How can I study the Bible?

March 23, 2025 Pastor Matt Watson

Psalm 19:7–11

7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

- Session 1 - Why must we study the Bible?
- Session 2 - What are we attempting to do in studying the Bible?
- Session 3 - How do we study the Bible?

Session 1 – Why must we study the Bible?

1) The Bible comes with incredible benefits.
   - God's Word is a lamp (Psalm 119:105).
   - It's trustworthy, purposeful, and refreshing like rain and snow (Isaiah 55:10-11).
   - God's Word is a sword in our spiritual fight . It's a double edged sword in exposing our sin (Ephesians 6:10-11, 17, Hebrews 4:12).
   - God's Word is a wise counselor (Psalm 119:24)
   - God's Word is pure silver (Psalm 12:6) -- this was the topic of our last equipping class. God's Word is perfect and trustworthy.
   - God's Word is like honey (Psalm 119:103). It brings joy and sweetness and abundance!

2) The Bible is essential for spiritual growth.
   - John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
   - 1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—
   - Hebrews 5:11–14 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. [12] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, [13] for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. [14] But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.
   - 2 Timothy 3:16–17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

3) Jesus knew Scripture.
   - Luke 4:16-27 - When Jesus taught in the synagogue, he knew Scripture, he interpreted it, and he understood it. It’s not too far of a stretch to conclude that he was a student of the Scripture.
   - Matthew 4:1-11 – Jesus was so familiar with Scripture he could quote it when he was being tempted.

4) God's Word gives strength, endurance, and hope through suffering.
   - Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5) A steep price has been paid to make God's Word available to you today.

   The work of four men –
   - Jerome – he translated the Bible into Latin (400ad).

- John Wycliffe – Catholic priest who began to translate the Bible into Old English (1400's) and was later labeled a heretic by the Catholic Church.

- Jan Hus – like Wycliffe, he stood up against the Catholic Church. He began to translate the Bible into Hungarian and Bohemian. He was declared a heretic and burned at the stake.

- William Tyndale – He took Jerome's Latin translation and made the first translation of the English from the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. He mass produced with the newly invented printing press in hopes that the masses would have access to God's Word.

  "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the scriptures than you!"

Why don't we study the Bible?

88% of American households own a Bible.
56% of Americans believe the Bible to be "the actual or inspired word of God."
37% of American read the Bible at least once a week.

1) "The Bible doesn't apply to my life."

2) "I don't know how to study the Bible."

3) "I don't need to -- that is the pastors job."

4) "I don't need to -- I can grow closer to God in other ways."

5) "I don't have time."

6) "I don't want to."

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

- Fast of fake substitutes and Feast on the Word of God.
- Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

What is the best mindset to have in studying the Bible?

Not dutifully, but joyfully

Not selfishly or hyper-spiritually, but carefully

Not randomly, but consistently

Session 2 – What are we attempting to do in studying the Bible?

The single worst question to ask yourself when first coming to a passage or verse in the Bible – **"What does this verse mean to me?"**

The AIM of Bible study is discovering the **Author's Intended Meaning.**

Do most passages in the Bible have one or multiple AIMs?

Most of the time, when you are reading the Bible, the author's meaning is singular, interpretations can be multiple, and applications can be infinite.

Your application of any text is only as good as an accurate interpretation of what the author was trying to say.

Difficulties in Finding the AIM –

- Historical separation
- Language barrier
- Personal bias
- Cultural differences

Exegesis – the careful study of a biblical text in order to discover what the author intended his original readers to understand.

The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary on the goal of exegesis: "to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage. Exegesis … places no premium on speculation or inventiveness and novelty in interpretation is not prized."

Session 3 – How do we study the Bible?

REAP – Read, Examine, Apply, Pray

R – Read

To study the Bible you will have to first read the Bible.

5 Ways to Read the Bible

1. Read prayerfully.

   Proverbs 2:3–6 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, [4] if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, [5] then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. [6] For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

   Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from your law.

2. Read patiently.

   Psalm 37:5 - Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.

   Psalm 37:7 - Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;

3. Read repeatedly.

4. Read slowly.

5. Read thoughtfully.

2 Timothy 2:7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

- Read the Bible like you read a crossword puzzle.
- Read the Bible like it's the first letter from the love of your life.
- Read the Bible like you are a lead investigator.

15 things to look for when reading thoughtfully -

1. What jumps out to you in this passage?
    - Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

2. What is emphasized or repeated?
    - 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4]who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. [5]For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. [6]If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. [7]Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.
    - 1 John 2:15–17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16]For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17]And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

3. Is anything being compared?
    - Psalm 42:1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
    - 1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—
    - James 3:3-6 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. [4] Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. [5]So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! [6] And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

4. Is anything being contrasted?
    - Proverbs 14:31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
    - Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (cause / effect)

5. Is there a specific means given?
   - Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.
   - Romans 8:13-14 Romans For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14]For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

6. Is a purpose given?
   - John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [31] but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
   - Psalm 119:11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

7. Is there exaggeration or emphasis given?
   - Matthew 23:24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!
   - Psalm 84:10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

8. Is there a pattern?
   - Pharaoh hardening his heart (Exodus 7:13, 14, 22, 8:11, 15, 28, 9:7, 34, 35, 13:5)
   - Matthew 5:21-47 "You have heard that it was said"

9. Are there any connecting words? Conjunctions - and, for, but, therefore, since, or because
   - Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
   - Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

10. Do any prepositions jump out? Prepositions - by, with, from, in, on, upon, through, or to
    - Romans 5:1–2 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

11. What is the mood or tone?

12. Who are the key characters?

13. What verbs drive the verse?

14. What is the setting?

15. When is this happening?

Psalm 1:1-6

[1]Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
[2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

[3] He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
[4]The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

[5]Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
[6]for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

E – Examine

Two main places to examine -

- Understanding the CONTEXT of the Passage
- Answering your QUESTIONS for the passage

Context – How does this verse fit in the paragraph it's in? In the chapter it's in? The book it's in? The Bible as a whole?

- For the paragraph? Read the paragraphs before and after
- For the book? Read an introduction to the book
- For the Bible as a whole? Come to church!

Questions – Ask questions, find answer!

My Top 3 Resources for Examining a passage -

- https://soniclight.com/constable-notes-pdf/
- ESV Study Bible - Christianbook.com
- For meaning of specific words - Blueletterbible.org

What is the meaning behind this specific person, place, or word?

What is the historical or cultural significance of this person, place, or word?

What is a scoffer?

To what does the Law of the Lord refer to?

What is chaff?

What does it mean to be blessed?

After you have examined the passage and have started to understand it, write a short summary of the AIM.

Psalm 1 - The best life is the life that is right with God and then is shaped by His Word Alone.

A - Apply

- Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it
- John 8:31–32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
- What is our response when we hear the Word of God? - James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.
- Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,
- Matthew 7:24-27 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25]And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26]And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27]And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

This is the whole point!

Questions for Application

- How does this truth affect my life? My work? my relationships? my idols? my sin?
- What does this passage teach me about God?
- What do I see about God's character?
- Where do I see Christ or Christ's character?
- What lessons would God want us to learn from this passage about the way we live?
- What does this passage prompt me to pray about?

What are some applications from Psalm 1:1-4?

P - Pray

Pray before your study, Pray during your study, Pray after your study

3 Closing Thoughts

1. Start small
2. Study in community
3. Be prayerful and patient