

COURSE HANDOUTS

AND

**PROCESSING QUESTIONS
AND PROJECTS
FOR HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE**

LESSON 1

Essential Bible Study Scripture Passages

Scripture is “God Breathed” (“Inspired”)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)

Scripture originated with the Holy Spirit

2 Peter 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

David spoke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

Mark 12:36 re: Psalm 110 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." (NIV)

Scripture described as “The “Word of God”

Mark 7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that. (NIV)

Understanding the scripture requires effort on our part.

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV)

THE FORMATION OF THE CANON

DEFINITION: “Canon”—The books of the Bible which meet the criteria to be considered inspired.

PROCESS: The Holy Spirit guides men and women to say and write what He wants us to have preserved.

Three Steps In The Formation of The Canon

1. The Holy Spirit inspires an author to write a document (letter, song, proverb, etc.)
2. God’s people recognize the inspiration of the document and gather it together with other documents.
3. God’s people affirm that a specific collection of documents is canonical.

A Brief Chronology of The Formation of the Canon

(All dates are approximate)

Old Testament

3rd Century BC—The Old Testament was translated into Greek (The Septuagint)

150 BC--The Old Testament Canon was complete and recognized as such

AD—30—Jesus recognized the Old Testament as inspired (Matthew 22:29)

AD 90—A consensus of Rabbis affirms the Old Testament Canon

New Testament

65 AD--Peter recognizes Paul’s writings as “scripture” (2 Peter 3:15-16)

100 AD--All NT scripture had been written and in was in circulation

125 AD--A long list of recognized books exists

170 AD--Irenaeus indicates general acceptance of the gospels

325 AD--1st Ecumenical Council of Nicea discusses the Canon

397 AD--3rd Council of Carthage, Augustine has the same list as we do today

1546 AD --Council of Trent declares the Apocryphal books as Canonical

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

RESPONSE QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. What do you hope to learn from this course?
2. What experience do you have with Bible study?
3. Why do you believe God wants us to study (or “be diligent”) in Bible study? (2 Timothy 2:15)
4. What passages would you like to have a clearer understanding of?
5. What are the three questions you need to answer in Bible study, and how are each of them accomplished?
6. What is the “Bible”? Which of the documents have you already read?
7. What does “inerrant” mean?
8. How would you explain how we got the Bible?

LESSON 2

The Books Of The Bible

The Old Testament

The Pentateuch (Books of Moses)

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

The Major Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

The Historical Books

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

The Minor Prophets

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Poetic and Wisdom Literature

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs (Song of Solomon)

The Books Of The Bible

The New Testament

The Gospels

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

The Historical Books

The Acts of the Apostles

Paul's Letters

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

The General Letters

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

Apocalyptic Literature

The Revelation of John

Paul's Letters to the Churches

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians

Paul's Pastoral Letters

1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus

Paul's Prison Letters

Philemon
Ephesians
Colossians
Philippians

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

SESSION 2: BIBLE OVERVIEW

RESPONSE QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. How many documents make up the Bible?
2. What are the Old and New Testaments? What is the difference between them?
3. What are the first five books of the Bible called, and what do they describe?
4. What books are part of Poetic Literature (Wisdom Literature is considered to be part of Poetic Literature for this question)?
5. How would you respond to people who say the Bible is not “historical”?
6. What is the difference between the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets?
7. What are the first three gospels called, and how do they differ from the Gospel of John?
8. What is Apocalyptic literature? How does a knowledge of Apocalyptic literature help you understand the Revelation of John?

LESSON 3

TYPES OF BIBLES/TRANSLATIONS

(Examples are my classifications. Others, including publishers, might not agree)

Literal Translations Also referred to as “word for word”, these are an attempt to translate the words as close to the original as possible. Since there is no such thing as “word for word” from one language to another, these translations are attempts at being as faithful to the original text as possible. **Examples:** Authorized Version (King James); New American Standard, Revised Standard.

