. When you're done with John, move on to Mark, Matthew, and Luke. As those tend to be the next easiest material. Read all the books -one after the other- until you have read all the Gospels.
 - b. When you're done with the Gospels, consider reading the letters from Romans to Jude. Because Revelation is pure prophecy not covered in the New Testament, stay out of there for now. When you get a good familiarity with the major prophets, then tackle Revelation.

7. Pick out topics to study. A topical study is very different than a book study or a chapter study. The subject index of most Bibles has specific areas of study. Once you have found an interesting topic, you begin by doing a rough read through of the verses. This will give you a general oversight of what the verses have to say. For example: salvation, obedience, sin, etc. Remember: reading a chapter several times will help you find things that you might have missed or skipped over before.

Method 2: Studying Techniques

1. Use the dictionary. Make sure that you look up words in the chapter that you are reading from. This will help you understand the Bible better.
2. Have a Bible notebook. This will keep you accountable to reading every day. Also, ask yourself questions and write them down in your Bible notebook. Use the "who", "what", "when", "where", "why", and "how" formula for your studies. For instance, "Who was there?", "What was happening?", "Where is this happening?", "How did it turn out?". This simple formula will make the story make sense.
3. Highlight important stuff or things you really like in your own bible. But don't do this if it belongs to someone else.
4. Use cross references and footnotes if you have them in your Bible. These are little numbers and symbols which tell you to look somewhere else in the text for more information, or show you when something was previously discussed. Footnotes, usually found at the bottom of a given page, will tell you where information is coming from or explain complex ideas or historical events and concepts.

- a. Try picking out a few words that jumped at you and looking them up in a concordance to find other verses talking about the same thing.
5. Follow the references in your Study Bible back to the first time it was used. This is where a chain reference Bible is essential.
6. Keep a journal. You don't have to write a lot. Just use a notebook page with the date, book / chapter / verse on the top. Ask yourself some questions and outline what you are reading. This helps to show you what God is revealing to you through His Word. Write out ideas or verses or thoughts that come into mind as you read. Think "Who, What, When, Where, How." Answer every possible question under each category. Compare your findings with what you know the Bible teaches. Then look them over and pray about it.
7. Get rid of all distractions. Turn off the television or radio. Unless you're studying with a group, try to find a quiet place where you have a table to read and take notes. This is alone time between you and God.

Method 3: Studying with Others

1. Find a Bible study group. Find a group of people that you can study with. The text is very complicated and having some help to get through it will be very important. They will also help keep you motivated and inspired.
2. Share what you have found with others within your Bible study group. Discuss what you have read with others who may have more experience reading and studying the Bible than you do.
3. Don't take what someone else says about the topic, except as a guide. Let the Bible inspire you. Increasing your knowledge about

Biblical Principles will only come after years of dedication, hard work, and just plain reading.

a. The Bible is not just one book from Genesis to Revelation.

There are 66 books, each from different authors at different times. Several authors have written more than one book, but they were written at different times for different reasons. You will find similar subjects and meanings throughout all the books of the Bible.

Method 4: Sample Study Plan

1. Decide your order. You can certainly read the New Testament in order if that suits you, but there are some plans that read the books out of order for a purpose. One is described in the following steps.

2. Start with the Gospels. Each Gospel paints a different picture of Jesus. Matthew shows Jesus as King; Mark shows Jesus as Rabbi (Many scholars believe that Mark is Peter's son. (1 Peter 5: 12 & 13) Further study shows that this Mark is actually the missionary that worked with Paul 2 Tim 4:11); Luke shows Jesus as man (Luke was a physician, probably a Greek, from Asia Minor (Col 4:14); and John shows Jesus as God, that is, the Messiah.

a. Read John again for continuity. This will give you a more complete picture of the Gospels. John was the last Gospel written. Matthew through Luke are known as the "Synoptic Gospels" because they tell the same basic story, bringing in their own points as directed. John fills in the gaps of what the others leave out. It's a book that completes the story of the Gospels.

3. Read Acts next. Acts, also known as "The Acts of the Apostles" was written by Luke, and is a picture of the revelation and development of the early church.
4. Read Galatians through Philemon. These 6 shorter letters are personal letters from Paul to 3 of the churches he had visited, and to 3 of his friends, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
 - a. Read The Epistle to the Romans. This shows the means, and the path to Salvation, then the Epistles to the Corinthians. This is the introduction to the Holy Spirit, and develops His doctrine and Gifts, followed by Hebrews through Jude. The teachings of the early church elders.
 - b. Unless you have been a Christian for some time, and you have a good grounding in prophecy, leave Revelation for the more serious students in their study times.
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6. Move on to the Old Testament. The Old Testament is compiled in the order for convenience, not chronology. You can read it by groups to make things easier. There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament. If you read 3 per day, you will have read it in 10 months.

- a. Read Genesis. This is the creation and the early relationship with God.
- b. Move on to Exodus through Deuteronomy. This is the Law.
- c. Read the history books. Joshua through Esther.
- d. Following the history section, read the books of wisdom and poetry.
 1. Job, often said to be the oldest book, shows how one man's relationship with God and man went, and is full of lessons on how it could have gone better. It's a great lesson on what God expects of man.
 2. The Psalms is the writings of a king of Israel who was a man after God's own heart despite the fact that he was not only a sinner, but a convicted killer.
 3. The Song of Solomon, also known as the Song of Songs, was written by King Solomon in his youth. It was a work of poetry by a young man in love. King Solomon was the wisest and wealthiest man in the world.
 4. Proverbs was King Solomon's writings as an adult when he was King of Israel, and was learning his hard lessons.
7. Ecclesiastes was King Solomon's lamentations of a man who had spent his life on riotous living, many wives, concubines, wine, women and song. Ecclesiastes is the book of lessons of what not to do.
8. Following the books of wisdom and poetry, get started in the 5 major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, & Daniel.
9. Move on to the 12 minor prophets to finish the Old Testament.

Application/Activity

This week's application/activity is simple in design yet difficult in application. I want you to pick a book of the Bible, any book you want, Old or New Testament. I want you to divide the chapters of that book into seven. I want you to force yourself to read those chapters each day. For example, I will chose the book of Romans. Romans has sixteen chapters. For the first two days I will read three chapters, the next five days I will read two chapters. So Wednesday I will read chapters one, two and three, Thursday I will read chapters four, five and six, Friday will be chapters seven and nine, and so on. Next, I want you to text me, each day, the book and chapters that you have read along with one thing that you have pulled out of that day's reading that God has placed on your heart.

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