

# Bible Study Essentials

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A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR OBSERVING, INTERPRETING, AND  
APPLYING SCRIPTURE IN HEALTHY AND HOLISTIC MANNER



These worksheets have been adapted from bible study resources from "Living by the Book" by the late Dr. Howard Hendricks, "Women of the Word" by Jen Wilkin, "One to One Bible Reading" by David Helm, and the ministry of Risen Motherhood.

# Getting Started

*"The Bible was written not to satisfy your curiosity but to help you conform to Christ's image. Not to make you a smarter sinner but to make you like the Savior. Not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts but to transform your life." – Dr. Howard Hendricks*

*"It seemed beyond obvious that if God had given us His revealed will in the Bible, I should be spending more time trying to know and understand it" – Jen Wilkin in "Women of the Word"*

## 1. Begin with Prayer

We all need the Spirit's help in understanding Scripture. The Holy Spirit is our Helper and will help us understand what we're reading (John 14:25-27). We don't critique the Bible; the Bible critiques us. Pray that your time in the Word would reveal any area of your life that may not be in submission to God and His Word. Pray that God will help you hear from Him, believe His Word, and obey His Word. (Psalm 119:33-40)

## 2. Get a Study Bible

Use a trustworthy study Bible for step 1: Context. However, for Observation and Meaning, simply get alone with the text. We recommend the ESV Study Bible and in terms of different translations, we recommend the ESV, CSB, NIV, NASB, RSV or NLT translations. The ESV is closer to a "word for word" translation based off the original languages while the NLT is more "thought for thought". Choose one that you can read and comprehend well.

## 3. Get alone with the text

Remember, the goal of Bible study is to discover, for yourself, who God is through your diligent study of "a book that boldly and clearly reveals who God is on every page" and to allow the Spirit to lead and guide you through your study. We recommend repetitive reading of the passage/book once a day or until you're familiar with the overall theme and message. You can write directly in a Bible (like a journaling Bible) or we suggest printing out the book or passage you're studying on paper in a large font (10-12 pt.), double spaced. You can search what you'll be studying at [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) and copy and paste it into a word document to print. This allows you to see the passage while allowing enough room for the steps in the Observation phase in the worksheets on the following pages. You can even use different colored pens to organize your observations, note various themes, etc. Try to avoid reading the study notes until after you've gone through the first two steps (Observation and Meaning) as outlined in the worksheets below. Consult the study notes and commentaries only after you've completed the "observation" and "meaning" sections to make sure you're not in the weeds or haven't missed something important. Once you're confident in your observation and meaning notes, move on to personal application of the text. Pray for the Spirit to help you hear, understand, and obey His Word.

## 4. Get together with others

There is tremendous value in studying the Bible personally and with other believers. We encourage you to regularly be in community with other believers in order to share what God is teaching you. This also allows you to learn from each other as you'll still have questions. In addition, discussing the themes, questions, observations, and conclusions with other believers can illuminate things you may have missed or challenge any hidden biases you may have as you approach the text. Studying together should also lead to living it out together as well. Seek to hold each other accountable to not just study the Word but apply the Word (James 1:22-25).

# Bible Study Worksheet

Passage/Book: \_\_\_\_\_

## Context:

1. Who wrote it?
2. When/where was it written?
3. To whom was it written?
4. In what literary style?
5. Why was it written?

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## Themes:

Have these themes in mind as you study each passage or book. Make note of the overall theme of the passage or if there are multiple themes layered on top of one another in the passage. Each book has a general theme and purpose but look for specific themes within the larger overarching theme.

### **GOSPEL TRUTHS:**

What does the text say (explicitly or implicitly) about the gospel message? Look for statements about God's holiness, man's sin, redemption through Christ, and our future hope in the full restoration of creation.

### **NEW SELF / IDENTITY:**

What does the text say about who we are in Christ, after we are filled with his Holy Spirit and living free from the penalty of sin? Often, this is seen in context of our "old self," in passages that compare and contrast qualities of a believer versus an unbeliever.

### **THE GREAT COMMISSION:**

What does the text say about Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations? (Matthew 28:16-20) Where and how does this text encourage us to love our neighbor, witness to unbelievers, and help other believers mature in the faith?

### **THE GREAT COMMANDMENT:**

What does the text say about loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? (Matthew 22:37) What does this love look like and how do we obtain it?

### **THE CHURCH:**

What does the text say about God's establishment of, purpose for, and mission for the church (globally and locally)? It's sometimes helpful to note where a passage is speaking to the church (general), the church (specific), or a believer (as an individual).

### **REDEMPTIVE PROMISES:**

What does the text say about God's promises to us as redeemed followers of Jesus? What can we look forward to, be confident of, and have unchanging hope in?

### **"TYPES" OF JESUS:**

How do the main characters or themes in the passage point back – or forward – to the person and work of Jesus? (As the Jesus Storybook Bible says, "Every story whispers His name.")





**Meaning** *(continued)*

- **Content** (information gathered in the observation stage)
- **Context** (literary, historical, cultural, geographic, and theological)
- **Culture** (historical factors & influences that led to the writing of the text)
- **Comparison** (compare Scripture to Scripture; view cross references)
- Summarize the passage in your own words by paraphrasing it.

***2. Is our theological (or timeless) principle(s) congruent with what the rest of the Bible says?*** (Scripture interprets Scripture)

- How does this passage fit into the overarching storyline of the Bible?

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**Patience:**  
Pray for God to show you the meaning and the application of the passage.

What is He showing you?

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<p><b>Application</b></p> <p>Know the text (using observation and interpretation) and know yourself (what are my weaknesses/strengths?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do I learn about God?</li> <li>- How does His character change me and my view of self?</li> <li>- How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?</li> <li>- Is there an attitude, mindset, or behavior that needs to change?</li> <li>- Is there a sin to avoid?</li> <li>- Is there a promise to claim?</li> <li>- Is there a verse to memorize?</li> <li>- Is there a challenge to face?</li> <li>- Is there a command to obey?</li> <li>- What does the text demand of my life?</li> </ul>	<p><b>What does the text say about God? How does the text change me?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>Prayer:</b></p>	<p><b>Based on your time in God's Word, what is your prayer for today? This week? This month? This year?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

