

Introduction to a Basic Bible Study Method

A Guide for Beginner

Welcome to God's Word and the wonderful world of Bible Study! This is a step towards building an intimate relationship with the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the universe. Within our study we seek to know God better, understand His overarching plan for mankind, and dig deeply into our own relationship with God—a God who loves you enough to send his Son to a cross. Now this is worth our time.

For this study you will need:

1. Bible (go figure). Recommended version(s): NIV, NAS, NKJV, ESV
2. 3-ringed binder with some loose-leaf paper
3. (1) pencil, (1) pen, (1) highlighter
4. A humble spirit, a teachable spirit, and a desire to worship God together

Step 1—Read the Text.

1. Pray before you read. Specifically ask God to still your heart, quiet your mind, and prepare yourself to converse with the Lord.
2. Read the entire book of _____ in one sitting as you would a novel. Don't worry about content, details, etc. on this first read. One thing to pay attention to... context.
3. Read other books by the same author and/or of similar genre. How does this help to flush out the context?
4. Now, read the book again, but this time with your notebook ready.

Step 2—Take Initial Notes

1. Read slowly during your second or third time through the text. Begin to write down some of the following elements: (1) repeated words, (2) theologically loaded words, (3) strategic syntax, (4) important statements and phrases being made to us, the audience.
2. When reading the text AGAIN, make try and answer W/H questions: Who (is the author), What (is he addressing), Where (does this take place), When (does this happen), How (should I react)
3. Pray again for God to assist you in the context and content of the book.

Step 3—Begin to Organize Your Thoughts

1. Try and generate your own "Introduction" to the book [similar to what you would find in a Study Bible].
2. Using the attached text of _____, make notes of the literary elements, strange occurrences, special commands or instructions, author's intentions, background clues, and cross-references you can find.
3. Take note of words in the text that need better understanding. With these we will learn proper word study methods and begin to grasp the meaning of the text as a whole.

Step 4—Introduction to Inductive Bible Study

1. *Observation*—Context, the Big Picture, and Focusing on Details [Answer: What does the text say?"]
 - a. Correct Context, Author's intention & Scope, Grammar & Word Study, Background Study
 - b. Scripture interprets Scripture... also theology; Biblical and the use of church history
 - c. Focus on the details: look for contrasts, comparisons, terms, expressions, etc.
2. *Interpretation*—From what the text says to what the text means
 - a. Search for meaning—principles for interpretation
 - b. Basic elements of the inductive process
 - c. Determine what is descriptive/prescriptive, indicative/imperative, and the author's intended meaning
3. *Application*—How am I going to appropriate this book.
 - a. Personal response—what must I do according to the text?
 - b. Spiritual response—how does this text draw me closer to God?
 - c. Corporate response—how do I preach or teach this text?
 - d. Social response—how does this guide me in areas of social justice?

Notes Concerning Context

As our four outlines¹ state, the first and perhaps most important area of Bible study is Context.

Here are some things to keep in mind while studying the context of your pericope of _____.

1. Look into the historical context of the passage
2. Look into the literary context of the passage
3. Look into the three levels of context: Immediate, Remote, and Biblical
 - a. Immediate Context: within the passage
 - b. Remote Context: within the same book
 - c. Biblical Context: throughout the entire Bible
4. Look into parallel passages.
 - a. By reading and re-reading Scripture, we begin to see how and where the Bible interlaces itself.
 - b. Concordance and cross-reference help, either in your study Bible or in a separate source.
 - c. Make sure the cross-references are true in vocabulary and subject matter.
 - d. Note similarities and differences in these parallel passages.
 - e. Always interpret what is obscure by what is more plain.

Parallel Passages: Material with identical or similar language or ideas found in the passage being studied that is found in other places, (1) in another book by the same author or (2) in another book of a different author.

So, if you are wondering what you are to do for this week in our study of _____, please study the context of your section of the book by:

1. Look intently into your chapter for historical markers. Look into the entire book of _____. Make notes.
2. Look intently for literary markers in chapter and book that provide contextual perimeters. Make notes.
3. Look intently at the three levels of context and make general notes.
4. Cross-reference your passages. Either, write out a list or cut-and-paste the actual passages in a list.
 - a. Key in on the special words and phrases you found in your general reading and notes.
 - b. Pay special attention to those cross-references that have several other similar occurrences.
5. Give parallel passages found throughout _____'s writings, other books of similar genre.
6. If you haven't done so, please read your passage (or the entire book of _____) in several different English translations. Make note of your finding as they relate to locating context. Make note of the strange way some translations may slant your passage meaning by the use of words, phrases, or literary emphasis.

If you are more industrial, you can attempt the following:

From the text alone, derive:

1. Major purpose of the entire book
2. Minor purpose(s) of your passage
3. The occasion of the writing, i.e. the writer's situation, mood, style, etc.
4. Key verse, key word, key phrase, and key spiritual thought
5. Perhaps, do the nerd thing by cutting your chapter out of an on-line site into a table three (3) times, one column with the NAS, one with the NKJV and one with the NIV.

And last, but definitely not least, read *How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth* by Fee and Stuart, *How to Study Your Bible* by Kay Arthur or *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* by Tremper Longman III.

"Apply thyself wholly to the text, then the text wholly to thyself."

A Guide for Beginner © 2008 by Jeff Valodine, Director of Every Thought Captive, Inc.

¹ (1) Basic Bible Study, (2) Inductive Bible Study, (3) "Historical—Grammatical" Bible Study, and the (4) Critical Bible Study