

How to Study the Bible

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Why Study the Bible

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

To Know God *Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

It builds faith *Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*
Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

It is Spirit and Life *John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

It is of God *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

Direction *Psalms 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Sanctification *John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

Comfort *Psalms 119:49-50 Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.*

Strength *Proverbs 24:5 A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.*

Peace *Psalms 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

Confidence *Isaiah 51:7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.*

Success *Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

Stability *Psalms 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

Health *Proverbs 4:20-22 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*

Joy

Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

Wisdom

Prov 2:6 For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Get to Know Your Bible

The Bible is organized into 2 major sections:

- 1) Old Testament – before the birth of Jesus
- 2) New Testament – after the birth of Jesus and the acts of the Apostles

The Testaments contain books inspired by God to various authors

Old Testament – 39 books (image from printablee.com)



Books of the Old Testament

The Law	History	Poetry	Prophecy
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

Books of the Law – written by Moses. Outlines the origins of all things, as well as the birth of the nation of Israel. These books also define the civil, religious, and moral laws of the land.

Books of History – Tells the narrative of the Israelites (the descendants of Abraham). They outline the establishment of judges, then kings. It details their entry into the Promised Land, their deeds within it to their exile from it.

Books of Poetry and Wisdom – Written in poetic style. Includes wisdom for daily living.

Books of Prophecy – Broken down into the 5 major prophets (in blue) and the minor prophets (in red). These give prophetic warnings before Israel goes into exile. They include prophecies of comfort and restoration while in exile. There is also prophetic insight into things still yet to come.



Gospels – The birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah

History – The beginning of the church from the ascension of Jesus, the coming of the Holy Spirit to the spreading of the gospel beginning with the Jews to the gentiles throughout the Mediterranean.

Paul's letters (Epistles) – written by Paul of Tarsus. He once persecuted the church of Jesus Christ then had an encounter with Jesus and became an Apostle to the gentiles.

General letters – Written by authors other than Paul. (Some credit Paul with Hebrews, but there is no scholarly consensus since the writer is not identified within the book itself).

Apocalypse – This book is also a letter written to seven churches. But it is unique in that it is the book of “last things” (biblestudyblueprint.com). It tells of the coming anti-christ, final judgement, and the new creation. It encourages believers throughout the ages to stand strong because in the end we win.

The books are then broken down into chapters and the chapters break down into verses.

66 books in the Bible

1189 chapters

31,102 verses.

Bible Study Materials

1. Bibles

- a. Choose your translations.
 - i. Formal translations – A Word for Word translation. May not be as easy to read but holds to the original language.
 1. **King James Version – Most popular and the foundation for your Bible Study**
 2. New King James Version (NKJV)
 3. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
 4. English Standard Version (ESV).
 - ii. Dynamic translations – Translates the idea of a passage. These translations leave more room for bias from the translator (be cautious). The most common are:
 1. New International Version (NIV)
 2. The Message (MSG)
 3. The Living Bible (TLB)
 4. Good News Bible (GNB)
 5. New Living Translation (NLT)

2. Concordance

- a. “A Bible concordance is an alphabetical listing of words and phrases found in the Holy Bible and shows where the terms occur throughout all of Scripture. With cross-references for verses, concordances make it easy to understand the meaning of terms and the context in which those words are used.” (www.biblestudytools.com)
 - i. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance – for the King James Version of Bible
 - ii. NAS Exhaustive Concordance – For the New American Standard Bible

3. Dictionary

- a. Standard contemporary English dictionary
- b. Webster 1828 dictionary – Dictionary created to correspond to the 1611 King James Version of the Bible

4. Scripture references - Any tool which gives other scriptures related to the scripture currently being read

- a. Study Bible – Will have scripture references, definitions, other insights in the margins, middle, or bottom of the page.
- b. Topical Reference material – Study tools which can outline a list of scriptures related to a particular topic.
 - i. Nave’s Topical Bible
 - ii. Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

5. Other Reference Material – to help contextualize and/or visualize what the Bible is saying

- a. Charts
- b. Maps
- c. Historical context – Books, websites, other resources which will further detail the customs and culture during the writing of the books of the Bible.
- d. Commentaries – Books which further expound on scripture by noting historical and theological references scripture by scripture.
 - i. Jamison, Fausset, and Brown Commentary
 - ii. Matthew Henry Commentary

Bible Study Preparation

Set a Time

Be intentional and strategic in making time to study.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Can I really give my attention to the Word at this time?
- Is this a time when I can focus uninterrupted?
- Have I released everything else so that I may focus on the Word?

Prepare a Place

Just as we must be intentional with our time, we must be intentional with our space.

- Is the setting relatively free from distractions?
- Is it a setting in which you will remain alert?
- Is it a space which has room for all necessary tools, devices, books, and notebooks?

Have a goal

What do you hope to accomplish in this session?

