

How to Study the Bible

Seven steps to help you understand a passage and respond thoughtfully.

Start with your Bible and a short, complete passage. Use pages 2-3 for your notes and page 4 for a worked example.

1 Start with prayer

Put away distractions. Ask God for attentiveness, wisdom, and a heart willing to respond.

2 Read a short passage carefully

Read a whole paragraph or scene twice. Notice who is speaking, who is listening, and what happens.

3 Observe key words and details

Record two or three details: repeated words, contrasts, commands, or connections such as “because” and “therefore.”

4 Explore the context

Read before and after the passage. Consider the book, original audience, situation, and kind of writing.

5 Understand the main message

In one or two sentences, summarize what the writer communicates to the original audience.

6 Check your understanding

Which words or verses support your summary? Revise it if needed. Use a trusted resource or ask for help with unresolved questions.

7 Apply what you learn and pray

Identify a response that follows the passage: an action, a truth to trust, or a reason to worship. Pray about what you have learned.

A manageable start

Begin with 10-15 minutes and continue the same passage tomorrow if needed. Work through one book in short sections. If you miss a day, simply begin again.

Read and explore

Use pages 2-3 for each passage. Print fresh copies or type into the fields and save a copy.

Passage

Date

Bible translation

1 Start with prayer

Ask God for wisdom and attentiveness. What would you like to bring to him as you begin?

2 Read a short passage carefully

Read it twice. Who is speaking or acting? What is happening?

3 Observe key words and details

Write two or three observations. Include verse numbers where helpful.

4 Explore the context

What comes before and after? Note the kind of writing, audience, and relevant background. Mark what you still need to check.

Understand and respond

Return to the passage as you write. Let the text guide both your summary and your response.

5 Understand the main message

What is the writer communicating to the original audience? Summarize the main message in one or two sentences.

6 Check your understanding

Which words or verses support your summary? What needs revising?

What remains unclear? Note a question and a resource or person to consult.

7 Apply what you learn and pray

What specific action, truth to trust, or reason to worship follows from this passage? How does your response connect to its message?

Write a brief prayer asking God to help you respond.

Return to this study

When will you return, and what will you revisit or put into practice?

Learning contentment

Philippians 4:10-14 | Read the passage in your own Bible first.

This example models the process. The personal response and prayer are illustrations; let your response arise from the passage.

1 Start with prayer

Ask God for help to understand Paul's words and to respond honestly.

2 Read carefully

Paul expresses joy at the Philippians' renewed concern for him. He describes learning contentment in both need and plenty.

3 Observe the details

Notice the contrasts in verse 12: plenty and hunger, abundance and need. In verse 14, Paul also affirms their sharing in his trouble.

4 Explore the context

This is part of a letter. Read Philippians 4:15-20 as well: Paul discusses the Philippians' practical support. His words about strength belong in this setting.

5 Summarize the main message

Paul has learned contentment in changing circumstances through Christ's strength. He also values the Philippians' support in his hardship.

6 Check the interpretation

Verses 11-12 identify the circumstances behind verse 13. Christ's strength here is not a guarantee that every ambition will succeed. Verse 14 shows that receiving support still matters.

7 Apply and pray

Possible response: Identify one situation where contentment is difficult. Ask Christ for strength to remain faithful while remaining open to help and appropriate change.

A possible closing prayer

Lord Jesus, help me trust you in both need and plenty. Give me strength to remain faithful, and help me receive support with gratitude. Amen.

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