

## How to Study the Bible

Regular Bible Study is an important part of being a Christian.

If it's not something you are familiar with it can be a bit intimidating. The bible is a big book and it may be confusing as to where to start.

(Tip: The bible is divided into two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament. Each of these is a collection of books combined together. When I say book in this post I am talking about one of these books, not the entire bible.)

When it comes to reading it, don't be afraid. Just jump in there and try, even if you are uncomfortable or nervous. Once you get started you might see it's not as hard as you thought it would be!

Here are some steps to follow to help get you started reading:

Give yourself grace. You cannot sit and read all of it at once. You typically can't even read a whole book, unless it's one of the really short ones like Jude or 3rd John. That's okay, it's not a race.

It's an investment in your life, your faith walk, and God's kingdom. So take a deep breath and relax. Just get started!

Start by finding a quiet spot and uninterrupted few minutes. This might mean you have to get up a few minutes early. You could also use your lunch break at work, or time alone in the evening when the day has calmed down.

Grab your bible.

I recommend you bring a notebook and pen as well, just in case. Even if you aren't a note taker, you might run across something that speaks to you that you want to remember. (I use the top margin of the page I'm taking notes on or a sticky note to jot down irrelevant things I remember while studying, like if I suddenly remember I need to buy milk or schedule a dentist appointment. After writing it down I can dismiss the thought so it's not in the way.)

Take a deep breath. Focus on the task at hand. Choose to be calm.

Humble yourself. It is about reading the inspired word of God and learning about the Creator of the Universe. There's no room for pride or big thinking. Open your mind and heart to what the Word will say.

Pray.

Ask the Father to speak to you while you are studying.

Deal with anything that might be hindering you or on your mind. This could be concerns, burdens, or your to-do list. You might also notice something coming up you need to ask forgiveness for. That's okay, even expected. Just prayerfully deal with it and keep going.

Ask Him to show you what you should be reading/studying that day.

Turn to the passage you want to study. It doesn't have to be a big one, just a few verses.

If you don't know where to start, Galatians, Jude, or the Gospel of John are all good places.

I do want to caution you, though, to be careful not to pick just one verse.

Typically you need at least a verse or two around it to help you understand. If you pick only one verse you run the risk of misinterpreting it because it is out of context.

There are 2 ways to approach bible study.

One is to just read the whole book over the course of a few days and then go back and focus on a few Scriptures at a time.

The other is to read a chapter and then go back and focus on a few Scriptures at a time. This is my recommended method as it's less overwhelming.

Either way is fine, but whichever you do, how you study the verses is the same, so let's focus on that for now.

Starting with your chosen text, read 2 - 3 verses, depending on what it says and how it flows. You'll know when to stop.

Read it twice. This is just to get a general feel for the text.

Now, read it a 3rd time, more slowly, really paying attention to the verbs and adjectives.

Then start asking yourself questions about it using the 5ws and an h:

-Who - is talking? Who are they talking to? Who are they talking about?

-What - are they talking about, going to do, thinking about? What is going to happen, has happened, will happen? What lesson can we learn from it?

-Where - are they when talking? Where are they going? Where are they coming from? Where are they talking about? Where will what they are talking about happen?

-When - will it happen? did it happen? are they going? did they go?

-Why - are they saying it? talking about it? telling them/us?

-How - does what they are saying affect the people in the story? How does it change things? How does it show God and His love, glory, compassion, grace, and/or mercy? How can we apply it to ourselves?

Look for clue words - therefore, because, since, then, however, but. These clue you in to the message of the verse. They also tell you to look for the other half of the situation being discussed. I've often heard, *"find out what the therefore is there for"*.

If you don't understand or aren't getting a feel for the passage, pray. Ask the Father to help you see what the passage is about and what you are missing.

Don't be surprised if something you have been praying about at other times comes to mind.

It might be totally unrelated to what you are studying and the answer come to you. Or, you may realize the Scripture you are studying applies to it. You might also realize you have done something wrong and need to repent or take steps to correct it. That's part of it. Just keep studying and praying through it.

Once you see what the passage says, ask how it applies to you.

- Is it telling you to start/stop something?
- Is it helping you understand the basis of biblical living?
- Is it giving you history?
- Is it reminding you of a promise God made?

Write down any notes or observations you need or want to.

While studying you might sense the Lord speaking to You about a matter totally unrelated to what you're reading. Listen carefully and agree to it in your heart. Jot down notes and search out Scriptures that speak to what you are hearing (you can either study them immediately, or finish your current study and then go look the other subject up. Whichever you choose is fine, just be sure to finish studying both things as soon as possible).

You might struggle to focus on what you are reading. If so, pray and ask the Lord to clear your thoughts and remove distractions. You may have to do this several times in one study session. Just keep studying and keep asking Him until you have practiced enough that you have trained your brain not to notice or give in to distractions.

One thing I have often heard people say is that the bible contradicts itself. This is not true. If you think it does, then keep reading and digging; you might have missed part of the story or misunderstood what you read. Remember, Scripture interprets Scripture, so keep reading and digging until you find the verse or phrase that helps you understand what you are missing.

While studying you might realize you don't understand a certain passage or bible principle as well as you thought you did. You might also realize you have been taught wrong or that you misunderstood something you read/studied/heard before. Don't be ashamed or embarrassed. These things happen. Be thankful for the new understanding, apply the new knowledge to your life, and keep going. What is important is that you learn the truth and how to apply it correctly from now on.

By following these steps you can learn how to read your bible in a way that makes sense and helps you understand just how much God loves you.

Remember, the whole point of bible study is to learn more about God and His Word so you can be closer to Him, so don't give up no matter what!

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. [2 Timothy 2:15](#) (NIV)*