

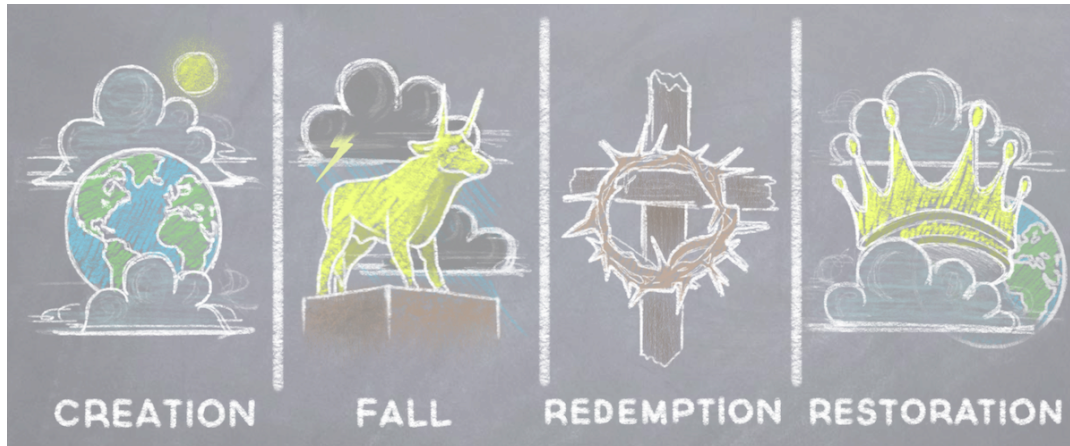
How To Read and Study The Bible On Your Own

Rev. Dave Latham



For additional resources, please visit:
www.davelatham.com

Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible



Genesis 1-2

Revelation 21-22

“Now, some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn’t do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you should be doing. It’s about God and what he has done.” - Excerpt From: The Jesus Storybook Bible (Sally Lloyd Jones)

The Old Testament: “Someone is coming” (Announces the coming of Christ)

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (The Gospels): “Someone is here” (Focuses on the life/ministry of Christ)

Acts-Revelation (The Rest of the New Testament): “Someone is coming again” (Focuses on the 2nd coming of Christ)

