



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

I'll be the first one to admit I had no idea how to read the Bible until my sophomore year of college. I refuse to let you go as long as I did without knowing how to study the Bible because there is nothing that will change your life like the Word of God. You can, you will, and you must prioritize the Word of God. You must make a decision that this book will be the very foundation of your life. God wants to lead you to still waters; God wants to lead you to green pastures. Satan wants you to be miserable; Satan hates you and wants you to be a depressed, angry, bitter person who feels completely worthless. The Word of God is the story, the wisdom, and power of the gospel. It's EVERYTHING.

- Pastor Blaine

Introduction to The Bible

The Bible is God's perfect word, without error. Every book in the Bible, although physically written down by numerous authors, is inspired by God. The Bible is God's primary means of communicating His story and His character to His people.

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word "*biblia*" which means "little books". The Bible is actually a complex library of 66 books written by at least 40 different authors over a period of at least 1500 years. The oldest book was written about 1500 B.C. or earlier. The last was written about A.D. 100.

You will notice in the contents that the Bible is divided into **two main sections**: the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**. The Old Testament contains 39 books beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi while the New Testament has 27 books beginning with Matthew and ending with Revelation.

A "testament" is another word for covenant, an agreement established by God setting out the relationship between God and human beings. In the Old Testament, this relationship was based on law. God chose a group of people for Himself and gave them His law. The nation of Israel was chosen by God and

named for one of their ancestors. The historical books in the Old Testament show how this relationship based on law failed time and time again because people, left on their own, will always sin and disobey God's law.

In the New Testament, the relationship between God and human beings is based on grace (God's free acceptance of us) and peace. Grace and peace ONLY come through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to live among men on earth as fully human yet fully God. Jesus lived a completely sinless life while coming to teach the ways of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was crucified and died in our place to pay the penalty required for breaking God's law. After three days, he rose up from the dead, thus defeating death once and for all. Through His death, Jesus gives eternal life by forgiving sins past and sins future of those who turn from their sin and profess Jesus as Lord.

The New Testament starts out with the **Gospel** – four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, named for the men who wrote them. "Gospel" literally means "good news." The Gospel describes the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Greek word that means the "Messiah," the servant king looked for by the prophets of the Old Testament.

The next book in the New Testament, Acts, describes the acts of Jesus' followers following Jesus' return to heaven. The other New Testament books are all letters from Jesus' followers to early Christian churches or other Christians. These letters help us understand the good news of Jesus Christ and how to apply it in our own lives. The final book of Revelation was a recorded revelation on the end times given to the apostle John while living in exile.

The Bible includes 8 different genres of literature:

Narrative, historical, poetry, wisdom, gospels, epistles, prophecy, and apocalyptic.

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

The very first thing we need to understand when reading Scripture is learning to read it IN CONTEXT. CONTEXT. CONTEXT. Say it again. Context. So, what does that mean? To read Scripture in context means reading it in the way it was intended to be read. The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by over 40 authors; it's extremely complex. We must first learn to read it to understand it as it was intended to be read. To properly read in context, start by answering these questions for any passage you're about to read...

Ask:

- Who wrote this book?
- Who was this book written to?
- Why was the author writing this book?
- What is the genre of this book? (narrative, historical, poetry, wisdom, gospels, epistles, prophecy, or apocalyptic)
- What was the historical & cultural context surrounding this text?
- How does it fit in line with the grand narrative of Scripture?
- How does it point to Christ?

Answering these questions and similar questions as you're studying a passage will protect against reading a verse or sentence out of context. Doing so would be reading the Bible in a way other than the way it was intended to be read.

Resources:

<http://bibleproject.com>

<http://desiringgod.org>

<http://thegospelcoalition.org>

<https://www.blueletterbible.org>

330-465-1674 (Blaine's #)

TIME, PLACE, PACE

Humans are extremely habitual; we like our rhythms and we like our routines. Just like anything else, we must work to make personal Bible study a habit in our daily lives. Research suggests that it can take upwards of 60 days to create a new habit in our life. This means that if personal Bible study is not a habit in your life, you will need to be incredibly intentional about building this habit into your life. Here are 3 tips that will work together to help build this healthy habit in your life: Time, Place, and Pace.

1. **Time** - when will I study the Bible?

I will set aside time for personal Bible study ____ days a week, around _____ am/pm, with a goal of _____ minutes/hour(s)

2. **Place** - where will I study the Bible?

I will study the Bible _____.

3. **Pace** - At what pace will I study the Bible?