Decide how you will begin your study.

- Will you begin with a book of the Bible?
- Will you begin with a particular topic such as love, unforgiveness, etc.
- Will you begin with a particular teaching or parable?
- Will you dig deeper into a topic or message heard previously?

Pray

Before you begin, ask the Holy Spirit to be your guide and your teacher. Ask for wisdom, revelation, and understanding. Pray with humility and welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit into your space. Remember that God has given us His Word for our benefit. We are not doing God any favors by studying His Word. We want to have a divine encounter every time we get into the Word of God. Expect the Holy Spirit to show up in your study time.

Psalm 119:33-38 KJV

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Document

Keep a record of your studies. Document, either in a notebook or electronically, the scriptures, your thoughts, any questions that arise while you are reading.

Write down any revelations given by the Holy Spirit. Write out a prayer. Write how that particular Word has changed you. You can incorporate what you have studied into a daily confession.

Scripture Study Example 1 One Scripture Word Study

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Read the scripture, then reread the scripture. The verse is more than likely part of a larger thought so also read the verse immediately before and after the study verse (if necessary, read more to get the full context of the thought). Then return and read the study verse, again.

Begin with the King James Version (KJV) because it was translated from the original language into English. Use an Interlinear Bible which gives the original text for the scripture and has links to the Strong's Concordance to look up the words. (www.biblehub.com).

Keep – (natsar [naw-tsar']) to guard (to protect, maintain), watch, keep

Heart – (leb [labe] from (lebab [lay-bawb']) used for the feelings, the will, and the intellect; the center of anything

Diligence – (mishmar [mish-mawr']) guard, office, prison, ward, watch

Issues – (totsaah [to-tsaw-aw]) exit, i.e. boundary, deliverance, source, borders, going forth

Life – (chay [khah'-ee]) alive, appetite, age

You now have a greater understanding of the context of the main words in the passage. It will be helpful to get the scripture in other translations.

Proverbs 4:23 AMP Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4:23 NLT Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

By this point you are getting your own revelations, images, and words to describe feelings and thoughts.

“I should be guarding my heart like it is in a prison.

My heart includes my feelings (what am I letting close to me that disturbs my peace?)

It includes my intellect (what information am I absorbing? Am I looking and listening to material that makes me smarter or stuff that's stupid?)

My heart holds my will (Is my will God's will or am I determined to do things that my flesh wants to do?)”

Find other scriptures related to this scripture: (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge)

Deuteronomy 4:9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

Matt 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

Matt 15:18-20 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Keep reading and meditating as the Holy Spirit leads. Write out a prayer and confession of faith to seal what you have learned.

Homework assignment #1
One Scripture Word Study

Choose at least 1 of the following:

- 1) *James 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*
- 2) *Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
- 3) *Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*
- 4) *Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*
- 5) *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

For that scripture do each of the following:

- a) Look up and document the Greek or Hebrew definitions for the words in the scriptures using the Strong's Concordance. No need to define the small, common words (such as the, or, and, then, etc.).
- b) Using the words from the definitions, write out thoughts and images that come to mind. You can even rewrite the scripture in your own words.
- c) Write out the scripture from at least 2 other translations.
- d) Find at least 2 reference scriptures.
- e) Write out a prayer or confession pertaining to the scripture you have studied.

Scripture Study Example 2

Chapter/Passage Study

Luke 10:25-37 KJV

- 25 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*
- 26 *He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?*
- 27 *And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.*
- 28 *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*
- 29 *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*
- 30 *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*
- 31 *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*
- 32 *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*
- 33 *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*
- 34 *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*
- 35 *And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*
- 36 *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*
- 37 *And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

When studying an entire chapter or full passage begin with a basic 4 step process.

Step 1 – Define the “obvious”

What themes and ideas stand out to you? What do you think the passage is about and what does it say to you?

- a. Jesus is teaching about compassion
- b. Jesus wants us to be helpful to those who are hurting
- c. Being compassionate takes time and money

Step 2 – Research and context

Define key terms and characters. As necessary, look into cultural norms and context for a deeper understanding.

- a. The Law – Referring to the law of Moses, which defined the religious, cultural, and ethical law for the Jewish people.
- b. The Priest – The one who offered sacrifices to God. He was important and held high esteem in the community. He saw the injured man and went to the other side of the street.
- c. The Levite – Those who took care of the church. The Priest came out of Levi. These were set apart by God to serve in the temple and stood as a liaison between and priests and the people. He “looked” on the injured man. (So did he stop and stare at him for a minute?) Then passed by on the other side.

- d. The Samaritan – Looked down on by the Jews. Considered contaminated in blood and worship. This is who took compassion on the injured man.

Step 3 – Take a look inward. Ask “How does this apply to me?”

