



LEARNING TO STUDY THE BIBLE

a simple approach to studying
Scripture in every season

WHAT IS IT?

Simply reading the Bible is a beautiful practice and holds immense value. Yet, the Word of God is rich, layered, and meant to be engaged beyond a surface-level reading. We are called to study it with diligence and hide it deep within our hearts.

Taking time to understand context, culture, word meanings, and translation deepens our understanding of both the Christian life and the character of God. And as our understanding grows, so does our trust in the One who is revealed to us through His Word.

SO WHAT DOES STUDYING THE BIBLE LOOK LIKE?

There is no right or wrong way to study Scripture - and online, you can find a plethora of methods from which to choose. I developed the rhythms I will share with you over the span of several years, adding and refining, as I studied and learned from those far wiser. Much of my rhythm today is influenced by Jen Wilkin's podcast "Woman of the Word," which shares basic strategies, practical tips, and encouragement for true Bible study. She does a phenomenal job explaining why Bible study is important, common barriers and pitfalls, and a valuable step-by-step process for studying. I highly recommend giving the podcast a listen if you are interested in the study of the Bible - you won't be disappointed!



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01 START WITH THE BASICS

Every book of the Bible is written from a unique perspective. There are different authors, genres, audiences, time periods, and intended themes that shape the writing. So, before diving into the study of each book, take time to consider its background. Get to know:

- The Author - Jew or Gentile? Who are they? What were they known for?
- The Genre - Is it narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, letter, or apocalyptic?
- The Time Period - When was it written? What were the significant events that occurred at that time?
- The Audience - Who were they? Where were they located? What was the culture? What were their beliefs?
- The Themes - What was the purpose of this writing?

02 READ THROUGH THE CHAPTER OR LETTER, THEN BREAK IT INTO SMALL SECTIONS FOR FOCUSED STUDY

Especially with letters that were written to be read through to completion, there is much gained in listening aloud to the section of the Bible being studied before getting into the details. This can help identify overarching themes or connections.



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03 ANNOTATE WHATS BEING STUDIED

I love to print a copy of the Scripture double-spaced or use an Illuminated Scripture Journal to mark up for this stage. And if you want to get really fancy, you can pull out the colored pencils. Whatever you want to use, start adding notes and giving explanations or commentary to the text - just like you used to do in school. Write obvious meanings, associated verses, look up and denote definitions, patterns, or repetitions. Underline, box, circle, draw arrows, whatever you need to do to make sense of the passage. And never feel like there is any word too little or basic to search up a definition - if you couldn't explain the definition to someone else, look it up. Trust me - this habit alone has given my study so much depth and provided so much understanding!

04 SUMMARIZE SMALL SECTIONS OF SCRIPTURE

They say if you can provide a well-stated summary in your own words, you have a solid understanding of something - so give it a shot with Scripture. Taking each section you study, provide a 1-3 sentence summary about what is happening or the message being conveyed in the passage.

05 WORK TO DISCERN INTENTION

Ask yourself - "Why is the author saying this? How does it connect to his overall message or themes? Why is this important?"



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06 LIST KEY TAKEAWAYS

Going verse by verse, write bulleted notes on what lessons, ideas, commands, or explanations of God are being given. This is almost like a more in-depth version of the summary. What is the passage telling you?

07 WRITE OUT YOUR QUESTIONS & SEEK ANSWERS

Naturally, you will not understand everything you read. Write out a list of questions and seek the answers - in commentary or through trusted Google sites. I like: The Matthew Henry Commentary, The Enduring Word Commentary, BibleRef.com, The Bible Project, GotQuestions.org!

08 THINK ABOUT THE APPLICATION

By this, I do not mean - “How does the Scripture apply to you?” Instead, I encourage you to ask - “What did this passage teach me about God, and in light of that, how should I view myself, and what can I change in my life to live as if this were true?” Because ultimately the Bible is NOT about us, it is about Him, and we are studying it to know Him better.



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09 LOOK AT COMMENTARY

I love to finish by seeking the wisdom of someone much wiser than I in the study of Scripture, helping me fill in the gaps - some I didn't even know I had. My two favorites are: The Matthew Henry and Enduring Word Commentaries

CONCLUSION

It may seem long and cumbersome, and it may not fit every season of life, but it has been such a valuable addition to my time with the Lord. And the best part - you don't have to fit it all into one sitting! You can take it step-by-step, breaking it down into as many study sessions as needed, as you wrestle to understand God and His word better. And who knows, you might even find it exciting!?

“WE MUST MAKE A STUDY OF OUR GOD: WHAT HE LOVES, WHAT HE HATES, HOW HE SPEAKS AND ACTS. WE CANNOT IMITATE A GOD WHOSE FEATURES AND HABITS WE HAVE NEVER LEARNED. WE MUST MAKE A STUDY OF HIM IF WE WANT TO BECOME LIKE HIM. WE MUST SEEK HIS FACE.”

JEN WILKIN