Each time I study the Bible, I will aim to study ____ paragraph(s) / chapter(s).

**don't read a verse at a time (see CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT)*

These are 3 extremely practical ways to build the habit of personal Bible study in your life. Do your best to stick to your time, place, & pace but make sure to leave a little room for grace.

C.I.A.

The time has come to become part of the CIA - comprehension, interpretation, and application. These 3 steps have the potential to change the way we study scripture and transform the way we love God with our mind. Essentially, we're asking, "what does it say?", "what does it mean?", and "how should it change me?". Remember, the Bible is not about self-discovery but rather about discovering the God of the universe.

1. **Comprehension** - "What does it say?" "What is this passage revealing?"
 - A. This is where we want to spend the majority of our time. See "Context, Context, Context" section.
 - B. Ask: What does it say about God?
 - C. Ask: What does it say about me?
2. **Interpretation** - "What does it mean?"
 - a. Meaning is determined by the author and discovered by the reader. We don't assign meaning to a text; we simply discover it.
 - b. Cross-reference to other scriptures; contextualize
 - c. It can't mean something to me that it never could have meant to the original audience. Focus on transcendent principles.
3. **Application** - "How should it change me?"

Here's a few questions to ask:

 1. Is there an example for me to follow?
 2. Is there a sin to avoid?
 3. Is there a promise to claim?
 4. Is there a prayer to repeat?
 5. Is there a command to obey?
 6. Is there a condition to meet?
 7. Is there a verse to memorize?
 8. Is there an error to mark?

PRAY THE WORD:

1. Open with Prayer.

Welcome the Lord into your time in His Word. Ask for eyes to see His truth and wisdom to understand it. Pray with expectation for God to speak to you through His word during this time.

2. Praying through the Word

As you read, pray the Words of God over your own life.

If the Scripture says, "Go and make disciples", pray this: "God, empower me and give me courage to go and make disciples. I'm trusting your Word. I ask for opportunities to make disciples no matter where I am. I've dedicated my life to you and I want more people to know and follow you."

3. Respond in communication with God.

1. Praise Him for who He is and what He has done.

"Jesus, you are so good. Your unconditional love, constant forgiveness, and amazing grace are found nowhere else."

2. Thank Him for specific things and general things.

"Jesus, thank you for the work your doing in my life. Thank you for transforming me and my relationships. Thank you for bringing back to life from my sin. I thank you for specifically doing _____ in my life."

3. Repent of sin in your life and orient yourself back to Him.

"I'm a sinner. I've done _____. I'm sorry for the times I turn my back on you and your way. Forgive me for my sin and my imperfections. I need your forgiveness. I need your grace."

4. Present your requests to Him according to His will.

"God, I humbly ask _____. I believe you have the power to do anything. Right now, I pray and ask for _____ in the name of Jesus. No matter the answer, I will praise you for you are good."

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE:

Why memorize Scripture?

Bible memorization is a great way to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:1), because it gives the Word much more concentrated access to your heart. Memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. This discipline is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth.” That’s where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization. No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified. It provides a ready answer to various life situations: temptation, prayer, witnessing, counseling, etc.

HOW TO:

Step 1: Select a verse / passage that you want to understand deeper.

Step 2: Study it & understand it

Step 3: Hide it in your heart

- Write it out. Write it down again.
- Say it out loud. Say it out loud again.
- Start with memorizing key phrase.
- Keep it in front of you...
 - ◆ Put a post it note on your mirror
 - ◆ Make it your phone background
- Repeat day after day.
 - ◆ Keep revisiting

Final Resource: Bible Memory App

WHERE TO START: *(Some Suggestions)*

1. **Gospel of John**

- a. Focuses on the question, "Who is Jesus?"

2. **1 John**

- a. Focuses on the person of the Lord and gives encouragement to believers for Christian love and conduct

3. **Ephesians**

- a. A short summary of the gospel and its implications for Jesus' disciples. Focuses on the grace of God.

4. **James**

- a. Focuses on faith in action

5. **Psalms**

- a. A collection of poetry, prayers, & songs directed toward God.
 - See "PRAY THE WORD" section.

FINAL TIPS:

- Utilize Bible App Reading Plans
- Read in community
 - Adds element of accountability
 - Ask a mentor to study with you
- Don't avoid difficult books / sections
- Share what you learn with friends, family, and community
- Utilize an audio bible
 - Listen while driving, doing chores, etc.
- Journal as you read
- Utilize Bible Study Supplementation:
 - Podcasts
 - Articles
 - Books