



— *HOW TO* —  
*STUDY*  
*THE BIBLE*

# *HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE*

Below are 4 simple principles that will help guide your studies. It doesn't have to be over complicated! If you'd like to dive in right away, perhaps begin practicing by working through Ephesians 2:1-10 as you read this document. Take a moment to pray before you begin.

# FINDING THE CONTEXT

## SURVEY THE BIG PICTURE

In no other book or letter would we jump right in to the middle of the text, read a couple lines and then assume we have a full understanding of what the author is trying to convey. So why do we do this with the Bible? To truly grasp what is being communicated, we need to take the time to survey the big picture.

### 1) *Historical*

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- Think through who is the author and who are the recipients?  
Also consider the date, geography, and culture.
- While it isn't necessary to consult outside resources, two places you can look for this basic information are:
  - *Soniclight.com* – free online commentary. See under the tab “Study Notes”
  - *ESV Study Bible*

### 2) *Literary*

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- What comes before/after the passage?
- How does this passage relate to the passages that come immediately before and after it? How does it relate to the message of the entire book?
- What is the literary style of the book? Is it a historical narrative, a letter, a poem, or apocalyptic? How should I read it in light of the literary style?

### 3) *Redemptive*

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- On a macro scale, where does this fit in the big picture of God's restoration of all creation into a right relationship with Himself? What does this passage reveal about that larger narrative?

# *OBSERVE WHAT'S THERE*

*EXPLORE THE PASSAGE*

Observation is the art of seeing what is really there. The longer you spend in observation, the less time you will need to spend in interpretation AND the more likely your interpretation will be correct.

## *4) Underline the Verbs*

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## *5) Circle Key Words*

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- What words continue to repeat throughout the passage?
- What seems to be a primary focus?

## *6) Box Connecting Words*

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- For example – what is the “therefore” there for? Look for words like but, and, so, yet, however. These will tell you how passages relate.

## *7) Find the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How*

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# — INTERPRET THE MEANING —

DISCOVER THE BIG IDEA

Often we want to make ourselves the center of the story. However, the goal of interpretation is to lay any of our preconceived notions aside and discover what the author was trying to convey to the original audience.

## 8) Look Up Key Words

- Find their meaning through cross-referencing. Cross reference how the word is used in 1) other parts of the book 2) other books by the same author, and 3) the Bible as a whole.
- Some places to begin: - Biblegateway.com  
- The concordance in the back of a Study Bible

## 9) Tackle Any Tough Questions

- List all the options
  - *Pros and Cons for each potential interpretation*
  - *Choose the most likely option*
    - Consider the normal use of language. What would be the most obvious use of language?
    - Interpret Scripture with Scripture. If you are coming to a conclusion about a passage that directly contradicts another part of Scripture, then you need to reconsider. Scripture won't contradict itself.

## 10 ) Compare Multiple Translations

## 11) Find the Big Idea

- Above all, what is the author's main point?



# APPLY THE TRUTH

RESPOND TO GOD

Finally, we don't read Scripture just for head knowledge but to be transformed more into the likeness of Christ. Begin by asking these four questions:

## 12) What does this teach me about God?

- Start with this. A correct view of God will help shape a correct view of ourselves.

## 13) What does this reveal about my sin?

- Not just the sin of humanity. What does this specifically say about my sin?  
How can the word sink into my heart to bring about life-change.

## 14) How does this point to Christ's redemption?

15) Finally: What is the one truth I need to apply to my life this week? Ask God for His help.

## ***RECOMMENDED READING***

Much of this material was taken from an 8 page packet published by Grace Bible Church and content developed by Cru. This is meant to be an abridged version. If you'd like an elaboration on the content see:

[www.grace-bible.org/uploads/publications/Bible\\_Study\\_Methods.pdf](http://www.grace-bible.org/uploads/publications/Bible_Study_Methods.pdf)

[http://ibs.cru.org/files/8013/7110/7358/BSM\\_Class\\_Notes\\_S2013.pdf](http://ibs.cru.org/files/8013/7110/7358/BSM_Class_Notes_S2013.pdf)

- *How to Study the Bible for All Its Worth*, Fee & Stuart
  
- *How to Study Your Bible*, Kay Arthur
  
- *The Joy of Discovery*, Oletta Wald