Combined or Dynamic Equivalence Translations These translations are attempts at translating the original text in phrases and figures of speech more familiar to us than the original language. **Examples:** New International Version, English Standard Version (some would place these as literal translations), New King James Version, New Living Translation.

Idiomatic Translations. These translations render phrase for phrase into modern, informal verbiage. They are similar to Dynamic Equivalence Translations. **Example:** Contemporary English Version.

Expanded Translation. These translations expand on simple translations by adding synonyms or bracketed explanations to the simple translation. **Example:** The Amplified Bible.

Simplified Translations. These translations use simplistic language and simplified grammatical construction to make the translation understandable to people with lower reading levels. **Example:** Today’s English Version.

Paraphrases. These are not translations, but simplified restatements of the text in the words of the author, reflecting his understanding of what the text means. **Examples:** The Living Bible, The Message.

Gender Neutral Bibles. These are Bibles taking a translation and changing some gender terms to read more gender neutral. These are sometimes more accurate (e.g. “man” translated “person”) and other times simply reflect the desire of the editors for gender neutrality (e.g. “God our Father and Mother”). **Examples:** Gender Neutral Bible. Some would add certain editions of the Revised Standard or New International Version.

Biased Translation. Very rare, these translations intentionally mistranslated in order to reflect theological biases. **Example:** The New World Translation (Jehovah’s Witnesses).

Many Bibles add various resources to the text of various translations above. **Examples:** Reference Bibles such as the Ryrie Study Bible, Scofield Reference Bible; Devotional Bibles such as The Women’s Devotional Bible, The Spirit-Filled Bible.

Bible Passages From Different Translations

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.
NASU

Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.
NIV

Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.
ESV

Teach a child how he should live, and he will remember it all his life.
TEV

Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and
when he is old he will not depart from it.
AMP

Point your kids in the right direction —
when they're old they won't be lost.
THE MESSAGE

Bible Passages From Different Translations

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
KJV

Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained,
But happy is he who keeps the law.
NASB

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;
but blessed is he who keeps the law.
NIV

Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,
but blessed is he who keeps the law.
ESV

A nation without God's guidance is a nation without order. Happy is the man who keeps God's
law!
TEV

Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish; but he who keeps
the law [of God, which includes that of man] — blessed (happy, fortunate, and enviable) is he.
AMP

If people can't see what God is doing,
they stumble all over themselves;
But when they attend to what he reveals,
they are most blessed.
THE MESSAGE

Bible Passages From Different Translations

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
NASU

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
NIV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
ESV

Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God.
TEV

IN THE beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.
AMP

The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God,
THE MESSAGE

Bible Passages From Different Translations

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

NASU

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

NIV

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

ESV

Do your best to win full approval in God's sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth.

TEV

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

KJV

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

AMP

Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple.

THE MESSAGE

Bible Passages From Different Translations

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

NASU

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NIV

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

ESV

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.

TEV

Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action), So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

AMP

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another — showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

THE MESSAGE

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

SESSION 3: TRANSLATIONS

RESPONSE QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. In what language were the Biblical documents written?
2. Is there a “literal” translation of the Bible? Please explain your response.
3. What is “dynamic equivalence”?
4. What is the difference between a paraphrase and a translation? Name a paraphrase.
5. How would you describe the following translations? When would each be useful?
The King James Version
The New American Standard Version
The New Revised Standard Version
The New International Version
The New King James Version
The Amplified Bible
6. What translation(s) would you choose for your own study? Why would you choose these?

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7. Using the handouts titled “Bible Passages From Different Translations”, compare the wording of the different translations of each passage. What do you note about each translation? Does this change your thinking about the answer to question #6?