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE BIBLE

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Number
Symbol
Name
Chapters

THE OLD TESTAMENT

1
Gn
GENESIS
50

2
Ex
EXODUS
40

3
Lv
LEVITICUS
27

4
Nm
NUMBERS
36

5
Dt
DEUTERONOMY
34

6
Jo
JOSHUA
24

7
Jg
JUDGES
21

8
Ru
RUTH
4

9
1Sm
1 SAMUEL
31

10
2Sm
2 SAMUEL
24

11
1Kg
1 KINGS
22

12
2Kg
2 KINGS
25

13
1Ch
1 CHRONICLES
29

14
2Ch
2 CHRONICLES
36

15
Er
EZRA
10

16
Ne
NEHEMIAH
13

17
Es
ESTHER
10

18
Jb
JOB
42

19
Ps
PSALMS
150

20
Pr
PROVERBS
31

21
Ec
ECCLESIASTES
12

22
Sg
SONG OF SONGS
8

23
Is
ISAIAH
66

24
Je
JEREMIAH
52

25
Lm
LAMENTATIONS
5

26
Ez
EZEKIEL
48

27
Dn
DANIEL
12

28
Hs
HOSEA
14

29
Jl
JOEL
3

30
Am
AMOS
9

31
Ob
OBADIAH
1

32
Jo
JONAH
4

33
Mi
MICAH
7

34
Na
NAHUM
3

35
Hb
HABAKKUK
3

36
Zp
ZEPHANIAH
3

37
Hg
HAGGAI
2

38
Zc
ZECHARIAH
14

39
Ml
MALACHI
4

THE NEW TESTAMENT

40
Mt
MATTHEW
28

41
Mk
MARK
16

42
Lk
LUKE
24

43
Jn
JOHN
21

44
Ac
ACTS
28

45
Rm
ROMANS
16

46
1Co
1 CORINTHIANS
16

47
2Co
2 CORINTHIANS
13

48
Gl
GALATIANS
6

49
Ep
EPHESIANS
6

50
Ph
PHILIPPIANS
4

51
Cl
COLOSSIANS
4

52
1Th
1 THESSALONIANS
5

53
2Th
2 THESSALONIANS
3

54
1Tm
1 TIMOTHY
6

55
2Tm
2 TIMOTHY
4

56
Ti
TITUS
3

57
Pl
PHILEMON
1

58
Hb
HEBREWS
13

59
Js
JAMES
5

60
1Pt
1 PETER
5

61
2Pt
2 PETER
3

62
1Jn
1 JOHN
5

63
2Jn
2 JOHN
1

64
3Jn
3 JOHN
1

65
Jd
JUDE
1

66
Rv
REVELATION
22

PENTATEUCH
(NARRATIVE)

HISTORY
(NARRATIVE)

WISDOM
WRITINGS

MAJOR
PROPHETS

MINOR
PROPHETS

GOSPELS
(NARRATIVE)

ACTS
(NARRATIVE)

PAUL'S LETTERS
TO CHURCHES

PAUL'S LETTERS
TO INDIVIDUALS

GENERAL
LETTERS

LETTER
(PROPHECY)

How to Actually Study the Bible on your Own: A One Page Summary

Opening Questions:

- Why do you think people have a hard time studying the Bible?
- Have you ever been frustrated by your own efforts to study the Bible? What made it frustrating?
- What have your past attempts looked like? How did you pick which verses to read?

There's nothing 'mystical' or 'spiritual' to the way you actually study the Bible. We approach it systematically and God works miraculously through it.

- *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12 ESV)

WSC Q #2: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

- *A: The word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*

WSC Q #3: What do the scriptures principally teach?

- *A: The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.*

A Few Foundational Steps:

1. Remember Jesus Loves You
2. Commit time to read your Bible: it sounds silly, but learning how to study the Bible means nothing if you never put it into practice. Set aside time, pray for wisdom, take it off the shelf, crack it open, and read it.
3. Pick a book and stick with it- you have 66 to choose from, pick one and stick to it
 - a. It is not a sin/lack of faith to use the table of contents to find specific books...it's OK!
 - b. Good places to start: 1st John, The Gospel of John, Romans, Hebrews
4. Get a good study Bible- look for one with study notes, cross references, and articles to help you

Look at the book:

1. Identify the Genre: Is this narrative? Is it a letter? Is it poetry? (Ex: You do not read a scholarly article like you read a poem. Each genre has its own unique features.)
2. Who wrote it? When? Why? (Put yourself in the shoes of the writer and the audience)
3. What is the big idea/theme of the book?

Look at the passage:

1. Context, Context, Context- Read more than 1 verse and find where it fits into the whole (2 Types):
 - a. Literary (what's going on in the book?)
 - b. Historical (what's going on in history?)
2. What was the original author trying to convey to his audience?
3. How does this apply to the overall theme/big idea?
4. What does it say about God? (His character, His power, His grace, His attributes, etc.)
5. What does it say about me? (my heart, my struggles, my sin, my doubts, my joy, etc.)
6. Application: How am I called to respond to the text? How does this impact my life?

Write Something Down and Pray

- Many people find keeping a journal helps
- Pray through some of the things that came up in your study
 - o (Ex: Passage on loving your neighbor = Pray that God would give you a loving heart)

Hit a tough/seemingly boring passage? Hang in there and remember 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Then, keep reading.

Study One: Overview and Observation

1) Inductive Bible Study

Deduction – begins with a theory→ poses a hypothesis→ makes observations→ confirms or rejects the theory

Induction – begins with observation→ establishes a pattern→ forms a hypothesis→ establishes a theory

2) Overview

The three basic parts to an inductive Bible study:

- **Observation** – *What does it say?*
 - o What is actually there? Simply gathering facts, details.
- **Interpretation** – *What does it mean? Why is it there?*
 - o What do these facts mean? Your goal here is to understand the association between the facts.
 - o How does this apply to the overall theme of the book? How does it
- **Application** – *What will I do? What does it matter?*
 - o What should I think/feel/do now in light of this? How does the gospel impact my application?

