



How To Study The Bible

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Course Description:

How to Study the Bible is designed to give a student the information and tools required to begin effectively studying the Word of God. The course will cover a wide assortment of topics ranging from basic Biblical information, e.g. the number of books in the Bible, to the use of advanced study aides such as Concordances and Bible Commentaries. This course is a must for anyone who is serious about learning how to study the Scriptures.

Course Curriculum:

WEEK ONE

Why Study the Bible

WEEK TWO

Methods of Reading and Studying the Bible

WEEK THREE

Rules of Interpretation

WEEK FOUR

Biblical Study Tools

Instructors:

Senior Pastor Curt Buckmire
Pastor Nedra Buckmire

Course Term:

Four weeks from 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Course Sign In Sheet:



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Student Name	8/4/02	8/11/02	8/18/02	8/25/02



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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Why Study The Bible

As a Christian, you must understand that the Bible, which is commonly called the Word Of God, is a gift from God. It was written by man under the direct inspiration from God. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) says;

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

We should study the Bible:

- a) Because it is profitable, from the Greek, *helpful* or *serviceable*, that is, *advantageous*, for us to do so.
- b) It teaches us about the God we serve and how to live a “righteous” life before Him.
- c) It guides and directs us through the important decisions of our lives.
- d) It helps us to get back on the right path after we mess up.
- e) It prepares us for the work of the ministry (to serve); specifically that which God has called us to do.

As you can see there are many reasons why we should study the Bible, however; the most important reason why we should study the Bible is because God commands us to:

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

2 Tim. 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The word Study from the Greek means, to *use speed*, that is, to *make effort*, *be prompt* or *earnest*:—do (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavour, labour.

It is God’s desire that we get to know Him by spending time diligently studying the gift he left for us, the Bible, His word, that we may live a perfect and complete (accomplish, thoroughly furnish) life on this earth.



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Understanding The Bible

As previously stated, the Bible was written by men under the inspiration of God. It is God's written revelation of His will to men. Its central theme is salvation through Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ can be seen in every book of the Bible. Here are some interesting facts about the Bible:

- The Bible contains 66 books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.
- The Bible was written by 40 authors, covering a period of approximately 1600 years.
- The word *Bible* comes from the Greek word *biblos* which simply means Book.
- The word *testament* means "covenant," or agreement. The Old Testament is the covenant God made with man about his salvation before Christ came. The New Testament is the agreement God made with man about his salvation after Christ came.
- In the Old Testament we find the covenant of the law. In the New Testament we find the covenant of grace through Jesus Christ.
- The Old Testament is associated with Moses – The New Testament with Christ.
- The Old Testament begins with God, Genesis 1:1 (NKJV):
¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The New Testament begins with Christ. Matthew 1: (NKJV):

¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

- From Adam to Abraham we have the history of the human race.
- From Abraham to Christ we have the history of the chosen race.
- From Christ to present we have the history of the church.
- The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew.
- The New Testament was written mostly in Greek.
- Number of verses – 31, 102
- Number of words – 775, 693
- Longest chapter – Psalms 119
- Shortest chapter – Psalms 117
- Longest verse – Esther 8:9
- Shortest verse – John 11:35
- Longest Book of the Old Testament – Psalms
- Longest Book in the New Testament - Luke



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THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE LAW	HISTORY 17	PENTATEUCH 5	HISTORICAL PENTATEUCH 5	GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY
		HISTORICAL BOOKS 12	PRE-EXILE HISTORY 9	JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH I SAMUEL II SAMUEL I KINGS II KINGS I CHRONICLES II CHRONICLES
				POST-EXILE HISTORY 3
THE PSALMS	POETRY 5	POETICAL BOOKS 5	POETRY (THE HEART) 5	JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON
THE PROPHETS	PROPHECY 17	MAJOR PROPHETS 5	PROPHETICAL PENTATEUCH 5	ISAIAH JEREMIAH LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL DANIEL
		MINOR PROPHETS 12	PRE-EXILE PROPHECY 9	HOSEA JOEL AMOS OBADIAH JONAH MICAH NAHUM HABAKKUK ZEPHANIAH
				POST-EXILE PROPHECY 3