LESSON 4

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

1. Bible translations
 - Study oriented—NASB, NRSV, ESV
 - Easy reading oriented—NIV, TEV, CEV, NKJV, NLB
 - Paraphrases—*not* Bibles—The New Testament in Modern English, The Living Bible, The Message
 - Interlinear Bibles
 - Special Compilations (e.g. Chronological Bible, Harmonies)
2. Concordances
 - Exhaustive (First step in word definitions) vs. Brief
3. Topical Bibles
 - No specific word required
 - Nave's Topical Bible (public domain)
4. Bible Dictionaries
 - *Not* English dictionaries
 - Dictionaries vs. mini-encyclopedias
 - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words (public domain)
 - Theological Dictionary of the NT (Abridged) aka, "Little Kittel"
 - Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
 - Kittel's Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words
 - Specialty dictionaries (e.g. Trent's Synonyms of the New Testament, Old Testament)
5. Bible Encyclopedias
6. Commentaries
 - One Volume—not recommended
 - Book by Book (Tyndale, NICNT, Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture series)
 - Section (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Bible History)
 - Topic (Hard Sayings of Jesus, "Custom" Commentaries)
 - Background (New Testament History)
7. Bible Atlases
8. Digital Resources
 - Full Study Programs: PC Study Bible and Logos Bible software
 - Free Study Programs: www.e-sword.net; www.blueletterbible.org; www.biblehub.com; www.biblegateway.com; www.crosswalk.com
 - Phone Apps: YouVersion; Spectrum Bible

Resources For Bible Study

Bible Translations: The first tool needed for Bible study is a translation of the Bible into your own language (unless of course you read Greek and Hebrew). This requires that you choose which translation (or translations) you wish to use. Remember that translations range on a continuum from those intended to be very “literal” in their translation and grammar, to those intended to be used primarily for reading and not focusing on word for word accuracy. The most common examples are the New International Version (NIV) for general reading, and the New American Standard Bible (NASB) for more academic study. In doing these studies, it is a good idea to read from both. You can do this either by obtaining print copies of both, or by using a web based Bible study program such as Crosswalk (www.crosswalk.com) or E-Sword (www.e-sword.net). Bible translations are also available on phone apps, for example, YouVersion and Spectrum Bible. For the purpose of study, it is best to avoid using paraphrases—books which do not actually translate the Bible, but instead rephrase it to reflect what the author thinks the Bible means in modern language—such as *The Living Bible* (not to be confused with the New Living Translation, which is a valid translation) or *The Message*.

Interlinear Bibles: An Interlinear Bible presents the text in the original language, the original language in English letters, and an English Translation in lines one on top of another. Most also include grammatical parsing information for each word.

Parallel Bibles: Parallel Bibles are simply combinations of different Bible translations laid out side by side. These allow the reader to study a given passage in different translations at the same time. The typical Parallel Bible contains four to eight different translations.

Harmonies of the Bible: A Harmony takes different passages of the Bible which describe the same events and lays them side by side, usually in chronological order, so that the reader can study that event from all Biblical accounts at the same time. For example, a Harmony of the Gospels takes the four Gospels, organizes them chronologically, and then lays the different accounts of each passage side by side.

Concordances: A concordance is a book which lists words used in the Bible, along with where they are used. The most complete concordances are called “exhaustive concordance” because they list every single instance where each word is found in a given translation (there are different concordances for each major translation including the King James Version, NIV, and NASB). Exhaustive concordances have one more useful function—they provide a very simple Bible dictionary. When you look up a word in the exhaustive concordance (for example, “love” in 1 Corinthians 13), you will find the word listed by the reference, and a number. That number refers to the number assigned to that word (the Greek or Hebrew word) in the dictionary at the back of the concordance. By looking up that number you learn the specific word used in the original language (both in the characters of that language and in English), and a very brief definition of that word.

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Bible Dictionaries: A Bible dictionary is like any English dictionary, except it provides the definitions of words found in the Bible. For example, if you look up the word “love” in 1 Corinthians 13 as noted above, you will find the Greek word is “agape”. You then go to the Bible dictionary to find a deeper definition for the word “agape”. Bible dictionaries are organized in two ways. Some of the older ones (like *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*) list words as they are found in a specific translation (in the case of “*Vine’s*”, the King James Version). Others, including the best new Bible dictionaries, list the Greek or Hebrew word. To use these, it is most helpful to first use the concordance to discover the specific Greek or Hebrew word being used, then look that word up in a tool such as

- Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*
- The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
- The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged (aka “*Little Kittel*” because it is a condensation of a 10 volume set).
- Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*
- Specialty dictionaries such as Trench’s *Synonyms of the New Testament*

By using these tools you can gain a clear and much deeper understanding of the words the Holy Spirit preserved in the original language of the document.

