

Summer Study: How to Study the Bible The Table

1. The Bible claims to be perfectly authoritative.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2. The Bible claims to show the path to eternal life.

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” – 1 John 5:13

3. The Bible is the baseline for the real Gospel.

(See: Galatians 1:6-10) – In Galatians 1, Paul is writing to a church that has quickly deserted the Gospel they received without even knowing they were doing so because they were adding to it.

4. It's possible to know a lot of Bible and not know Jesus.

In Luke 24:13-34, these two guys end up sharing all these stories and facts about Jesus to Jesus all the while never recognizing that JESUS WAS RIGHT THERE WITH THEM.

It's possible to know a lot of facts about the Bible but completely miss Jesus when he's right there among you.

5. It's impossible to take the parts of the Bible you like (salvation from sin, etc.) and ignore what you don't (the commands on how we live).

This one is simple to understand yet difficult to live.

6. The Bible is primarily the story of God, not us.

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God...” *not insert your name here.*

The command to listen/hear God is found 1,500 times in Scripture.

7. The Bible is different than any other spiritual discipline because it informs all the others.

Jeremiah 17:9 – your heart can't be trusted. The Bible is the baseline by which we judge other spiritual experiences (worship through music, serving, prayer, etc.)

How to Interpret the Bible (7 Principles)

1. **The author's original intention of meaning holds more weight than what a text "means to you."**
 - a. Why we study author's life, grammar, vocabulary, setting, date, surrounding issues, etc.
 - b. Get a good study Bible!
2. **Interpretation must happen within the context of the passage.**
 - a. Revelation 3:20 – sometimes inaccurately used as a verse about evangelism.
 - b. Jeremiah 29:11 – a verse about going in to exile (divine time-out) for an entire generation.
3. **Identify the kind of literature (genre) you're reading.**
 - a. Narrative, prophecy, poetry, history, wisdom literature, gospel, epistle, apocalyptic, etc.
4. **Read the text for its plan and obvious meaning.**
 - a. Popular myth: the real truth of Scripture is hidden behind what normal people can see.
 - b. The use of figurative language in Scripture only enhances the plain meaning of the text. "Why do you complain about the splinter in your brother's eye when you have a plank in your own eye?" Jesus said (Matt. 7:3). Even though this is figurative language, we have no trouble understanding what Jesus meant.
5. **Obscure texts yield to clear texts.**
 - a. Also called the law of non-contradiction. Because the Bible is God's word, and God is true, the Bible will not contradict itself.
 - b. For example, there are clear passages that teach the doctrine of eternal security, that once a person is truly saved he or she cannot lose salvation (John 5; Rom 8). Some passages in the Bible are very hard to interpret like Hebrews 6:4-6. So I would let the overall and clear theology of the Bible influence me that a very hard passage like Hebrews 6 is not teaching that someone can lose his salvation.
6. **Use the Bible to Interpret Itself**
 - a. Paying attention to cross-reference notes will help you gain this skill.
 - b. Psalm 1 and Romans 3:10-12

3 Questions to Ask When Reading the Bible

- 1.) What is God saying about Himself?
- 2.) What does this teach me about following Jesus more fully?
- 3.) What do I need to do because of this passage? What action does this scripture call me to?

S – Scripture

Write down the Bible passage you'll be studying. This can be one verse or several. I've found that writing helps me focus on each word individually and on the passage as a whole. It also helps me soak it in and meditate on it.

O – Observations

Examine the text and write down what you notice.

- What jumps out to you in the passage?
- Who is it written by? Who is it written to?
- What's one thing you didn't notice before?
- What seems interesting or unusual?
- What comes before and after the text?
- Is there repetition, comparison, or contrast?

These observations may start with the obvious (i.e., Jesus spent time with his disciples), but will gradually become deeper.

A – Applications

Apply God's Word to your life in a practical way. This is the part where you personalize your study of Scripture. As you read over the text, how should you change because of it? Is there a specific action you need to take or a confession you need to make?

P – Prayer

Respond to God's Word with your own words. Accumulating head knowledge about God is of little use; it's heart transformation He's after, and that's only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pray that the seed of God's Word falls on good soil in your heart, so that it will take root and produce fruit. *Praise* God for His attributes revealed in the passage. *Confess* any sin that has come to light during this time of studying. *Thank* Him for His Word.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." – Psalm 1:1-2

Observations	Applications
Blessing <i>or</i> wickedness (v.1)	I will live for the blessing of God instead of the approval/attention of the wicked.
We're called to NOT stand w/ sinners	God's loving commands can be "don't"
The key to blessing is delighting in the Word or God.	The Word is for my JOY! Not a chore.
Day and night	I need to be in the Word continually.
The blessed walk in the counsel of the Word, not the wicked.	I will seek guidance from Scripture before my friends, especially friends that don't follow Jesus.

Gracious God, remind me how good your way is. Remind me how much you love me and how much better life is when I'm regularly connected to you through your Word. Help me delight in you and to recognize when the enemy tries to make me forget how rich that time is. Amen.

Read James 3:1-5 or Romans 8:35-39 and fill out your SOAP study in the space below.

Scripture:

Observations	Applications

Prayer:

Bible Plan Approaches

1. Big Picture/ Bible in a Year
 - “Just keep swimming.” – Dory
 - Don’t try and understand everything the first time through. Don’t get bogged down in Leviticus. Don’t worry about getting all the –aboam named kings mixed up. Just plow ahead.
2. Book Study
 - Example: James – read introduction from good study Bible (we recommend ESV)
 - Chapter a day through a book of the Bible
3. Verse-by-Verse
 - Same general approach as book study but you might read smaller chunks per day.
4. Pick a Person
 - David, Ruth, Peter, etc.
5. Personal Paraphrase
 - Read a passage and re-write it in your own words.
6. Keep a Question & Answer journal
 - When you come across a tough text, write down your questions and do some research. Ask a friend or pastor to help you understand and record the answers to past questions for later reference.
7. Cross-Reference