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THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY 5	HISTORIC FOUNDATIONS 5	MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN ACTS
DOCTRINAL EPISTLES 22	CHRISTIAN CHURCH EPISTLES 9	ROMANS I CORINTHIANS II CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS I THESSALONIANS II THESSALONIANS
	PASTORIAL & PERSONAL EPISTLES 9	I TIMOTHY II TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON
	HEBREWS CHRISTIAN EPISTLES 5	HEBREWS JAMES I PETER II PETER I JOHN II JOHN III JOHN JUDE REVELATION

This chart, and the one on the preceding page are taken from the books "Old Testament Survey" and "New Testament Survey" Copyright 1976 by Kevin J. Conner and Kenneth P. Malmin.



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Let's Talk About Bibles

At the heart of any effective Bible study is a good study Bible. Study Bibles are Bibles which have study notes either in the margin (or elsewhere), or inserted into the text. Many study Bibles are available in several popular versions. The following is a list of good study Bibles that are readily available:

- *The Open Bible*
Available in *King James*, *New King James*, and *New American Standard Versions*, *The Open Bible* has alternate renderings and cross references at the end of selected verses. It also offers good footnotes that correspond to and outline at the beginning of the Bible, which is suitable for new believers and basic foundations.
- *Thompson Chain Reference*
Available in *King James* and *New International Versions*, the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible* has extensive chain references found in the margin, which are keyed to a listing in the back. The Bible has more helps than any other Bible.
- *Ryrie Study Bible*
This Bible is available in *King James*, *New King James*, *New American Standard Versions*, and *New International Versions*. It contains many good footnotes, but leans heavily toward the Baptist doctrine.
- *NIV Study Bible*
Available in the *New International Version* only, the *New International Version Study Bible* has extensive notes. It is a good study Bible.
- *Scofield Reference Bible*
Scofield's Bible is available in *King James Version* only. It has a good chain reference, as well as extensive footnotes.
- *The New Scofield Reference Bible*
The New Scofield Reference Bible is available in *King James*, *New King James*, *New American Standard Versions*, and *New International Versions* of the Bible. It has the best system for chain reference, better than the earlier Scofield and even better than the Thompson's chain reference, although it does not have as many listings. It has extensive footnotes (notes vary from earlier edition), and alternate renderings to update the *King James (King James Version only)*.



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- ***Dake's Annotated Reference Bible***

Available in *King James Version* only, this Bible has very extensive notes with some very good notes on healing.

As you choose your study Bible, you want to pay close attention to the type of Bible translation. Bible translations can be quite helpful to your Bible study in that they can simplify difficult passages in the Bible and make them easier to understand.

When choosing a Bible translation, keep in mind that there are several types of translations, each with a different purpose. The following is a list of the different type of Bible translations available: *

1) Ultra Literal Translations

These are translations that attempt to provide an English word for every Greek or Hebrew word in the original text, in other words, a word for word translation of the original text. These are usually very difficult to read but can be very helpful for finding exact word meanings. An example of this translation is the *exeGesus Bible*.

2) Literal Translations

These translations provide, in a readable format, the English word or phrase equivalent for each word or phrase used in the original text. Examples of these translations are:

- *King James Version (KJV)*
- *New King James Version (NKJV)*
- *American Standard Version (ASB)*
- *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*

3) Modern Literal Translations

These translations substitute modern words for archaic words, bringing the Bible into a modern language while yet still retaining the literal form. Examples of these translations are:

- *New American Standard Version (NASB)*
- *New International Version (NIV)*

* *How to Study the Word – Taking the Bible From the Pages to Heart*, Copyright 1994 by Terry Lawson, Published by Harrison House Publishers



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4) Modern English Translations

These translations present a rendering of the text in present-day English and contemporary style. Examples of these translations are:

- *New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)*
- *New English Bible (NEB)*

5) Paraphrases

Paraphrases are expanded translations, attempting to provide the meaning of the original, not word for word but rather thought for thought, bringing out the rich shades of meaning in the original words. Examples of these translations are:

- *The Living Bible (TLB)*
- *The Message Bible (TMB) ***

Homework assignment:

Locate the names of the Jesus twelve original disciples.