Topical Bibles: A Topical Bible is a listing of topics (a name, a place, an item, etc.) from the Bible, and giving an extensive list of passages which give you information on that topic. For example, if you want to look up what Paul said about “marriage” using a concordance, you would only get those passages which actually contain the word “marriage”. This would exclude passages such as Ephesians chapter 5. This passage clearly talks about marriage, but doesn’t use the word itself, instead referring to what wives and husbands should do. An example of this tool would be Nave’s *Topical Bible*.

Bible Atlases: A Bible Atlas is a set of maps depicting the geographical regions described in the Bible in different ways (e.g. Palestine in the time of Christ, Palestine in the time of Joshua, the Mediterranean in the time of Paul, etc.). They are useful to help the reader understand the stories unfolding in scripture.

Bible Commentaries: A Commentary is simply a written set of teachings, in this case, about the Bible. The most common form is for a commentary to teach on a specific book or section of books in the Bible. It will usually offer background information on that book, followed by a verse by verse or paragraph by paragraph written teaching section addressing grammar, word studies, historical background, cross references, application, etc. However, there are specialty commentaries that treat specific aspects (i.e. customs, imagery, etc.) of the Bible.

- One Volume—not recommended
- Book by Book (Tyndale, NICNT, Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture series)
- Section (Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, *Old Testament History*)
- Topic (*Hard Sayings of Jesus*, “Custom” Commentaries)
- Background (Surveys, Bruce’s *New Testament History*)

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Bible Encyclopedias

Digital Resources: Digital resources are any of the above resources in digital form or applications that are specifically designed for a digital format.

--Full Study Programs: PC Study Bible and Logos Bible software

--Free Study Programs: www.e-sword.net; www.blueletterbible.org; www.biblehub.com;
www.biblegateway.com; www.crosswalk.com

--Phone Apps: YouVersion; Spectrum Bible

BASIC BIBLE STUDY RESOURCE PRACTICE

TRANSLATIONS

1. Identify the translation you are using and classify it in terms of whether it is primarily a “reading tool” or a “study tool”.
2. Select a passage you would like to read (this should be at least one paragraph long).
3. Read this passage (aloud if you are working with a team) in at least one “reading tool” translation and one “study tool” translation.
4. Identify any differences you notice and discuss their significance (i.e. what does one do for you that the other doesn't? is this useful to you? Why/why not?).

CONCORDANCE

1. Select a phrase you remember from the Bible, then select a word from that phrase. Look up the word in the concordance and find the citation for the passage you selected.
2. Survey the other entries for the same word. Make a few notes about how that word is used. List any insights you gain from these passages.
3. Look up the definition of the word you originally looked up. Write down anything you learn about the word from the concordance dictionary.

TOPICAL BIBLE

1. Select a topic and look it up in the Topical Bible.
2. Make notes of what you learn from the entries on this topic.
3. Look up some of the passages listed that aren't expanded on in the text.
4. If there are other words listed under “see...”, look one up and follow the same instructions.

BIBLE DICTIONARY

1. Select a word from a specific passage in the Bible you want to look up.
2. Look up the word in a Concordance and note the Greek or Hebrew word and its basic definition.
3. Look up the Greek or Hebrew word in a Bible Dictionary and make notes of what else you learn about this word.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

SESSION 4: RESOURCES FOR BIBLE STUDY

RESPONSE QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. What are the three questions to be asked in Bible study? In terms of these questions, when should Bible study resources be used?
2. What is the first and most important Bible study resource?
3. What is a concordance? What is the difference between a concordance and an exhaustive concordance? What are the two primary uses for a concordance?
4. What is a topical Bible? When is one useful?
5. Should we use newer Bible study resources? Why/why not?
6. Which resources would you use to do a word study (discover the meaning of a specific word in the Bible)?
7. What are each of the following resources, and how does it help you study the Bible?
 - Interlinear Bible
 - Bible Harmony
 - Bible Commentary
 - Bible Atlas

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8. What electronic/digital Bible study tools have you used? Which do you find most useful?

