

L I M I T L E S S
C H U R C H

J E S U S T O T H E W O R L D

BIBLE STUDY METHODS

Welcome

We are pleased to provide this brief booklet on various Bible Study Methods and want you to know that it is our sincere desire that these methods help you in your journey of exploration into how to study the Word of God. As you navigate through the various methods, we hope that one or more work for you in obtaining a deeper, more intimate understanding of God through His Word.

James 1:22-25 “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 observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

Reading and studying the Word of God must result in change. With this in mind, we have two goals:

- 1. To increase in the knowledge of God**
- 2. To apply the scripture to your life so that you are conformed to the image of Christ.**

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote: “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” You can only apply what you know.

The principles of Bible study include defining the meaning of keywords, studying parallel passages, explaining the meaning of the text, revealing the truth, and making applications. The Study Guide includes seven methods to equip and encourage you to practice all these study principles. This is just a sampling of the many methods of effective, life-transforming Bible study. We have the truthful promise that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the **man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**) Our hope is that you'll grow to see this promise fulfilled in your life and you go through this study.

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Bible Study Overview

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- To encourage everyone to acquire the skills and tools necessary to dig deeply into God’s Word in order to find the many treasures waiting to be discovered.
- To understand basic Bible study methods and rules of interpretation in order to accurately understand and obey God’s Word.
- To learn **what** Scripture **says**, **what** it **means**, and **how** it can be **applied**.
- To stress the necessity to absolutely and totally depend on the illumination and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 1. To learn to Treasure the Word
 2. Accept its Authority
 3. Be transformed by the Word
 4. To understand the Word
 5. To learn from the Word
 6. To apply the Word to our daily lives as well as in others
 7. To study the Word
 8. To Live the Word
 9. To Spread the Word
 10. To Teach the Word

THE POWER & PURPOSE OF GOD’S WORD

- Study the Word of God and to know the God of the Word
- The words of the Bible have life-changing power
 1. The power to convict and convert the unbeliever
 2. The power to combat sin
 3. The power to cause spiritual growth
 4. The power to clearly reveal our true motive
 5. The power to conform us to Christ’s image

- Reasons that people do not study the Bible
 1. It is not a priority
 2. It is not relevant
 3. They do not know where to start or how to study it
 4. They do not think they can study on their own
- Why we must study the Bible
 1. Desire (our attitude)
 2. Devour (our appetite)
 3. Develop (our aim)
- Purpose of the Word of God
 1. Sanctification
 2. It is God's Absolute Truth
 3. It is a guide for our lives
 4. It teaches, comforts, and encourages us
 5. It cautions us about the mistakes of others
 6. It is a tool we can use against temptation
 7. It communicates the knowledge of God
 8. It causes us to be equipped
 - It teaches us sound **Doctrine**
 - **Reproof** – It pricks our consciences regarding sin to keep us from errors. If we are not thinking correctly, then we are not living correctly.
 - **Correction** – It sets us on the right path again (correcting our unrighteous conduct). God desires to communicate to us for our own good.
 - **Instruction** – God tells us what kind of life pleases Him (“righteous conduct”).
 9. All Scripture is
 - God breathed – It is God's very Words and is divinely inspired by Him
 - Useful
 - For teaching correct **doctrine**
 - For **rebuking**
 - For **correcting** our behavior
 - For developing right behavior by **training** us in righteousness
 10. Goal: That the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work

- Three reasons we need to study God’s Word
 1. It is essential to **Growth**
 2. It is essential to **Maturity**
 3. It is essential to **Equipping** and **Training**

ATTITUDES FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

- **Desire:** to know and understand God’s Word
- **Decide:** to be disciplined and discover
- **Determine:** to obey what you’ve learned
- **Depend:** on God through the Holy Spirit what to teach others

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BIBLE STUDY

- The student must work hard at Bible study – but must always rely on the power of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for our Bible study
- The Holy Spirit’s role in our Bible study is
 1. **Teach** us the truths of God’s Word
 2. **Guide** us into truth
 3. **Enable** us to discern error
 4. **Illuminate** our minds with insight to understand and accept
 5. **Empower** us to obey

THE QUALITIES OF GOD'S WORD

You can do a quick, informative study of the Bible right now. Just match the following statements about God’s Word with the verses listed below.

