

Bible Study Made Easy

Introduction

Is it really that important? Is it necessary? Why should I do it? These are some of the questions people ask when it comes to the issue of Bible study. Then come the excuses. I don't have time. It's too hard. I don't know how to do it.

Hopefully, by the time you finish this class your questions about Bible study will be answered and you will have found time to study the Bible because it is easy when you use the simple guidelines provided. So rest easy and **remember** that you don't have to learn everything at once. It is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth and to guide you through your life. You just have to trust Him and cooperate with Him.

The Bible tells us everything we need to know about life ... that's why we need to study it for ourselves. God has chosen to reveal Himself through the Scriptures, the Bible ... the written Word of God. He had his words preserved in writing so that men would not **forget** what He said or be confused as to **what** He said.

God can speak to you in many ways but you need to verify what He is saying by what He has already had written. The more familiar you are with what he has said ... makes it easier for you understand Him, where He is taking you and what He wants you to do. *All Scripture (written word of God) is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

First Things First

You can begin Bible study anytime, but it is better if you **start** by reading through the entire Bible from cover to cover. There is a reason for this. Jesus told His disciples that, *"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)* **Remember**, the Holy Spirit can't bring to your remembrance anything that you have not already put into your brain in the first place.

- Just do a **little** Bible reading **each** day. To begin with, no more than 10 minutes. That's plenty!
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what He wants you to know that day.
- As you begin each new book of the Bible get the BIG PICTURE by reading your Bible survey of that book.
- Get **two** colored pencils that won't "bleed" through the pages in the Bible.
- Use one color to mark **only** the words that God, the Father and Jesus actually spoke themselves, not through a prophet. For example, God said, "Let there be Light." Another example is when God **spoke** the Ten Commandments **out loud** to the gathered multitude before they were written on stone tablets.
- Use the other colored pencil to mark **only** when specific words or phrases seem to "jump off the page at you." It is the Holy Spirit prompting you!

Effective Bible Study

Once you have read through the Bible and marked what the Holy Spirit has revealed to you and what God has said you are ready to an extensive Bible study. This usually requires more time but you will have already established the habit of daily Bible reading so it will be easy for you.

The key to effective Bible study is to learn to read the text carefully and ask the right questions of it. There are two basic kinds of questions one should ask of every Biblical passage; these relate to **Context** and **Content**.

But before you begin, **remember** to ask God for wisdom in accomplishing your task. *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)*

The Context Of The Passage

When I first became a Christian my pastor gave me advise on understanding the Bible in just one sentence and it has remained with me throughout the years. **“A text taken out of context is a pretext.”** Here is what he was saying, “Any scripture verse (text) taken out of its historical and biblical environment (context) is an effort to conceal its true meaning or purpose (pretext).” Some people allude to this as: “You can make the Bible say anything you want it to say.”

A familiar example of this is the story of the man who wanted direction from God. So he went to the Bible, shut his eyes, opened it and put his finger on the page. Upon opening his eyes he saw that his finger was pointing to the following passage: *Then Judas went out and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:5)* He thought to himself that it couldn't possibly be what God was saying to him so he followed the same process. Upon opening his eyes he saw that his finger was pointing to the following passage: *Go thou and do likewise. (Luke 10:37)* In frustration he once again followed the same procedure and upon opening his eyes read: *And what thou doest, do quickly. (John 13:27)*

To understand the intended meaning of the text you must first consider its **original setting** in history and in the Bible. Historical context can be found in your Bible Survey and answers the following questions:

- Who wrote the text?
- When was it written?
- Why was it written?
- To whom was it written?
- What is the location of the writer, readers, or events?
- What geographic, political, or cultural aspects are relevant to the passage?

Reading and understanding the verses preceding and following the text you are studying provide the biblical context.

The Content Of The Passage

The procedure for determining the content of any Bible passage has three component parts:

- **Observation** – What does the passage say?
- **Interpretation** – What does the passage mean?
- **Application** – How does the meaning of the passage apply to me?