9. Design your Bible Study Tool Box.

Which tools would you start with? Why? (Specify whether these would be digital or paper).

Which tools would you add to the basic toolbox, and why? (Specify whether these would be digital or paper).

Which tool(s) do you believe you would never use? Why?

How would you ensure that you can build this toolbox even with limited financial resources?

10. Obtain an exhaustive concordance and walk through the steps for identifying the Hebrew word translated “rod” in Psalm 23:4, and the Greek word translated “forgive” in Matthew 6:15.

11. Obtain a Bible dictionary and look up the meaning of the words you identified in question 10.

From your research answer the following questions:

--What is the difference between a “rod” and a “Staff”?

--What is the significance of the definition of the word translated “forgive” for someone who struggles with forgiving someone who hurt them badly.

Session 4: Bible Study Resources, Processing Questions and Projects, p.3.

12. Use the exhaustive concordance to learn as much about forgiveness as possible.

13. Obtain a topical Bible. Using it, what can you learn about forgiveness that you didn't learn using the exhaustive concordance.

LESSON 5

PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

1. ***Approach the Bible with an open mind, your goal being to understand what it says.***
 - *admit to bias
 - *screen bias by admitting to other possibilities
 - *interpret personal experience in the light of scripture
2. ***Define assumptions regarding the text.***
 - *Biblical inspiration and authority
 - *consistency of truth
 - *progressive revelation
 - *the role of the Holy Spirit in understanding the text
 - *the purpose of the Bible is to change our lives, not add to our knowledge
 - *the responsibility of each believer to study, understand and respond to the Bible
3. ***Understand the passage according to its context.***
 - *immediate context
 - *larger context
4. ***Understand the passage in the light of all that the Bible teaches.***
 - *the whole Bible is the ultimate context of the passage
 - *understand the unclear in the light of the clear
5. ***Understand the meaning of the words in the passage.***
 - *original language
 - *denotation (definition) options
 - *connotation
 - *historical context –“usus loquendi” (how was the word used at the time and place of the writing?)
 - *figurative vs. literal
6. ***Recognize and understand any figurative expressions in the passage.***
 - *simile--comparison of two things which are alike (she is like a...)
 - *metaphor--comparison by equation (she is a...)
 - *symbol--the use of something to represent something else
 - *idiom--an expression peculiar to a specific culture
 - *metonymy--use of a part to represent the whole, or the whole to represent a part
 - *hyperbole--exaggeration
 - *rhetorical question--use of a question for emphasis without desiring an answer
 - *euphemism--use of a less objectionable term for a more objectionable term
 - *anthropomorphism--the attribution of human characteristics to something not human
 - *type--an OT person, place, or thing illustrating a N T truth
 - *onomatopoeia--a term which spells out a sound

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- 7. *Recognize and understand any parable or allegory in the passage.***
 - *parable--a brief story with a spiritual truth
 - *allegory--an extended metaphor

- 8. *Understand the passage according to its grammatical construction.***
 - *consider parts of speech
 - *consider the construction of the original language
 - *consider choice of tense, case, etc.
 - *consider clauses, phrases, etc. and their relationship to the whole

- 9. *Understand the passage in the light of its background.***
 - *the writer's purpose
 - *historical considerations
 - *cultural considerations

- 10. *Examples are authoritative only when followed by a command.***
 - *history vs. instruction
 - *commands must be contextually appropriate

- 11. *Church history is important, but not authoritative, in understanding the Bible.***

LESSON 6

The Process of Textual Bible Study

1. If possible, this study should be done with at least one other person, preferably one who does not always hold your theological views.
2. Determine the passage to be studied.
3. Read the passage in at least two translations (preferably one designed for easy “reading” and one designed for academic study) as well as the original language if you are able.