The Word of God is about instruction and transformation in our souls. *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

This step allows for the Holy Spirit to locate you in a moment. Which character in the teaching most relates to you? What words or phrases jump out at you? What images and themes speak to you? Write whatever comes to you.

- a. The wounded man was beaten and left “half dead”. But he didn’t get help from where he may have thought he could get help. If he was expecting the priest and the Levite to help because of their position and status he was going to die. I should not put a limit on who or what God can use to help me. God can use anyone to help me and can use me to help anyone. My neighbor is the one who needs me in that moment.
- b. I must have compassion while I am on my own personal journey. All three men were headed somewhere to do something. But only one allowed compassion to interrupt his agenda. Do I allow the compassion of God to shine forth even in the midst of my own plan?

Step 4 – Identify what the Holy Spirit is saying to you and then find reference scriptures. What the Holy Spirit speaks to you through the scripture may be completely unrelated to what you initially believed was the main theme of the passage.

- a. My Unlimited God – God used a Samaritan to help someone attacked by thieves. I can’t place restrictions and stipulations on how God chooses to heal me. Sometimes all I can do is lie there until my help comes. But I must know that help is on the way!! I can’t give up.
- b. *Psalm 27:14 Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.*
- c. *2 Timothy 4:17-18 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*
- d. *Joshua 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

Write your prayer and declaration after your study.

Homework Assignment #2 **Chapter/Passage Study**

Choose one (or more) of the following passages:

1. Mark 4:1-20
2. Judges 16
3. Acts 4:33 – Acts 5:12
4. Jeremiah 1

Complete the following for the chosen passage:

1. Define the “obvious” – Identify the main theme or idea of the passage
2. Research and context – Identify all characters in the passage.
Are there any significant cultural traditions which should be identified
3. Ask “How does this apply to me?” Write comments and questions outlining how the passage is significant to you and your Kingdom purpose.
4. Identify what the Holy Spirit is saying to you and then find at least 2 reference scriptures.

Scripture Study Example 3 Topical Study

Boldness – Subject, theme, or topic for study

First write your initial thoughts and goals. Why do you want to study this topic and what do you hope to achieve by the end?

I want to be bold in my walk with God. I want to be able to speak and do what is right especially in the face of opposition. Sometimes I feel fear and intimidated when faced with having to go against the crowd and take a stand for righteousness. That needs to change so that I can maximize my effectiveness for the Kingdom of God.

Define the term:

Boldness (dictionary.com) – 1. Lack of hesitation or fear in the face of risk or danger: courage
2. Refusal to be held back by the opinion or judgement of others.

Search for the term in scripture which uses it in the context relevant to the study.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Use the Interlinear Bible to get the Hebrew/Greek number corresponding to the word in the scripture.

NT:3954 parrhesia (par-rhay-see'-ah); all out-spokenness, i.e. frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication, assurance:

Begin to think about and write about what the definition says to you.

Use the concordance to now see everywhere that number (3954) is used in the Bible. Search the Bible by the number and not the word because the number may be translated into more than one English Word.

Write out other scriptures based on the search.

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Eph 6:18-19 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

As you are reading scripture, the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal related themes such as fear:

2 Tim 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Find Bible characters illustrating or interacting with the selected topic.

Joshua 1 – God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous

1 Samuel 17 – David vs. Goliath

Homework Assignment 3 Topical Study

Choose one of the following topics:

1. Fear
2. Anger
3. Prayer
4. Giving/Money
5. Peace

For the chosen topic:

1. Define the topic and list any synonyms and related words.
2. Locate 1 scripture using the word in the context you would like to study in the KJV.
3. Use the Interlinear Bible to identify the Greek/Hebrew word origin (number and definition).
4. Use the concordance to find where that word in that context has been used throughout the New or Old testament. Steps 2 – 4 will need to be repeated to do a full study with the Old and New Testaments.
5. Document other related scriptures.
6. Find a Bible character illustrating or interacting with the chosen topic.

Devotional/Book Study

There are many books and devotions, both in print and online, written or spoken, which can be an aid or tool in your personal Bible Study time.

Most books and devotionals are based on a particular topic. They come in the format of scripture followed by an exhortation, instruction, or prayer by the author. Devotionals can be a great jump start to your study time. Be aware that devotionals and books are revelations given by God to that author. Even though they benefit any reader or hearer, you need to go deeper to see what the Holy Spirit would further say to you.

When studying with a daily devotional, read through the entire devotion. Write the scripture in your personal journal. Then dig further by finding additional reference scriptures, completing word studies, and writing out your own notes. Do not let reading a devotional be the only activity in your Bible Study time. Always go deeper.

If you are currently reading a book about a topic based on scripture, it would be better to do most of the reading outside of your scheduled Bible Study time. During your study time, you may then dig further into the topic on your own by doing word studies on the scriptures and documenting your own thoughts, prayers, and declarations.