Participation is key! For example, when you are learning how to play a new board game or card game, the person trying to teach you eventually says something like, “*Let’s just play and you’ll figure it out as we go.*” That’s the same idea here as we move forward.

3) Step One: Observation

In this step you are playing detective with the passage you are studying.

- The goal: Seeing *what is actually there* before jumping to what it means or how it’s relevant.
- Why is this a crucial and necessary first step?
 - o Our goal is to “draw meaning from” the text (Exegesis) instead of “reading meaning into” the text (Eisegesis).

Macro-details to observe: What is the genre? Poetry, narrative, discourse, law?

- Why does the genre of the book you are studying impact the way you read it?

Micro-details to observe: Who, what, when, where, why, how?

Literary connections to observe:

- Repetition (same term)
- Continuity (similar term)
- Contrast (but, however)
- Comparison (like)
- Cause to Effect (when, so after)
- Effect to Cause (because, since)
- Means to End (so that, in order that)
- Logical Conclusion (if...then, therefore)

Example: Romans 12:1-2

[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's look at a few initial observations:

- It begins with “therefore.” This is the conclusion of something that came before.
- Paul urges them to do something in a way that is connected to God’s mercy.
- Offering your bodies as living sacrifices seems to be pleasing to God.
- There is a contrast in verse 2: do not conform but be transformed.
- The second command of verse 2 is passive: *be* transformed.
- The result of this is the ability to “discern” God’s will.
- Paul qualifies God’s will as “good, acceptable, and perfect.”

Your turn: Romans 5:6-11

[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

List some of your observations below:

Study Two: Interpretation

1) Review

- What are the three elements of an Inductive Bible Study?
- What is the difference between exegesis and eisegesis?
- What question is the “Observation” step trying to answer?

2) Step Two: Interpretation

A) The Goal of Interpretation

- Is NOT to decode a secret spiritual message.
- Answering – *What does the text mean? Why is it there?*
- Discovering the main point of the passage as it was originally intended by the author to his originally intended audience.
- To begin to understand how that main point relates to the overall theme of the book, to Jesus, and the Gospel message.

B) The Method of Interpretation

- Ask Interpretive Questions:
 - Why did the author/character do...?, Why did this event happen?, Why was/were _____ involved?
 - What is the significance of...?, What is the implication of...?
 - Why was this event included here?, How did the people react? Why?
- Answer Interpretive Questions
 - Look for clues in the passage
 - Look at the larger context of the paragraph, book, etc.
 - Don't answer questions that the passage isn't providing answers to!
- Find the Central Meaning
 - What is the big idea? The author's main point is....?
 - Go back through the text with this main point to test it. Do all the verses contribute to this main point? If not, you may have come upon a secondary point rather than a main point.

Intro to Romans: Author, Recipients, and Date (Taken from *The Gospel Transformation Study Bible*)

- The apostle Paul wrote to a church of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome. There was tension between the Jewish and Gentile believers and they all faced pressure and persecution from the Roman government. He probably wrote this epistle while he was in Corinth on his third missionary journey, around AD 57
- Romans is widely regarded as the most complete summary of the gospel message and Christian doctrine found in any single biblical book. It is certainly Paul's most extended and concentrated presentation of God's saving work in Christ.

Romans 1:1–7

[1] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, [6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, [7] To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where do you see some of the things listed in the “Intro to Romans” section (above) in this passage?

Your Turn –Romans 1:16–20

[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”[18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

<u>Observations</u>	<u>Interpretive Questions/Answers</u>

Study Three: Application

1) Review

- What are the three elements of Inductive Bible Study?
- What question is the “Observation” step trying to answer?
- What question is the “Interpretation” step trying to answer?