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Methods of Bible Study

As you prepare to study your Bible, realize that there is no “right” way to do it. You should prepare your heart and determine what your overall objective is going to be for the study session. Once this is completed, you can use one of the following methods to help you achieve your objectives:

THE DEVOTIONAL METHOD

This method alone can be used to study the Bible. The term “method” may be misleading here since it isn’t a mechanical method like the others. Rather it is one by which you actually feed your spirit man. This method feeds your spirit so you need to earnestly seek the mind of God for some direction.

- 1) Begin with prayer. This will help you to center your thoughts upon things of the Lord.
- 2) Read slowly and take brief notes.
- 3) Look for the true meaning of the passage your are reading:
 - a. What is the main subject?
 - b. Who are the persons revealed in the passage? Who is speaking? About whom are they speaking? Who is acting?
 - c. What is the key verse?
 - d. What does this passage teach about Jesus?
 - e. Does this passage portray any sin for me to confess or forsake?
 - f. Does this passage contain any commands for me to obey?
 - g. Is their any promise for me to claim?
 - h. Is there any instruction for me to follow?
- 4) Keep a spiritual diary.
- 5) Memorize passages of the Word of God.
- 6) Obey the Word of God.



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THE SYNTHETIC METHOD

The synthetic method of Bible study allows you to get the overall picture of a book or subject. The word “synthetic” here is taken from the Greek. It takes the preposition *syn*, which means “together,” and the verbal root *the*, which means, “to put,” so that we come up with the meaning *a putting, or placing together*. This method is designed to give us a bird’s eye view of the Bible.

To use the synthetic method approach to studying, start by reading a chapter or verse through several times. Look for the main theme or the book or passage first. For example:

- *The book of Colossians speaks of Christ and the Church*
- *The book of Ephesians speaks of the believer and the Church*
- *The book of Galatians speaks of the believers’ freedom found in Christ*

The synthetic method pays no attention to details, but looks at the book or passage as a whole. When using the synthetic method to study the Bible, 1) look for distinct themes that run through the book or passage. 2) Watch how these themes develop. 3) Is there any one verse or passage that states this theme clearly than any other?

THE BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD

The biographical method of Bible study is simply studying the history of a person who is mentioned in the Bible. It should include all events recorded in the person’s life. It should also include any text that may give us some clue as to who the person was. Be careful however not to confuse individuals with the same name. A good example of this can be seen using the name of Noah. There are two different people in the Bible with this name. The first one we are all aware of was the man called by God to repopulate the earth after the flood. The second one; however, is quite a different person and not even a man but in this case it’s a woman so be careful when using this method to study the Bible.

THE ANALYTICAL METHOD

The analytical method of Bible study consists of pulling apart sections of Scripture, words or phrases, then analyzing them in detail. This method involves the use of study tools such as *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Bible dictionaries and other study aids.

This method generally involves the study of words and sometimes phrases, commonly called doing a word study, in whole or in part. It may also involve noting the occurrences of words, and often deals with the word meanings.



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THE TOPICAL METHOD

The topical method of Bible study consists of selecting a subject or “topic” from the Bible. The topic may consist of a theme or concept; it may be a word or a phrase. For example, you may select a topic of healing as a theme and do a word search on *heal* or *healing*. A topical Bible, like the *Nave’s Topical Bible*, is an excellent study tool for this method of Bible study.

THE PRACTICAL METHOD

The practical method of Bible study involves looking at the way the book or passage applies to you in a “practical” way. You should try to answer some of the following questions:

- a) How does this verse or passage affect my daily life?
- b) How can I apply it for everyday living?
- c) How does it apply to my Christian walk?