For the remainder of this process, the passage being studied must be no larger than a few paragraphs. If you are studying a larger passage, break it into shorter sections.

4. Determine the context and background of this passage (purpose, historical setting, author, date, location, etc.).
5. Outline the passage, noting the primary point being made and any commands being given.
6. Note any questions you have regarding the passage or its background.
7. List any words in the passage you believe to be very important to the meaning of the passage, or which you cannot define (do not “guess” or determine from context).
8. Define any words you listed above by determining the word used in the original language and defining that word using the principle of “usus loquendi”.
9. Using Bible study tools, answer any questions you listed in #6.
10. Determine what the key message of the passage is, and what response is required. (The latter should be both generic—that which is for everyone—and specific—that which is how you need to respond personally. The second of these should be unique to your life and setting.)
11. Seek assistance if you are unable to do any of the above.

The Process of Topical Bible Study

1. If possible, this study should be done with at least one other person, preferably one who does not always hold your theological views.
2. Determine the topic or question to be studied.
3. Making a list of relevant passages using a topical Bible, an exhaustive concordance, cross references, your memory, etc. Remember to search on a variety of words related to your topic or question (i.e. instead of searching on “marriage”, search also on “husband”, “wife”, etc.). Allow your list to grow as you do this search.
4. If your list is extensive, narrow it down by noting passages which are substantial, well known passages, and passages which contain insights which are crucial to understanding the overall teaching of scripture on this subject. Continue in this process with the narrowed list, then go back and use the process on the remaining passages if time permits.
5. Read the passages from your list in at least two translations (preferably one designed for easy “reading” and one designed for academic study) as well as the original language if you are able.

Follow the remaining steps for each passage on your narrowed list. Be careful about your own bias and preconceptions as you enter the study. One way to do this is to study with someone with different biases and preconceptions.

6. Determine the context and background of this passage (purpose, historical setting, author, date, location, etc.). Pay special attention to any cultural practices which might shed light on the subject you are studying (using historical research, specialized commentaries, etc.).
7. Outline the passage, noting the primary point being made and any commands being given. Pay special attention to any insights, explicit or implicit, which shed light on your subject or question.
8. Note any questions you have regarding the passage or its background.
9. List any words in the passage you believe to be very important to the meaning of the passage, or which you cannot define (do not “guess” or determine from context). Pay special attention to any words which might relate to your subject (i.e. if your subject is marriage, studying words such as “husband”, “wife”, “submit”, and “love” would be important to your study).

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10. Define any words you listed above by determining the word used in the original language and defining that word using the principle of “usus loquendi”.

11. Using Bible study tools, answer any questions you listed in #8.

12. Determine what the key message(s) of these passages is/are, and what response is required. (The latter should be both generic—that which is for everyone—and specific—that which is how you need to respond personally. The second of these should be unique to your life and setting.)

13. Seek assistance if you are unable to do any of the above.

Word Study Process For Biblical Words

NOTE: This process assumes the student does not have the ability to read the original language personally. If s/he does, skip steps 2-4.