2) Step Three: Application

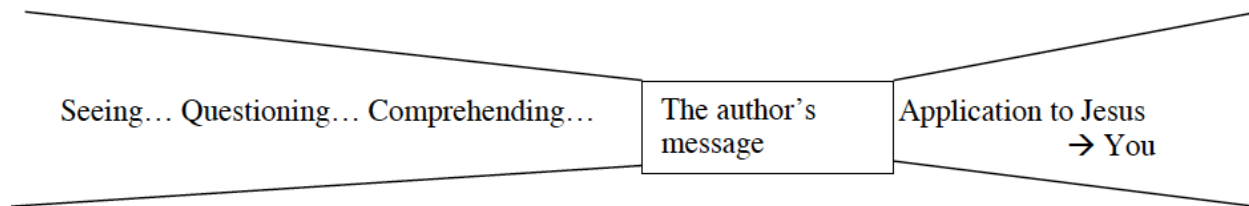
Answering the questions – “What will I do?” “Why does it matter?” What does it say about God? What does it say about me? What is the text calling me to do, think, act?

Implications

How does this passage relate to people *generally*? Is there a...

- Sin for me to repent of?
- Promise for me to claim?
- Example for me to follow?
- Error for me to avoid?
- Command for me to obey?
- Knowledge of God to believe?
- Something to pray about?

Understanding and Applying the Christological Reference



Avoid Bare Moralism – I.e. “Here’s what you need to do and now go out and do it!” At the end of the day, this approach makes the Bible ultimately about *you*, not God. This makes us moralistic Pharisees which leads only to either self-righteousness or self-loathing.

- Ex: Go be like David and slay those “giants in your life”!

Applying the Gospel – Focus on what *God* has done. It’s ultimately about *Him* (Luke 24). The Bible is not about you. The gospel of grace is always the Bible’s agent of motivation for life-change (Titus 2:11-12).

- Ex: You can’t slay the “giants in your life”....that’s why you need Jesus!
- Think→ How does this passage relate to Jesus? How has Jesus fulfilled this passage?

Application – How will I change?

- Because of the gospel and by God’s grace, I will_____. [Think, Feel, Do]
- If “Do,” then be specific! “I need to read the Bible more” is not an application, it’s an implication.
- Answer the questions – *how* and *when* and *where* you are going to do this. → Be realistic

Your Turn – Romans 8:31-39

[31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<u>Observations</u>	<u>Interpretive Questions/Answers</u>
What was the author trying to tell the original audience? Why?	<u>Application</u> Main Point: Christological Fulfillment: Application for me:

Study Four: Different Bible Translations and Using Study Tools

Review

- What are the three elements of Inductive Bible Study?
- What question is the “Observation” step trying to answer?
- What question is the “Interpretation” step trying to answer?
- What question is the “Application” step trying to answer?

Understanding Different Bible Translations

- The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, the New Testament was originally written in Greek
- The job of Biblical translators is to take the “original autographs” (OT and NT manuscripts) and translate them into English (or another known language).
 - o A great example of this is Wycliffe Bible Translators (www.wycliffe.org)
- There are a few broad categories that most translations fit into:
 - o Word-For-Word Translations: NASB, ESV, KJV
 - These translations will sometimes sacrifice “readability” for the sake of specific accuracy with the original texts
 - o Thought-For-Thought: HCSB, NIV
 - These translations try to strike a balance between “readability” and overall accuracy with the original text
 - o Paraphrase: NLT, TLB, MSG
 - These translations will sacrifice accuracy with the original texts for the sake of readability

Compare these three different versions of Ephesians 2:8-9

KJV: [8] *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

ESV: [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

The Message: *Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving.*

What are some of the benefits you see of looking at multiple translations?

Some Helpful Study Tools to Consider

- *Commentaries* – These are helpful verse-by-verse summaries and explanations for any book in the Bible.
- *Concordance* – These list every occurrence of individual words (usually tied to the original language). A famous one: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, by James Strong.
- *Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia* – These give background information on names, people, places, terms, customs, as well as the authors and settings of particular Bible books.
- *Study Bible* – Typically the all-in-one package. (Dave likes *The ESV Study Bible* but there are other great ones)
- *The Bible Project*- These are helpful YouTube videos that help you understand the main themes and general flow of biblical books (www.bibleproject.com or search “The Bible Project” on YouTube)