Entire books or short passages may be studied in this way. Some good examples for this type of study include the book of Proverbs, Psalms, the book of James, and the Sermon on the Mount. This method lends toward personal application.

While there are many other good methods for Bible study, these six methods will help guide you and allow you to meet your overall Bible study objectives. Certain subjects tend to lend themselves more readily to one method over another. Let the above information help you determine which approach will be suitable to meet your specific Bible Study needs.

BIBLE STUDY APPROACHES:

1. By the Book.

Read the book at least a dozen times, then answer the following basic questions:

- a. Who is the author?
- b. What were the circumstances of the author when writing?
- c. To whom was the book written?
- d. Where was the book written?
- e. When was the book written?
- f. Why was the book written?
- g. What were the major problems being addressed?



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- h. What solutions were given?
 - i. What was the central meaning in that day?
 - j. What is the central meaning today?
2. By the Chapter - How to analyze a Chapter.
Read the chapter through at least ten times. Then ask the following questions:
- a. Who is the main subject?
 - b. Who are the main people?
 - c. What does it say about Christ?
 - d. What is the key or main verse?
 - e. What is the central lesson?
 - f. What are the main promises?
 - g. What are the main commands?
 - h. What error should I avoid?
 - i. What example is here?
 - j. What do I need most in this chapter to apply to my life today?
3. By the Verse.
There are many ways you can study a single Bible verse:
- a. Study it by the verbs in the verse.
 - b. Study the verse through the personalities revealed.
 - c. Study a verse by looking for the great ideas revealed in it.
 - d. Sometimes a combination of these various ideas applied to a verse will bring the correct results.

Homework assignment:

Take a chapter from one of the Gospel books: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and answer the questions outlined in the *By the Chapter – How to analyze a Chapter Approaches to Bible Study*.



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Rules of Interpretation

II Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJ) states, *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.*

Because the Bible is God's Word, it has *eternal relevance*; it speaks to all mankind, in every age and in every culture. Since God chose to speak his Word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has *historical particularity*. Each document is conditioned by the language, time and culture in which it was originally written (and in some cases also by the oral history it had before it was written down). There is a tension that exists between its *eternal relevance* and its *historical particularity*.

As you begin to *study to show yourself approved unto God*, always seek the Holy Spirit for guidance and understanding. Biblical hermeneutics is a scientific method of interpreting God's Word. The hermeneutical method will help to ensure that you accurately understand the message God intended to communicate.

The following rules are widely accepted and should be used as general guidelines when attempting to better understand or interpret a scripture passage.

1. Always observe the context.
2. Learn to allow the Bible to interpret itself.
3. Do not over spiritualize everything.
4. Assert an unassuming attitude.
5. Study parallel passages.

Also, Observation, Investigation, Correlation and Application will aid in your pursuit of understanding the Word of God.

- Observation, what do I see?
- Investigation, Who, What, When, Where, Why and So What?
- Correlation, how does the information fit together?
- Application, how can I apply to my life?



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Questions to Ask

Questions always open a passage for greater depth of understanding. The following are some basic questions every student of the Word should consider.

Why

- ...Was the book written?
- ...Should anyone listen to this passage?
- ...Are the people saying these things?

When

- ...Does the episode take place?
- ...Was the book written?

Who

- ...Wrote the book?
- ...Are the characters involved?
- ...Is doing the talking?

What

- ...Are the political, social and cultural circumstances?
- ...Does the language structure (verbs, tenses, etc.) tell you?
- ...Did it mean to you?

Where

- ...Does the episode take place?
- ...In scripture is the same idea stated and/or illustrated?
- ...Does this passage fit with the total theme of the book?

So What

- ...What areas of my life does this speak to?
- ...What areas of the audience's life does this speak to?
- ...What experience of God in my life best expresses and explains what this passage is teaching?
- ...Which experience is appropriate to publicly share?



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Helpful Definitions

General Hermeneutics – the art and science of interpretation. It is a science because it can reduce interpretation, within limits, to a set of rules. It is an art in that the application of the rules remains complex, requiring a skilled interpreter.