1. Read the passage you are studying and determine which word(s) you want to study in depth.
2. Identify the word. For example, “love”, and the specific Bible reference from which you take the word such as Ephesians 5:25. Remember you are taking this word from a specific **translation of the Bible**.
3. Using an **exhaustive concordance** for the version you are reading (e.g. NIV, NASB, etc.) look up the word in the passage you are reading (i.e. look up “love”, then go down to the entry for Ephesians 5:25). After identifying the word and the passage, look for the number at the end of the reference the concordance gives for that word. In this example, the number is “26”.
4. Turn to the back of the concordance, to the list of Greek and Hebrew words. Since this is the New Testament, you will be using the Greek list (“Greek to English Index—Lexicon of the New Testament). Look for the number you were given in step 3 (in this case, 26). You will see the Greek word in both Greek and English letters, and in some cases other information. You now know the Greek word you are reading, “agapao”. The concordance will usually give words used to translate this word. By looking at these words you may get a little broader understanding of the word “agapao”.
5. Using the word you learned from the concordance, go to an entry level **Bible dictionary** such as “Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the New Testament” and look up the word you just learned. In Vine’s, you will need the English word originally searched for **in the KJV**. This means you will need to look up Ephesians 5:25 in the KJV. In this case, the KJV also rendered “agapao” “love”. However, in some cases, other words will be used. Whichever word used in the KJV is the word you search for in the Vine’s dictionary, again “love” in this instance. You look up “love” and are presented with two sections: “Verbs” and “Nouns”. Look at the words listed and find the Greek word “agapao”. In this case you will find it immediately under “Verbs”.

NOTE: In this instance we are looking for information on a New Testament Greek word. If you are searching for information on an Old Testament Hebrew word, it is recommended that you start with the “Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament” instead of Vine’s.

6. Note what you learn from the dictionary (in this case Vine’s) about “agapao”. For example, you immediately learn it is a verb in this passage (Ephesians 5:25). In this instance, Vine’s gives a fair amount of information. Read it and note what you deem important to this study. Note also any questions you are left with after reading the entry in Vine’s. For example, how is the word being used grammatically in this passage? Did the entry differentiate this word sufficiently from other Greek words for “love” you may be aware of such as “eros” or “phileo”? (to learn this you will need to read the entries on these words if they exist).

7. Determine the grammatical information regarding the word in the specific passage. For example, in Ephesians 5:25, the word found is not “agapao”. The concordance and Vine’s were not wrong—this is the word you are studying. However, it is presented in its lexical form. This is necessary because, unlike English, many languages including Greek and Hebrew use a root word with different endings to show how the word is being used. For example, tense, person, mood, etc. are all designated by using a specific prefix and/or suffix. So, at this point, you want to know exactly what word is in Ephesians 5:25. To find this, one tool you can use is an **interlinear Bible**. Using this Bible, turn to the passage and look at the Greek words. You will find the word “love” along with the Greek word, Concordance # (this is derived from the original Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance numbers) and a parsing of the verb using letters. In this case, the letters are “v.pam.2p”. To understand these, you have to go to the table at the beginning of the Interlinear translation which tells you what each of these letters stands for. In this case, “v” means “verb”, “p” means “plural”, “a” means “active”, “m” means “imperative”, and “2p” means “second person”. This means that, in this case Paul is commanding a group of people (defined in the passage) to actively love someone. This is important because it makes it clear this is not a suggestion or observation that it would be nice—this is a command to love.

8. If you find you still have questions, consider going to a more in-depth dictionary such as “Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume”, also known as “Little Kittel”. To use Little Kittel you simply look up the English word you are trying to learn more about in the “English Key Words” list at the beginning of the book. You will find love, and then a number or set of numbers. When you look up the first number (in this case “5”) you will be taken to a section describing “agapao”. Where Vine’s gave you about one page of information on this word, Little Kittel gives you 5 ½ pages.

9. Summarize all you have learned from the resources you have used.

Remember: This process can (will) seem daunting and overwhelming when you first begin. Rest assured that, with a little practice, it will be second nature to you as long as you have the tools!

TEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY EXERCISE

A textual Bible study has as its focus a specific section of the Biblical text. The purpose of this study is to understand what God is saying through this text and how we might be faithful in response.

