

Personal Bible Study for Spiritual Growth

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Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

The Two Dimensions of Bible Study

The Natural Dimension: The Bible is a book (Matthew 11:25)

The Spiritual Dimension: The Bible is God's book

Revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21): It's God disclosing Himself and His heart to us.

Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17): It helps us live out God's purposes for us.

Illumination (Psalm 119:105; 119:15-17,18): It gives practical guidance and direction.

How to Begin Studying the Bible

- Plan a specific time.
- Pray for God to speak to you, without an agenda of what this will look like.
- Read and re-read a passage. Insight begins with basic understanding of the facts.
- Seek to know the Author (God), the author (human writer), the context and the specific circumstances surrounding when it was originally written.
- Take notes, and don't be afraid of using your pen or a highlighter to mark the page as you read.
- Make the Bible your authority, not just a source of advice you can take or leave. (James 1:22-25)
- Seek wisdom and not just answers (Ecclesiastes 7:25). "What are you saying to me, God?"
- Don't go it alone! (Hebrews 10:24-25) Discuss and study God's Word with others.

The Process For Studying the Bible: Inductive (vs. Deductive)

Deductive Process: *Conclusions shape and define the facts, and are based on our preconceived ideas, which may or may not be accurate. The result is that we make the Bible say what we want it to say (or believe it's saying), instead of letting the Bible speak for itself.*

Inductive Process: *Conclusions flow out of the facts, as a result of our taking the time to correctly interpret them, and allow them to challenge our preconceived ideas. (Acts 17:11) Television shows like CSI or Law and Order use an inductive process to pull together and synthesize a variety of facts and insights into a truthful conclusion.*

The three parts of Inductive Bible Study ...

OBSERVATION: -- *“What do I see here?”* Observation moves from the general to the specific, investigating the facts in a passage.

- A. Observe the whole passage, not just an isolated verse or two (getting an overview)
 1. Read the verses carefully and more than once
 2. Write down your initial impressions
 3. Write down the major facts (who, what, where, when and why)
- B. Observe the parts (taking a look at the various pieces)
 1. See if there’s a logical flow to the writer’s thinking of an outline of some kind
 2. Ask some initial questions about the details you read ...
 - Who? The various people.
 - What? The key teachings or events.
 - Where? The location and places mentioned.
 - When? The time factors or references to time and order.
 - Why? The motive the author shares for writing, or issues communicated.

INTERPRETATION: -- *“What does it mean?”* Interpretation is the way we discover the author’s original meaning as he wrote the Scriptures.

- A. The questions of interpretation
 1. Do some checking on the “five w” questions, *beginning with the Bible itself*.
 2. Define words that are repeated often or that you don’t understand. A simple English dictionary is OK.
- B. The answers of interpretation
 - State in simple terms what you believe is being said as you begin (be tentative, though)
 - Search the context -- surrounding verses, entire book, etc.
 - Seek comparisons – where people, teachings, places are mentioned elsewhere, or the way the author uses the same words elsewhere (concordance, www.biblegateway.com)
 - Study other peoples’ insights (commentaries). Don’t do this until this point.
 - State your conclusions a little more definitively, but be open to input/critique

APPLICATION: -- *“How does God want me to respond?”* Application is action – learning how what’s discovered should affect your thoughts, feelings and behavior. Then diligently putting these things into practice in your life in community with other people, with humility asking the Holy Spirit to empower you to do this.

- **Know yourself and allow God to “know you”** (Psalm 139:23-24). Look for God to make connections in light of your strengths and weaknesses, and what He’s longing to accomplish in your life.
- **Relate the passage to your life.** Summarize those things that seem to apply to you, and decide if what is taught is timeless/universal or to be applied in principle.
- **Meditate on the passage.** Pick out one verse that captures how God is speaking to you through these verses and memorize it. Keep in mind – if you can worry, you can meditate!
- **Put into practice what you’re learning.** Spiritual growth is humbly living out what God is teaching you about Him and your relationship with Him in the “real world” and in community with others. It’s becoming increasingly more authentic, Christ-absorbed and compassionate, and increasingly more dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make it happen (John 3:30). And it’s coming alongside others for the purpose of helping them experience Christ and to grow in Him (2 Timothy 2:2).

Bible Verses Referenced

- **Matthew 11:25** Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."
- **2 Peter 1:20-21** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- **Psalms 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
- **Psalms 119:15-17,18** I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your word. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.
- **James 1:22-25** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.
- **Ecclesiastes 7:25** I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- **Acts 17:11** The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
- **Psalms 139:23-24** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
- **John 3:30** He must become greater; I must become less.
- **2 Timothy 2:2** And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.