Biblical Hermeneutics – the science of interpreting the communication of God to man. This divine communication has come to man in the form of sacred literature, the Holy Bible.

Exegesis – the careful, systematic study of the scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. It is the attempt to hear the Word, as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the scriptures.

Historical Context – has to do with several things such as time and culture of the author and its readers, that is, the geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author's setting; and the occasion and purpose of the book, letter, psalms, prophetic oracle, or other genre.

Literary Context – essentially, words only have meaning in sentences, and for the most part biblical sentences only have meaning in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences.

Content– has to do with the meanings of words, the grammatical relationships in sentences, and the choice of the original text where the manuscripts have variant readings.

The key to good exegesis, and therefore to a more intelligent reading and understanding of the Bible, is to learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions. Remember the goal in exegesis is to find out what the original author intended.

Homework assignment:

Take the Gospel book chosen from last's week homework assignment and answer the questions outlined in the *Rules of Interpretation - Questions to Ask*.



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Study Tools

Bible study tools are used as aids to help you obtain a better understanding of the Word of God. Being able to *rightly divide the Word of truth* is essential for an effective Bible study. While the following list of study tools is by no means exhaustive, they have been chosen because they are relatively easy to obtain, to use, and understand. You may wish to refer back to this section when deciding which study tools you want to add to your library.

A. **Good Study Bible** (see *Let's Talk About Bibles* section)

B. **Concordance**

A Bible concordance lists all or many of the words of the Bible in alphabetical order and indicates the chapter and verse where they occur. Some words will have many listings, while others will have only a few. Some concordances are exhaustive listing every word in the Bible, while others are not.

1. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
2. Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible

C. **Bible Handbook**

A Bible handbook is, in essence, a concise Bible commentary, a Bible dictionary, and a Bible atlas in a single volume. Bible handbooks give quick and easy information, which makes them very useful for personal devotions.

1. The New Unger's Bible Handbook
2. Hayford's Bible Handbook
3. Wycliffe's Bible Handbook
4. Halley's Bible Handbook
5. What the Bible is All About, Henrietta C. Mears



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D. Bible Dictionary

A Bible dictionary defines and clarifies unfamiliar names, places and objects, and is an indispensable tool for the Bible student. It contains a thorough listing of all Bible subjects and was compiled or authored by someone specifically trained in the Bible and its customs, places and teachings.

1. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary
2. The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary
3. Vine's Bible Dictionary
4. Holman's Bible Dictionary

E. Topical Bible

Scripture verses are analyzed and grouped under related subjects by topics.

Nave's Topical Bible

F. Word Study Aids

Word study aids are reference tools used to find the meaning of a word or phrase. They are generally available in either New Testament only or Old Testament only.

1. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words:

Vine's sometimes shows the precise historical meaning of a word, and other times show the spiritual significance of a word. It is good for bringing out subtle nuances that a word can have.

2. The Complete Word Study of the New Testament
3. The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge



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G. Bible Commentary

A Bible commentary is a reference book devoted to the explanation, illustration, and sometimes the homiletic (art of preaching) expansion of the text of some portion of Scripture. They can be one volume or many volumes. They may contain the original Greek or Hebrew text, or English text.

1. Matthew Henry' s Commentary In One Volume
2. The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old & New Testament (separate volumes), Walvoord & Zuck
3. The Teacher's Commentary, Lawrence O. Richards

H. Theology Books

Theology books are designed to aid the Bible student understand sound Biblical doctrine. Doctrine, meaning teaching, received, believed and practiced determines a person's character, behavior and destiny. Therefore, Theology books are valuable in solidifying Biblical foundational beliefs.

1. The Foundations of Christian Doctrine, Kevin J. Conner
2. The Willmington's Guide to the Bible

I. Miscellaneous

1. The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Ralph Gower
2. How to Study the Bible For Yourself, Tim LaHaye
3. How to Study the Word, Terry Lawson
4. How to Apply the Bible, Dave Veerman

