

How to Study the Bible

A Resource to Help You Get Started

STARTING

Think through the following:

- *When will you read? Do you have a consistent time?*
- *Where will you read? Do you have a consistent place?*
- *What will you read? Do you have a plan?*
- *What do you need? Do you have a Bible, journal, pen and highlighter?*

PRAYER

You should always approach the Scriptures in a posture of prayerful humility and longing. Ask God to:

- *Create a hunger in our spirit for His Word.*
- *Open your eyes to see the wonders of Christ in the Scriptures.*
- *Satisfy you with understanding and His unfailing love.*

READING

The first step of study is to choose a specific passage and read it a few times to get an idea of the content, context and flow. Highlight particular sections that stand out so that you can come back to them later.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

OBSERVATION

What Does It Say?

Look for the obvious - facts about people, places, and events. Often these will be repeated making them easy to see. Ask questions like:

- What key words and major themes are repeated?
- What stands out?
- What comes before and after this passage?
- What do you find difficult to understand? What questions does this passage raise?
- Mark up the passage. Don't be afraid to write in your Bible. Circle, underline and highlight. Write in the margins. Get creative.
- At the end, try to write a paraphrase of the text in your own words.

INTERPRETATION

What Does It Mean?

Look for the correct meaning of the passage as it was intended by the original author. Your observation probably left you with some questions so now you can try to find answers. One of the most effective ways to work through this stage is to put yourself in the passage and ask questions of the text and then use study tools to help answer those questions.

- Compare multiple translations (NIV, ESV, KJV, NAS)
- Check study notes in the footnotes of your Bible.
- Look up key words/phrases.
- Check the surrounding context - what comes before and after this passage that will help to clarify?
- Ask: what could I know that would help this to make more sense?
- Ask: what would the original author have meant, what would the original audience have heard?

APPLICATION

What Does It Mean to Me?

Bible study is incomplete until you have applied what you learn to your own life. The purpose of Scriptures is not just for our understanding, but so that we can be more like Jesus. Does the passage include:

- Sin to confess? Do I need to make any restitution?
- Promise to claim? Is it a universal promise?
- Attitude to change? Am I willing to work on a negative attitude and begin building toward a positive one?
- Command to obey? Am I willing to do it, no matter how I feel?
- Example to follow? Is it a positive example for me to copy, or a negative one to avoid?
- Prayer to pray? Is there anything I need to pray back to God?
- Error to avoid? Is there any problem that I should be alert to, or beware of?
- Truth to believe? What new things can I learn about God or other biblical teachings?
- Something to praise God for? Is there something here I can be thankful for?

- Choose one or two specific action steps and prayerfully consider how you might pursue greater faithfulness in them. Be specific about what you will do and who you will ask to help you.