For this study, you will need a number of basic Bible study resources, pen, paper, and of course your Bible. Follow the steps below, making notes on this paper or others as you need.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Choose one of the following texts:
 - *Psalm 23
 - *1 Corinthians 12:12-26
 - *Revelation 2:1-7.
2. Read the text in at least two different translations, at least one being a “study tool” translation.
3. Note any questions you might have as you read the text concerning the meaning of words, phrases, etc.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. Write a brief (just a few sentences) summary of the immediate and greater contexts of the passage (e.g. what is the writer talking about immediately before and after this text, and what is the author talking about in general?). Make a note of any tools you use other than the text itself.
2. Add to any questions you may have written after your reading: any words whose meaning you aren't sure of; any words you believe are important enough to the passage to warrant extra study; any questions regarding grammar, etc.; any questions regarding the meaning of phrases used (whether questions of background, understanding figures of speech, etc.); any other questions you may have.
3. Prioritize these questions, then use any study tools needed to answer them.
4. Note any other passages of scripture you are aware of which might have *immediate* bearing on this passage.
5. Do whatever study is needed to answer the questions, recording your answers and their source, if other than the text itself.
6. Summarize this passage, highlighting anything you learned from your study that helps you understand the meaning of the text.

SO WHAT?

1. What do you need to change in your life as a response to this passage?
2. What encouragement can you draw from this passage?
3. What about this passage might be important for you to share with others?

TOPICAL BIBLE STUDY EXERCISE

A Topical Bible study has as its focus what the Bible says about a specific topic: a subject, person, event, etc. The purpose of this study is to understand what God is saying about this topic and how we might be faithful in response.

For this study, you will need a number of basic Bible study resources, pen, paper, and of course your Bible. Follow the steps below, making notes on this paper or others as you need.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Choose one of the following topics, or another of your choice:
 - *King David
 - *Forgiveness
 - *Baptism
 - *Locusts
2. Use a Topical Bible to locate passages in the scriptures which refer to the topic.
3. Use an Exhaustive Concordance to locate passages in the scriptures which either use the word which defines your topic or related words (e.g. if your topic is “marriage”, you might also look up “husband” or “wife”).
4. Read these passages in at least two different translations, at least one being a “study tool” translation.
5. Note any questions you might have as you read the text concerning the meaning of words, phrases, etc.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. List the primary passages which shed light on your topic and follow the directions for doing a textual study on these passages.
2. Make a list of statements you believe describe what these passages say about your topic.

SO WHAT?

1. What do you need to change in your life as a response to what you have learned?
2. What encouragement can you draw from what you have learned?
3. What about what you have learned might be important for you to share with others?

WORD STUDY PRACTICE

Use the process you learned to do word studies on the following words:
(All words from the NIV unless otherwise noted)

“**Love**” (Ephesians 5:25)

“**Forgive**” (Matthew 6:15)

“**Church**” (Matthew 18:16)

“**Submit**” (Ephesians 5:22)

“**Comfort**” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

“**Test**” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

“**Study**” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV)

“**Rebuking**” (2 Timothy 3:16)

“**Correcting**” (2 Timothy 3:16)

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

SESSION 6: BIBLE STUDY PROCESS

RESPONSE QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Name the two types of Bible study processes and define each.

2. Complete the “Textual Bible Study Exercise” provided. What did you find easy to do? What was difficult to do? (If you find you cannot complete the exercise, enlist the help of one of your local church leaders).

3. Complete the “Topical Bible Study Exercise” provided. What did you find easy to do? What was difficult to do? (If you find you cannot complete the exercise, enlist the help of one of your local church leaders).

4. Using the process you learned for doing word studies, select three words from the Word Study Practice handout provided and do as complete a word study as you can on those three words. What did you find easy to do? What was difficult to do? (If you find you cannot complete the exercise, enlist the help of one of your local church leaders).

A FINAL NOTE

We hope this series has been helpful to you. Any time you learn new skills or obtain a new tool, practice is needed in order to become skillful in their use. Bible study is no different. Having completed this course, you now need to practice! This takes a commitment of time and a desire to learn. If you are willing to do this faithfully, you will find the Word of God coming alive to you! God is a great communicator and a loving father. The Holy Spirit will guide you as you seek to know Him.

If you have concerns, comments or questions, please feel free to contact us at www.essentialfaithproject.org. We will respond as quickly as possible! We pray that God will reveal Himself to you!

Know Jesus and Be Faithful!