Accurate interpretation and correct application rest on the accuracy of your observations. Therefore, it is vital that you develop observation skills.

Observation

The role of the **detective** begins by reading the passage **carefully** as many times as possible, just **observing the details**. Then the basic questions that journalists use to get the whole story are asked: Who, What, Why, Where, When and How.

- Observing the **Facts**.
 1. Who are the characters involved?
 2. What is happening?
 3. Where do the events occur?
 4. When do the events occur?
 5. Why do the events occur?
 6. How do the events happen?
- Observing the **Tone**. What type of literature (genre) are you reading (e.g. story, saying, parable, etc.)? What is the mood or feeling of your passage (e.g. serious, joyful, sad, light)?
- Observing the **Theme**. What is/are the key point(s) of the passage? Is there a key verse?
- Observing the **Terms**. What are the key words (primarily nouns and verbs)? Are there any words that are repeated? What are the tenses of the verbs?
- Observing the **Grammatical Relationships**. How do the words of the sentence relate together? Pay careful attention to the grammatical structure by looking at the prepositions and connectors. Note cause and effects, progressions, contrasts, etc.

Interpretation

The role of an **evaluator** begins by reading the passage several more times, this time seeking to know the meaning. Compare the words, phrases, ideas, events/stories, with similar ones elsewhere in Scripture and define any unclear words. Use another Bible translation. Then ask the Interpretive Questions:

- Why did (i.e. Jesus) say ... ?
- What is the meaning of ... ?
- What is the significance of ... ?
- What is the implication of ... ?
- What is the relationship between ... ?
- Is there a progression in the passage?

Application T

The role of an **implementer** is to apply the truth(s) of the passage to your own life and then discover how to share it with others. It happens by following the five steps below:

- **Evaluation.** What are the important eternally applicable truths (in contrast to the time-bound illustrations and practices)?
- **Personalization.** Are there examples to follow? Are there commands to obey? Are there errors to avoid? Are there sins to forsake? Are there promises to claim? Are there new thoughts about God? Are there principles to live by?
- **Appropriation.** Transfer the labors of your study into practical obedience. Prayerfully meditate on the following questions.
 - What does this passage suggest I should be or do as a believer?
 - What attitude(s) should I have toward God, others, and myself?
 - How does this affect my family, daily work, associates, employers, subordinates, etc.?
 - Where am I now in this area of my life?
 - What practical steps can I take to become what I should be?

-
- **Clarification.**
 - The nature of the passage. Does this passage teach something to believe or something to do?
 - The nature of your audience. What educational, cultural, financial, age factors, etc., are important? What issues affect them?
 - **Proclamation.** True learning does not occur until you are able to teach someone else what you have been taught. Pray and meditate about how you can share the truth with others.

A Simple Bible Study Practice Set

The Word Of God

(Psalms 119)

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

The importance of God's word in a person's life cannot be doubted. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of it. Before leading his people into the Promised Land Joshua told them, "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; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." (Joshua 1:8) And the Apostle Paul gave Timothy, a young pastor instructions concerning it. *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (1 Timothy 4: 13-16)*

But nowhere in the Scriptures is the Word of God extolled more than in Psalm 119!

Psalm 119 was written about 425 years before Jesus was born. It is the longest Psalm as well as the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 119 it is one of the nine acrostic Psalms.¹ It has 176 verses, which are divided into 22 stanzas of eight verses each. The 22 stanzas represent all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and each of the eight verses in a stanza begins with that letter. For example, the first eight verses of Psalm 119 all begin with the letter, 'Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The second eight verses begin with the letter, Beth, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

As early as the 1st & 2nd centuries B.C. the Jews noted that the number 22 was significant in not just being the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet but also the number of generations from Adam to Jacob (Israel), the number of works of creation, and the number of books in the Jewish canon of the Bible.