- The Bible is infallible in its totality
- The Bible is inerrant in its parts
- The Bible is complete
- The Bible is authoritative and final
- The Bible is totally sufficient for your needs
- The Bible accomplishes what it promises
- The Bible provides assurance of salvation
- **Revelation 22:18-19**
- **John 8:47; 20:31**
- **Psalms 119:89**
- **Psalms 19:7**
- **Isaiah 55:11**
- **Proverbs 30:5-6**

If any of the above words are new to you, here are a few definitions you might find helpful:

- *Inerrancy*: The Bible is free from error in all it affirms.
- *Infallibility*: The Bible is unfailing in its purpose.
- *Sufficiency*: The Bible contains all needed information for Christian living.
- *Authority*: The Bible carries the right to prescribe beliefs and actions.

THE BENEFIT OF KNOWING GOD'S WORD

The Bible remains the only source of divine revelation and power that can sustain you as a Christian in your walk with God. Note these significant promises in the Scripture.

The Bible is the source of:

- Truth: "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth" (**John 17:17**).
- God's blessing: "But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it'" (**Luke 11:28**).
- Victory: "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (**Ephesians 6:17**).
- Growth: "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (**1 Peter 2:2**).
- Power: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (**Romans 1:16**).
- Guidance: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (**Psalms 119:105**).

Definitions of Important Terms & Rules of Interpretation

REVELATION - Means an unveiling of something which is unknown

- **Definition:** The *process* by which God has made known to men a knowledge of Himself, His works, His will, and the *content* of that knowledge
- Revelation assumes three facts: (1) that **God exists**; (2) that God **can be known**; and (3) that God **communicates** to man
- All revelation falls into one of two broad categories
 1. **General revelation (natural)** – God making Himself known in **creation (nature)** (**Psalms 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21**); in man (conscience) (**Romans 2:13-16; Ecclesiastes 3:11**); and in history (**Acts 17:24-28; Daniel 2:19-21**)
 - General revelation – Makes God known generally as **Sovereign Creator**
 - Is non-verbal
 - Demonstrates the existence of God
 - Is sufficient to hold men accountable for sin (without excuse)
 - Is not sufficient to lead men to salvation
 - Can be argued
 - General revelation reveals God through His **WORKS**
 2. **Special revelation** – God making Himself known verbally and personally to men (**Hebrews 1:1-13; Psalms 19:7-13**)
 - Special revelation – Makes God known personally as **Savior and Lord**
 - Is verbal (spoken or written)
 - Gives an understanding of God and how to rightly relate to Him
 - Makes men personally responsible for sin
 - Is sufficient to lead to salvation
 - Demands a response: accept or reject

- Special revelation reveals God through His **WORDS**
 - The *living* Word – *Jesus Christ*
 - The *written* Word – the *Bible*
- Special revelation is the **Word of God** in two forms
 - Jesus Christ – *personal* and *living* (*John 1:14, 18; John 14:8-9; Hebrews 1:1-3*)
 - The Bible – *propositional* and *written* (*2 Timothy 3:16*). God’s Word is *complete* in the Bible (*Jude 3*)

The revelation of God to man is sufficient – all we need to know about God and man is contained in the Bible, which is God’s progressive revelation of Himself preserved in written form.

INSPIRATION - Means “God-breathed” (sourced in God) and refers to the preservation of God’s revelation of Himself (content) in written form (inscripturated revelation). The emphasis of the orthodox doctrine is:

- Divine source – God’s Words
- Human agents – Guided along by the Holy Spirit without suppressing the personalities of the men who wrote, like being “driven along” by the wind (*Acts 27:15*)
- Holy Spirit overseeing the process (*2 Peter 1:20-21*)
- Verbal revelation – **Words** were inspired, not the writers (*2 Timothy 3:16*)

INERRANCY - Means that the Bible is without error as originally given by God. Inerrancy is limited to the **words** of the original manuscripts, not to copies or translations except as they accurately render the original. The Bible is inerrant because it is inspired – since the Bible is God’s Word, it must be without error. If you believe the Bible has errors, then one of two things is true:

- Either the Bible is not God’s Word
- Or God does not tell the truth

Note: “Infallible” used to mean inerrant, but has come to be used today by those who deny inerrancy to mean that the Bible speaks correctly on matters related to salvation and faith, but contains minor errors with respect to history, geography, science and the like. For example, liberal scholars say that **Genesis 1-11** is not literally true but only myth and legend. Such a view is a discredit to God’s Word and an accommodation to our natural, humanistic society.

AUTHORITY - Refers to the divinely derived **right and power** of the Bible as God’s Word to:

- Set forth a trustworthy, dependable, objective standard of **absolute truth** by which to measure everything else
- Determine right belief and correct behavior for all men and for the church
- Constitute the only reliable source of knowledge about God and the spiritual nature of man (**Matthew 7:28-29; Matthew 28:18**)

The authority of God’s Word is higher than man’s traditions, church teaching, philosophy and personal opinions (**Matthew 5:43-44; Matthew 15:1-9**)

Measure all traditions, cultural practices, experiential history, and teachings against the Word of God.

ILLUMINATION - Means to **enlighten** and refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to both **understand** Scripture and **accept** it as truth (**1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Ephesians 1:17-19**). Illumination emphasizes:

- The relationship of the believer to Christ, including spiritual maturity.
- The capacity to **understand, accept, and apply** God’s truth. See also **Luke 24:45** and **Mark 4:34**.
- Insight into the meaning of Scripture (**2 Timothy 2:7**).

INTERPRETATION - Involves the determination of the meaning of the biblical text when it was originally written. We must first decide the one correct *meaning* of a passage before we can apply its significance. What did the author mean by what he said? *Hermeneutics* is the technical name given to the rules of interpretation (**Acts 8:30-35**).

- The generally accepted rules of interpretation include:
 1. Interpret literally
 2. Interpret in context
 3. Interpret in view of history and culture
 4. Interpret in view of literary form
 5. Interpret in view of other parts of Scripture
 6. Interpret in view of theological consistency
- Special Rules of Interpretation include:
 1. **Parables** – Examine a parable to determine the central truth taught.
 2. **Proverbs** – Examine a proverb to determine what it teaches about how to live wisely.
 3. **Poetry** – Examine the figurative language and parallel structure of Hebrew poetry to determine its meaning.
 4. **Figures of speech** – Determine the figure of speech used and evaluate its impact on the idea or truth stated.
 5. **Symbols** – Examine all symbols carefully to determine the purpose and meaning of the representation.
 6. **Typology (“Types”)** – Examine types to make sure that there is direct correspondence between the Old Testament example and its New Testament counterpart.
 7. **Prophecy** – Examine prophetic passages using the general rules of interpretation, but carefully considering special features of biblical prophecy.
 8. **Use of the Old Testament and the New** – Examine the context of the Old Testament and New Testament passages and determine how, and for what purpose, the Old Testament is used in the New Testament.

SYSTEMATIC STUDY - Means an *orderly, logical procedure* or approach for studying the Bible to determine its meaning and apply its truths. Systematic study is concerned with both the proper *steps* to use and the *order* in which those steps are followed (*Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15*).

- Systematic study is only a *means* (process) we use to achieve a *goal*: to know, obey and teach God's Word. It assumes the following:
 1. Our study is always with a view to *apply* and *share* the truth discovered.
 2. Our study is always first *centered in the text itself* (What does Scripture say?)
 3. Our study is independent and inductive. *We seek to see the truth of Scripture, not impose on Scripture what we believe to be true*, or read into Scripture what is not there.
- What systematic study is not:
 1. It is not a single course, but a *life-long process* of study.
 2. It is not a substitute for hard work, but a tool to *aid in discovering* the truths of Scripture.

Bible Study Methods

“Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97

METHOD #1 - VERSE MAPPING (10-30 minutes)

The Verse Mapping method of Bible study involves unpacking the scriptures using word origins and definitions, historical context and maps, and prayer to help you find deeper meaning in God’s Word and apply it to your life. It involves creating diagrams or charts that function as a map of the verses (hence the name “verse mapping”).

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
 - English Standard Version (ESV)
 - The Living Bible (TLB)

Optional Supplies

- Bible app with different translations,
 - i.e. Bible Gateway, Blue Letter Bible (BLB)
- A Concordance
- A Bible Dictionary
 - Webster’s 1828 dictionary is available online
- Bible Commentaries

2. Choose a Bible Verse

Pray that God will speak to you during this time and bring his word alive in your mind and thoughts. Ask him to bring a verse to mind or how he wants to speak to you today. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and pray that your eyes and heart will be opened as you listen for His voice as you work to understand the scriptures.

- Use the following hints to help you choose the verse:
 - A favorite verse that has personal meaning or a verse you have memorized
 - A verse that addresses a topic of interest, i.e. truth, peace, strength, etc.
 - A verse in your daily devotional or personal Bible study
 - A verse that you struggle with understanding or believing
 - A verse that challenges you personally

3. Write and speak the verse

On a blank sheet of paper, write the entire verse by hand. You can use Bible Gateway to see the different wordings other Bible translations use. Alternatively, if you have several physical Bibles, you can look these up in book format. Sometimes a different translation will bring out the meaning of a word more clearly or will focus on another aspect of the original Greek or Hebrew text. Using different versions can help enrich our understanding of the verse and add insight or bring clarification to its meaning.

After writing the verse, read it aloud to yourself several times, emphasizing different words each time you read it. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” When you verbalize the words, you are speaking words that reinforce your faith.

Ask the Lord to make the verse take root in your heart and to open your ears to hear the verse as though He’s written it directly to you (which He has).

4. Examine the verse in its context

It is a good idea to read the whole passage and not simply the verse in isolation. What does the whole chapter say? Or what about the verses which come immediately before or after the verse in question? How does the verse fit in to the meaning of the whole chapter?

Read and record the verse immediately preceding and following the verse to help you understand its contextual meaning. Taken in context, the verse may have a different meaning than what you

initially thought. Take notes on what you discover in the surrounding verses.

Other things you can explore is the historical context. Try to identify who is the writer's original audience and why he is writing this book or letter.

5. Look for textual difficulties or points of interest

Here you can check for anything which stands out about the text or which may be unclear. These could be words which you might want to research the meaning of or which may be difficult to understand. There might be some which might initially seem contradictory to another passage of scripture. You can circle or underline any problematic words.

You can also cross reference related verses on the same subject using a concordance, Bible Gateway, Bible Hub or the Blue Letter Bible. Is the passage you're researched quoted or alluded to anywhere else in scripture?

Does it shed light on another passage of scripture or help you understand something else within the context of this verse?

On another note, you may want to see if there are any words, concepts or themes which the writer repeats within the text. If you see recurring words, this suggests that it might be important and that you should take note.

6. Summarize the main point of the verse

How could you summarize the main idea in a few words? Can you come up with one or two sentences that explain the overall theme of the verse?

Think of the blurbs on the back of book covers or film or TV listings that have to tell you in a short summary what a book, film or TV show is about without being excessively long. You don't want all the information in too much detail but the main thrust of the idea.

7. Make notes of what God is communicating to you personally in this verse

One of the most important aspects of studying God's word is the work God wants to do to transform you into the image of Christ through what you've learned. Knowing the questions to ask so that you may apply God's word to your own life helps you to apply what you've learned.

Humbly ask the Lord what He wants to do in your heart and life through what you've studied. You might want to ask the following questions about the verse:

- Is there a principle that I can apply to my life?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to confess and repent of?
- Is there a truth to believe or promise to claim?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there an action to take?
- Is there a person to forgive?

METHOD #2 - WORD STUDY (10-30 minutes to hours, days, weeks)

The Word Study takes a concentrated look into the origin, original meaning, uses, and intent of a specific word in the Bible based on the original language in which the word was used. Understanding the word in its original language may change our understanding of the word as it is used in the English language.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
 - English Standard Version (ESV)
 - The Living Bible (TLB)

Optional Supplies

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- A Bible Dictionary
 - Webster's 1828 dictionary is available online
- Bible Commentaries

2. Choose a word

Choose a word that you'd like to have a better understanding of then look up the definition in an English dictionary. Record the meaning of the word, including its use in language, i.e. verb, noun, synonyms, antonyms.

3. Research the word in its original language

Start with a verse that contains the word you want to study. The most helpful tool for this study is the Blue Letter Bible application (www.blueletterbible.org).

4. Write down the original language definition of your word

It is recommended that you read the BLB tutorial on how to use the tool which you can find at:

https://www.blueletterbible.org/help/using_blb.cfm.

You can also watch the short YouTube video tutorial located at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkM3uthqpsI>.

5. Write your observations about the word

Some of the questions you may want to find answers for include:

- What part of the speech is it? i.e. verb, adverb, noun
- How often is the word used in scripture?
- What is the context in which the word is used?

6. Write all the references that contain your word

One of the headers under the “Word/Phrase/Strong’s Search” header in the BLB application is “Concordance Results.” This exhaustive concordance records all the uses of the word in scripture, including the scripture reference and text. Note that if you searched the word in its original language, it will only show that word where it occurs in that language. For example, if you searched the word as it was used in the Greek language in the New Testament, the Concordance will show only the results for the Greek usage.

7. Read and take notes on all the references that contain your word

Remember the importance of reading the preceding and following verses to understand the verses in context. Write a brief summary of the verse and any concepts, observations, or insights you make concerning the use of the word in a particular passage.

8. Record a summary of your findings and make an application

Summarize what you discovered in the study of the word you choose and write ways in which your new understanding of the word, according to God’s word, has application to your life.

METHOD #3 - TOPICAL STUDY (30 minutes to hours, days, and weeks)

The Topical Bible Study Method is a look into God’s word on a specific topic to learn what the scriptures tell us about God’s view on the subject. It is through God’s perspective that we can receive revelation, instruction, understanding, and application, particularly in areas where we are being challenged or struggling.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
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2. Choose a topic

The topic may concern an area of struggle in your life or a desire to know more about God’s point of view on a subject of interest. Some examples might include salvation, redemption, prayer, faith, hope, love, joy, comfort, forgiveness, mercy, grace, serving, marriage, parenting, grief, temptation, or trials. The list is exhaustive! Prayerfully consider then choose the topic you’ll study.

3. Find and note related words

Look at keywords related to the topic you’ve selected. For example, if you’re studying forgiveness, related words might include anger, bitterness, hurt, and disappointment.

- 4. Find and record scripture references containing your keywords**
Using one of your references, such as your in-Bible concordance, Exhaustive Concordance, or online study tool, list all the scriptures containing your topic. Note, however, that not all the scripture you find will contain the specific keyword but they may address the topic.

- 5. Look up the scripture reference**
Carefully read the reference scriptures, remembering to read them in context with the entire chapter and, especially, the verses immediately preceding and following the verse. Meditate on what you read, asking God to reveal to you new insights into the meaning of the passage. This can be a lengthy process, but it is worth all the effort you put in.

- 6. Write a summary of your study on the topic**
After you've completed your reading and notetaking on the reference scriptures, write a summary of the topic from a biblical perspective. What does God's word say about the matter? Outline the key points then summarize your findings. Consider how your understanding of the topic changed over the course of your study.

- 7. Consider the application**
Ask if there is an action for you to take with your new understanding of the topic. It is helpful to write down key verses and commit them to memory.

METHOD #4 - OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, CORRELATION, APPLICATION (INDUCTIVE) STUDY (10 minutes to hours, days, and weeks)

The OICA method is one of the most complete yet simple ways to study the Bible and receive the richest, most thorough understanding of the meaning of scripture and how it applies to you on a personal basis. Through observing the text (what do I see?), interpreting the text (What does it mean?), and correlating the text (How does it fit into what other scriptures reveal?), you'll learn how to practically apply God's truth to your life.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

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2. Choose a Bible passage to study

Select a book, chapter, or verse that you desire to study.

3. Observation (What do I see?)

Look carefully at what the author is saying and how he is saying it. Some of the key observations to make and record may include:

- Terms and words. It is important to note not only the words use but also the terms and contexts surrounding those words. Just like in the English language, the meaning of

words change depending on how they are used, and words that appear identical in spelling can have completely different meanings. For example, the word desert could mean *an arid, dry land with sparse vegetation* or it could mean *to abandon someone in a way considered disloyal or treacherous*. But, you'll know the meaning when you read it in its entirety.

- Structure and emphasis. Look for the complete thought and content of the author's message by looking for units and divisions in the text. These include observing where the author began and ended paragraphs and even sentences. Take time to discover how much the author devotes to a specific topic or particular story to understand why the author puts so much emphasis on this topic when compared to what is written in context with the surrounding text.
- Repetition. A good rule of thumb when reading the Bible is that where there is repetition, the author intends to make a point and drive it home. For example, the word "abide" is used 7 times in the first 7 verses of John 15. There is a reason that Jesus used that kind of repetition, and it is worthy of noting His instruction concerning what it means to abide in Him.
- Relational concepts. Look for relationships between portions of the text, such as:

If and Then: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." (John 15:7)

Cause-and-effect: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." (John 15:3)

Comparisons and contrasts: "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35)

Questions and answers: "Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?' Jesus

said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:5-6)

Literary form: The genre the author wrote in is important because it lends itself to proper understanding and interpretation of the passage, chapter, and book as a whole.

Atmosphere: Explore details about the passage such as: Who were the people the author was writing to? What was happening during the time the passage was written? Where did the story take place? Looks for other information about the time in history, time of day, place, mood, or circumstance surrounding the passage so that you might gain a better understanding of the author’s reason and burden to write what he did.

Going into depth on this first step of observation will help you with the second step of interpretation, which is critical to proper understanding of God’s word.

4. Interpretation

Accurate interpretation of God’s word is a vital component of Bible study and involves discovering the meaning of a passage. Inaccurate or improper interpretation leads to inaccurate and improper responses and action. Imagine if you didn’t understand the context of Matthew 5:30, which reads, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” Misinterpreting this passage would result in a body of Christ that is entirely left handed! (Jesus was addressing the *heart* condition that leads to sin.)

The generally accepted rules of interpretation include:

- Interpret literally
- Interpret in context of the entire verse, the paragraph, the preceding and following verses, the chapter, the book, and the entirety of scripture
- Interpret in view of the history and culture that was existing when the author wrote the passage (you might

want to refer to an historical or cultural study bible for help with this)

- Interpret in view of literary form
- Interpret in view of theological consistency to ensure the interpretation is in line with the rest of scripture as a whole

5. Correlation

Scripture must be interpreted in the context of the Bible as a whole. In that regard, it is important to find how the passage relates to other areas of scripture. Ask how the passage enhances your knowledge and understanding of the character of God, salvation, redemption, and eternity and other concepts in light of the rest of scripture.

6. Application

The reason we study the Bible is so that our lives will be submitted into obedience to God and that we will be changed to be more like Jesus Christ. Knowledge and understanding does very little without application, and the truth of God's word is meant to have a profound effect on our life.

After your study of the scripture, ask yourself the following questions:

- What did I learn about God's character from this passage?
- How does the truth revealed to me in this passage affect my view of my relationship with God?
- What specific changes must I make to align myself with the truths of this passage, in obedience to Christ?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with others?

METHOD #5 – ICE “INSTRUCT, CORRECT, ENCOURAGE” (10 – 15 minutes)

The ICE method is a quick and easy way to keep your mind dwelling on God’s Word throughout the day. It involves reading and meditating on one verse or short passage and extracting its core message. Identifying practical ways that the core message can be applied to your life and foster spiritual growth and maturity.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
 - English Standard Version (ESV)
 - The Living Bible (TLB)

Optional Supplies

- Bible app with different translations,
 - i.e. Bible Gateway, Blue Letter Bible (BLB)
- A Concordance
- A Bible Dictionary
 - Webster’s 1828 dictionary is available online
- Bible Commentaries

2. Choose a Bible passage or verse to study

Select a book, chapter, or verse that you desire to study. Read the verse at least 3 times.

3. Observation (What do I see?)

Look closely to discover whether the passage contains

- An instruction to apply to your life in order to be Christ-like
- A correction against fleshly, sinful behavior
- An encouragement for walking according to the Spirit of Christ, which may include a promise – such as a blessing like joy, peace, comfort, etc.

- Write out the verse and circle or write the instruction, correction, and/or encouragement.
- Prayerfully meditate on the passage and ask God to help you apply it.
- Write a list of ways that the instruction, correction, and/or encouragement can be applied to the way you conduct yourself today.
- Keep the written instruction, correction, and/or encouragement and the passage reference with you and refer to it often throughout the day, continuing in prayer over its application in your life.

METHOD #6 - CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Chapter Summary method helps identify the keynotes of the chapter in order to bring out its spiritual meaning. This method is an effective tool for memorizing scripture! For example, most Christians know 1 Corinthians 13 as “The Love Chapter” and from there can typically give a condensed outline of the contents. The Chapter Summary method helps you identify the prominent meaning of the chapter.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
 - English Standard Version (ESV)
 - The Living Bible (TLB)

Optional Supplies

- Bible app with different translations,
 - i.e. Bible Gateway, Blue Letter Bible (BLB)
- A Concordance
- A Bible Dictionary
 - Webster’s 1828 dictionary is available online
- Bible Commentaries

2. Choose a Bible chapter to study

Select a book, chapter, or verse that you desire to study. Read the chapter at least 3 times.

3. Observation (What do I see?)

What is the theme of the chapter? Hint: use your Bible’s heading or create your own.

- Contents – summarize the contents by breaking the chapter down into groups of verses and writing a couple of words that generally explains the topic of each group, i.e. **1 John 1:1-4** “The Incarnation of the Word of Life.” (Hint: Use your Bible’s headings!)

- Chief People – list the chief people that the chapter (book) concerns, i.e. 1 John would include the author (John), to whom the letter was written, about whom the letter was written, other groups or individuals mentioned in the letter.
- Choice verse – write out the verse that has deep or critical meaning to you at the time you read it. (Hint: The verse you select may be critical now, but a different verse in the same chapter may have deeper meaning at another season of your life. This is how the Word of God is living!)
- Crucial Words – list the words, including the scripture reference, that a) the author emphasizes; b) that are repeated in the passage; c) that drive home the point the author is making in the passage; and, d) that stand out to you as particularly meaningful or important.
- Challenges (Difficulties I need to study further) – write out the verse or portion of the passage that is most difficult to understand. Follow up by studying the passage further using any of the other methods you've learned in order to gain understanding of the meaning of the verse or passage (verse mapping or a word study is great!).
- Cross-References – list some cross-reference scriptures that lend themselves to greater understanding of the chapter being studied. The Bible never contradicts itself!

4. Consider the application

Ask if there is an action for you to take with your new understanding of the topic. It is helpful to write down the general theme of the chapter and commit it to memory.

METHOD #7 - THE FOUR QUESTIONS METHOD

The Four Questions helps you study God’s word on your own in a way that doesn’t devolve into only looking for a personal application. When we study God’s Word, we want to know God, not just retain ideas or improve morally. These questions help us do just that. It may be difficult to answer all four questions for every passage. That’s OK. What is important is that you don’t “stretch” the text to fit the question – adding to God’s Word what isn’t there. But throughout the Bible, God reveals Himself. These questions will help you find out more about Him.

HOW TO

1. Gather your study supplies

Standard Supplies

- Notebook, Journal, or Sheet of Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Highlighters
- Several Bibles in different translations
 - New International Version (NIV)
 - New King James Version (NKJV)
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Optional Supplies

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- A Concordance
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 - Webster’s 1828 dictionary is available online
- Bible Commentaries

2. Who is God?

When we study God’s word, we always want to start with God himself. Write in your journal what you see in the passage about God and His character.

3. What has He done?

God’s character is often expressed in His actions. What do we see God intending and doing in the passage? Write it down in your journal.

4. Who are we?

The Bible reveals the people were made in God's image, and so our identity is rooted in and derived from who God is. We also learn that people have rebelled against God, and so we are identified that way too. Write in your journal what we learn about people as rebels against God, but even more importantly, write about what we learn about what people are made to be as image bearers of God.

5. What are we to do?

How does this passage call us to trust God to empower us to change in response to who He has created us to be and to how He is changing us into the image of Jesus? Write it down in your journal.

