

How to Study the Bible

The Psalmist declared, *“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”*(Psalms 119:105 NLT) His word lights the way, giving direction for each step (*“for my feet”*) and giving wisdom for long-range plans (*“for my path”*). Let God’s word guide, correct, instruct, lead, teach, and confirm, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”* (2 Tim 3:16-17 NLT)

Practical:

1. Start with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding of the truths you’re reading and for a greater hunger for God’s word. See Psalms 5:3
2. Make a commitment to regularly spend time in God’s word. God commanded Joshua to *“meditate on it day and night”*. See Joshua 1:8
3. Have a plan, a systematic approach to your study. It’s a lifetime endeavor so approach it with purpose. Our random, “God give me something today” approach while flipping open the Bible is not the best consistent plan. See Psalms 119:15
4. Make it a priority by scheduling it into your day. The “if I have time today” approach doesn't seem to work. Something always seems to squeeze it out. See Psalms 90:12
5. Have a notebook close at hand to write insights gleaned from your study. See Proverbs 2:3
6. Meditate on a text, read and reread. Meditate on it throughout the day, memorize key verses. See Psalms 119:48
7. Conclude in prayer. Ask the question, “How will I be different today because of what I have just read?” Then ask God help you to live it out. See Ephesians 4:16

Principles:

These are some principles of interpretation to keep in mind as we are admonished, *“Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”*(2 Tim 2:15 NLT)

1. Start with your favorite **translation** of the bible when studying and not a paraphrase. NOTE: A "translation" attempts to communicate word-for-word from the original language. A "paraphrase" takes the meaning of a verse or passage of scripture and attempts to express the meaning in the “plain language” of today.
2. Let scripture interpret scripture: Consider all of **God’s word** in regards to any topic. Refrain from isolating one verse and **building** a doctrine or position.
3. Context is important – interpret a passage in the light of its context. Context is the portions of scripture surrounding the passage being studied, **both before and after it**.
4. Language can be tricky. Interpret according the correct meaning of the words. Some words **change their meaning** over a period of time. Use a bible dictionary to understand the original meaning and the grammar of a sentence.

5. What's the intention? Ask yourself "Why did the author write the text?" **Knowing the purpose** of the writing can help in interpreting texts.
6. Interpret the scripture in the light of the **historical, geographical and cultural background** as far as can be known. There are many reference books that will help you in this process.
7. With the help of reference books search out the **literary form** of a passage. Is it a narrative, poetry, teaching, prophecy, etc?
8. While studying, look for **repeated words and phrases**. These can have great significance in a passage.

Personal:

There are many tools and techniques available at your local Christian bookstores to aid and enhance personal Bible study. One such tool is called "journaling" and consists of systematic daily bible reading, along with writing a journal following the acronym **S.O.A.P.**

S FOR SCRIPTURE

Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. Highlight, underline or place a mark in the margin of your bible next to the scriptures that stand out. When you are done, reread the verses you marked, look for one that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

O FOR OBSERVATION

What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. Paraphrase and write this scripture down in your own words in your journal.

A FOR APPLICATION

Personalize what you have read by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.

P FOR PRAYER

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Then, write it down.

Resources:

Many of these resources can be bought at your local Christian Book store or even checked out at your local library.

1. A bible dictionary will define the meaning of a word in the original language.
2. A concordance will help you locate other passages that contain the same word.

3. Commentaries illustrate how other men of God have interpreted a specific text.
4. Other bible translations or paraphrases: reading text stated in a different way may allow for a greater understanding of the passage.
5. There are many online resources to enhance your study and provide tools to dig deeper into God's word and enrich your study. Here are just a couple to get you started:

<http://www.klove.com/Interact/Links.aspx>

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>

<http://www.studylight.org/>

May God's blessing be upon you as you endeavor to be a faithful follower of Jesus, living out the command, *"Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed."*(Joshua 1:8b NLT) And may the promised blessing be yours; *"...be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*(Joshua 1:9 NLT)

Questions/Comments?

If you would like more information or someone to pray with you **email us**.