



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. John 15:11

STARTING

Before you get started, think through the following:

- When will you read? Do you have a consistent time?
- Where will you read? Do you have a consistent place?
- What will you read? Do you have a plan?
- What do you need? Do you have a Bible, journal, pen, etc.?

PRAYER & PURPOSE

You should always approach the Scriptures in a posture of prayerful humility and longing. Since the Holy Spirit is the author we need Him to help us understand what He wrote. Not only that, but our goal is ultimately a relational one - to know God. Therefore, this is not mere academic exercise, but one of communion with God. Ask God to:

- Incline you to His Word - focus your attention & desires upon Him
- Open your eyes to see the beautiful wonders of Christ and the glories of the gospel
- Unite your heart to fear His name, enthralling you & leading your response
- Satisfy you with His steadfast, covenant love that's been poured out in Jesus.

READING

The first step of study is to simply read the passage a few times to get an idea of the content, context and flow. Highlight particular sections that stand out so that you can come back to them later.

1. CONTEXT / OBSERVATION (The Text)

What is it saying?

What are you observing? Everything. Your goal is not yet to determine what is and is not significant. Observation is kind of like panning for gold. Your goal is to dig up as much as possible and allow the later processes to sift the gold.

Mark up the passage. Don't be afraid to write in your Bible. Circle, underline and highlight. Write in the margins. Get creative as you ask lots of questions:

1. What sort of writing is this? (letter, poem, prophecy, story, etc.)
2. Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
3. Who and where is the author? The audience?
4. What is the tone of the author?
5. Who and where is the main character?
6. What has happened so far?
7. Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text?
8. What is the main point or points?
9. What surprises are there?
10. What are the key words? What words or ideas are repeated?

2. MEANING / INTERPRETATION (Christ in the Text)

What does it mean?

Your observations will most likely lead to interesting and challenging questions about the text. The step of interpretation allows you to sift through the various observations in order to provide answers.

Some initial questions to ask as you try and discover the text's meaning are:

What is the...

- meaning of this word?
- significance of this phrase?
- implication of this statement?
- overarching theme?

Why did the author...

- choose this word?
- include this phrase?
- use this command?
- connect these ideas?
- not say ____?

As you ask these, compare multiple translations. Look up key words. Cross reference to see how this passage relates to other passages. When stumped, list out all the various options and pros and cons of each. As a very last step after due consideration, use supplemental resources such as Study Bibles or Commentaries for helpful insights and background information.

Your ultimate goal is to answer:

1. How does this text relate to other parts of the chapter? The book?
2. How does the passage relate to Jesus?
3. What does this teach us about God?
4. How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?
5. How does that meaning fit into the overarching redemptive plan of the gospel?

Make sure to discuss insights and questions with your spouse and gospel community rather than doing this in a vacuum.

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3. RESPONSE / APPLICATION (The Heart)

What do I do with it?

Bible study is incomplete until you have thought through how the truth you have discovered affects your life. Some passages will be more readily applicable than others, but all Scripture is useful and helpful (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

1. List out a number of potential applications. To get started, here are a few questions to consider:

- Is there praise to give?
- Is there a truth to submit to?
- Is there a sin to repent of and/or avoid?
- Is there a promise to trust?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an erroneous view exposed?
- What else is the Lord pressing upon you?

2. The application should fit and be directed by the meaning of the text. Process in prayer with the Lord as you respond to them and He disciplines you.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. Look at the book - John Piper digital workshops
2. God's Big Picture - book by Vaughan Roberts
3. The Story: Recovering Eden - Sermon Series from The Well
4. The Bible Project - Drawings & short videos for each book of the bible.

NOTES: