

Bible Study Basics to Help
Understand The Bible



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

Redland Church, IPHC
rphc.net

THE WORD:

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF WHAT GOD SAYS

The Bible is the greatest book that has ever been written. In it, God Himself speaks to all people. It is a book of divine instruction. It offers comfort in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, advice for our problems, rebuke for our sins, and daily inspiration for our every need.

The Bible is not an end in itself, but it is a means to the end of knowing God and doing His will. God has given us the Bible so that we might know Him and do His will here on earth.

Therefore devotional Bible study is one of the most important kinds of Bible study. Devotional Bible study means reading and studying the Word of God so that we may hear God's voice personally and that we may know how to do His will and live a better Christian life.

SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY:

1. Always begin your Bible reading in prayer. (Ps. 119:18) Ask God to reveal His will to you through His word. Ask Him to teach you through His Word today.
2. Choose a translation of the Bible that is in modern language that is easy to understand, such as the New International Version (NIV) or the New American Standard Bible (NASB).
3. Take brief notes on what you read. Keep a small notebook for your Bible study. (see #5 below)

4. Read slowly through one chapter, or perhaps two or three chapters, or maybe just one paragraph at a time. After reading, ask yourself what the passage is about. Then reread it.

5. It is often very helpful in finding out the true meaning of a chapter or passage to ask yourself the following questions, and then write the answers in your notebook:

- (a) What is the main subject of this passage?
- (b) Who are the persons revealed in this passage: Who is speaking? About whom is he/she speaking? Who is acting? etc.
- (c) What is the key verse of this passage?
- (d) What does this passage teach me about Jesus Christ?
- (e) Is there any sin for me to confess and forsake in this passage?
- (f) Is there any command for me to obey in this passage?
- (g) Is there any promise for me to claim?
- (h) Is there any instruction for me to follow?
- (i) Is there any prayer that I should pray?

Not all of these questions will be answered in every passage, but they will get you started in understanding each reading.

6. Keep a spiritual diary. Either in your Bible study notebook mentioned above (#2), or in a separate notebook entitled, "My Spiritual Diary," write down daily what God says to you through the Bible. Write down the sins that you confess or the commands you should obey (etc.) that are mentioned above.

7. Memorize passages of the Word of God. These passages will become weapons against Satan and his attempts to destroy your life. Note Jesus' resistance of temptation through the power of the Word in Matthew 4:1-11.

8. Meditate on the Word. This does not mean sitting in the middle of a room burning incense while humming to yourself! To meditate means "to reflect, to ponder, to consider, to dwell in thought." Through meditation, the Word of God will become meaningful and real to you, and the Holy Spirit will use this time to apply the Word of God to your own life and your own problems.

9. Obey the Word of God. The Bible has been given to us so that we may live a holy life, well-pleasing to God. (James 1:19-25)

10. Get into the habit of getting into the Word daily, and the Word will get into you!!

INTENSIVE BIBLE STUDY METHODS

The important thing to remember is: no matter what method of Bible study you are using, be sure to faithfully follow some systematic method of Bible study!!

1. Bible Study by Chapters.

a. Read through the chapter carefully, seeking to find its main subject or subjects.

b. As you read each chapter, give it a title that suggests its main content. For example, the Gospel of John may have titles like this:

- Chapter 1 – “Jesus Christ, the Word of God”
- Chapter 2 – “The Wedding at Cana”
- Chapter 3 – “The New Birth”

c. Reread the chapter again and make a simple outline of it which will include its main thoughts. For example, in John 1, you might make an outline like this:

“Jesus Christ, the Word of God”

- (1) Jesus was the eternal Word of God, vv.1-9.
- (2) Jesus came into the world, vv. 10-18.
- (3) John witnesses that Christ is to come, vv.19-28.
- (4) John says that Jesus is the Lamb of God, vv.29-37.
- (5) Jesus calls His first disciples, vv.38-51.

d. Concerning each chapter, ask and answer the questions in item 5 of “Practical Guidelines For Devotional Bible Study.” Compare Scripture with Scripture using the concordance to find the true

meaning. Very often to understand an important Bible chapter, one must study it together with the preceding or following chapters.

2. Bible Study by Paragraphs.

(The NIV Version is helpful for this method because it divides the text into paragraphs.)

a. Read the paragraph carefully for its main thought or subject.

b. To find the relation of the important words and sentences in this paragraph, it is often helpful to rewrite the text in your own handwriting.

c. From the text which you've rewritten you can see the relationship of the different parts of the paragraph to each other. Now an outline can be made of the paragraph like this example from Matthew 6:5-15:

“Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray” - Matt. 6:5-15

(1) How not to pray: Matt. 6:5, 7, 8.

(a) Hypocritically in public, v.5.

(b) With meaningless repetition, vv.7-8.

(2) How to pray: Matt. 6:6, 9-13

(a) In private to your heavenly Father, v.6.

(b) Following the pattern of Jesus' model prayer, vv.9-13.

d. It is helpful to look up important words in a concordance that occur in this paragraph. This will help to compare passages on the same subject.

3. Bible Study by Verses.

Many verses in both the Old and New Testaments are rich with great Bible truths. These verses demand more detailed study. This can be done in several ways.

a. Study it by the verbs in the verse. For example, in John 3:16, a comparative list could look like this:

God loved... Man believes

God gave... Man shall not perish/Man has eternal life.

Or study the nouns in the verse, such as: “God... world... only begotten Son... whoever... eternal life.”

b. Study a verse through the personalities revealed in it. Again, John 3:16 shows some significant points brought to light:

“God... only begotten Son... whoever... Him.”

c. Study a verse by looking for the great ideas revealed in it. John 3:16 could be an example again. It could be titled the greatest verse in the Bible. The following ideas are found in it:

“God” – the greatest person

“So loved” – the greatest devotion

“The world” – the greatest number

“He gave” – the greatest act

“His only begotten Son” – the greatest gift

“That whoever believes” – the greatest condition

“Should not perish” – the greatest mercy

“Have eternal life” – the greatest result

d. Sometimes a combination of these various ideas applied to a verse will bring the richest results. For example, take Romans 5:1:

“Therefore” – This verse depends on 4:25. Our justification is based on Jesus' resurrection.

“Justified” – Made righteous.

“By faith” – Method of our justification (see also verse 9 and 3:24)

“Have” – Not future, but present tense--we have this now.

“Peace with God” – We were enemies but now we have peace between us and God because of what Jesus Christ has done.

“Through our Lord Jesus Christ” – The way of peace of God is only through Jesus Christ.

4. Bible Study by Books.

a. There are several methods of Bible book study.

(1) One is called the inductive method. This is a method of studying in detail the contents of a Bible book and then drawing from these details general conclusions concerning the purpose of the book.

(2) Another method of book study is the synthetic method. In this method, one reads the Bible book over several times to obtain the main theme and purpose, without attention to the details.

(3) Historical study – The study of a book as it tells of the history of a nation or person, and deriving themes and principles from this.

- b. Here are some methods for Bible study by books:
- (1) Read the book through to get the mood, the sweep, and the general emphasis of the book.
 - (2) Reread the book many times, each time asking yourself one main question and jotting down the answers you find as you read. Here are the most important questions to ask:

First reading: What is the central theme or emphasis of this book? What is the key verse?

Second reading: Remembering the theme, see how it is emphasized and developed in the book. Look for any special problems or applications to this theme.

Third reading: What does this book tell me about the author and his circumstances when he wrote the book?

Fourth reading: What does the book tell me about the people to whom the book was written and their circumstances, needs, or problems?

Fifth reading: What are the main divisions of the book? Is there any outline apparent in the logical organization and development of the book? Divide the text into paragraphs and give a title to each paragraph. Draw a line down the right side of the paper, and on the right side of it write down questions, words, etc. that need further study.

Sixth reading and beyond Look for other facts and information that your earlier readings suggested. By now certain words will stand out in the book. See how often

they recur. As you read and re-read a book, the structure and outline will become more evident to you.

5. Bible Study by Words.

There are two profitable and helpful ways of studying great words or subjects in the Word of God.

a. Word study by Bible books. Certain words have special significance in certain Bible books. Take for example the word “believe” found in the book of John.

b. General word study. By the study of great Bible words, anyone can soon become familiar with the great doctrines of the Bible and understand the great principles which the Bible reveals. Using the concordance can help you trace Bible themes throughout each book in the Bible. Just look up the word in the concordance, (which is like an index of Bible words and where they are found) and you can see where a certain word is used in the Bible.

6. Bible Study by Topics.

Closely related to the method of study by words, is the study according to great topics or subjects. Here are a few examples:

- Bible prayers -- Bible promises
- Bible sermons -- Bible songs
- Bible poems -- Bible geography
- Bible commands found in the New Testament

The list of Bible topics is unlimited. Think of your own, and start studying.

To study a certain topic, such as “prayer,” look up the word in the concordance. Next, look up related words as well, such as: “ask,” “intercession,” “supplication,” etc.

7. Bible Study through Biography.

The Bible is a record of God's revealing Himself to men and women and through men and women. Here are a few examples of biography:

- The life of Noah: Gen. 5:32-10:32
- The life of Abraham: Gen. 12-25
- The life of Deborah: Judges 4, 5

Here are three ways to use biographical studies in your study of God's Word.

- (1) Read the Bible book or passages in which this person's life is prominent.
- (2) Trace the character with your concordance.
- (3) Be certain to note any indirect references to the person and his/her life in other portions of Scripture.

8. Conclusion.

There are many methods of studying the Bible. Use all the Bible study methods suggested above. From time to time change your method so that you'll not become too used to any one method and get bored.

The great thrill of Bible study is discovering these truths of God's Word for yourself and embarking on the adventure of obeying them and experiencing the blessing of God upon your life. May the Holy Spirit move through your life as you begin to explore His Word for yourself.