Finding patterns in Scripture and looking at them more closely is an exciting way to do a Bible Study. The following exercise breaks down Psalm 119 into two basic thoughts: 1) The Power Of God's Word And What It Can Do and 2) What We Are To Do With God's Word.

¹ An acrostic is a poem or series of lines in which certain letters, usually the first in each line, form a name, motto, or message when read in sequence. The other eight acrostic Psalms are: 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 145.

The Power Of God's Word And What It Can Do

- v. 9 Taking **heed** according to thy Word.
(To pay attention; careful; in conformity with; agreement; harmony)
- v. 25 **Quicken** me according to thy Word. (Also verses 107 and 154)
(To make alive; preserve; to enter into active growth; to keep alive; intact; free from decay)
- v. 28 **Strengthen** me according to thy Word.
(Make stronger; without yielding)
- v. 38 **Stablish** thy Word unto thy servant.
(Make sure; fix firmly; permanent; enduring; not subject to insecurity)
- v. 41 **Salvation** according to thy Word.
(Deliverance from the power and effects of sin; liberation from ignorance or illusion)
- v. 49 **Remember** thy Word.
(To keep in mind; recall again)
- v. 50 Thy Word hath **quicken**ed me.
(Revived; simulated, promise to preserve my life)
- v. 58 **Merciful** according to thy Word.
(Compassion; refraining from the enforcement due; gracious; unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration)
- v. 65 **Dealt well** according to thy Word.
(In a friendly or kindly manner; do good; do well; in good proper manner; justly; right)
- v. 76 **Merciful kindness** according to thy Word.
(Affectionate; loving; gentle; comfort; to give strength and hope to; to ease grief; cheer)
- v. 89 Thy Word is **settled** in heaven.
(Established; put firmly in place; eternal; everlasting; continuing without intermission)
- v. 105 Thy Word is a **lamp** and a **light**.
(To shine; to ignite something)
- v. 116 **Uphold** me according to thy Word.
(To keep from falling or sinking; sustain; to give support or relief; to keep up)

- v. 130 Thy Word giveth light.
(To grant or bestow by formal invitation)
- v. 133 **Order my steps** in thy Word.
(Command; direct; ordain; to set straight; to follow a straight course)
- v. 140 Thy Word is very **pure**.
(Unmixed with any other matter; spotless; tested; carried through to completion; careful about detail)
- v. 160 Thy Word is **true**.
(Ideal; essential, consistent, rightful; without falsehood)
- v. 169 **Understanding** according to thy Word.
(To know the meaning; to be thoroughly familiar with)
- v. 170 **Deliver** me according to thy Word.
(Assist in giving birth)

What We Are To Do With God's Word

- v. 11 Thy Word have I **hid** in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
(Concealed intentionally from sight)
- v. 16 **Not forget** thy Word.
(Neglect; lose the remembrance of)
- v. 17 **Keep** thy Word. (Also verses 57 and 101)
(Obey; to take notice by appropriate conduct; to conform to in habit or conduct; to follow the commands or guidance, hold to; continue; rely; to be faithful to)
- v. 42 **Trust** in thy Word.
(Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something)
- v. 67 **Kept** thy Word.
(Been faithful to; watched over and defended; conformed to)
- v. 74 **Hope** in thy Word. (Also verses 81, 114 and 147)
(Trust; to cherish with expectation of fulfillment)
- v. 148 **Meditate** in thy Word.
(Focus one's thoughts on; reflect; ponder; continuous thought)

- v. 161 **Standeth in awe** at thy Word.
(Standeth - To maintain one's position)
(Awe- Dread or terror; wondering reverence; heart trembles; shake as with fear)
- v. 162 **Rejoice** at thy Word.
(To give joy; great delight)
- v. 172 **Speak** of thy Word.
(To express ones self before a group; sing; to relate or celebrate something in verse)