

KNOW YOUR SOURCE – STEPS FOR THE DAILY STUDY OF GOD’S WORD

OVERVIEW OF STEPS FOR BIBLE STUDY

1. MAKE A PLAN
 2. SECURE THE NECESSARY TOOLS
 3. USE A SOUND BIBLE STUDY METHOD
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3. USE A SOUND BIBLE STUDY METHOD

The Inductive Bible Study Method

1. Observation
2. Interpretation
3. Application

Prerequisite: Begin With Prayer

Begin every Bible Study time with intentional prayer.

- Once you have your plan, your tools, and are ready to Study - before you open your Bible – slow down and spend time in intentional prayer.
- Confess your sins and your natural tendency towards deception and error.
- Invite the Lord to guide and direct your time of Study – away from error and into truth.

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

Martin Luther on Prayer and Bible Study: *“You should completely despair of your own sense and reason, for by these you will not attain the goal...Rather kneel down in your private little room and with sincere humility and earnestness pray God through His dear Son, graciously to grant you His Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide you and give you understanding...Since the Holy Writ wants to be dealt with in fear and humility and penetrated more by studying with pious prayer than with keenness of intellect, therefore it is impossible for those who rely only on their intellect and rush into Scripture with dirty feet, like pigs, as though Scripture were merely a sort of human knowledge not to harm themselves and others whom they instruct.”*

1. Observation

The goal of observation is to note exactly what the text says. Observation asks, **“What does the text say?”**

To do this well you must:

1. Slowdown.
2. Carefully observe what the passage is literally saying – unbiased by prior experience.
3. Consciously resist the impulse to search for or find meaning in the text.

“Observation describes the act of taking notice, fixing the mind upon, beholding with attention, and as used in science, includes the idea of making and recording one's findings, a skill certainly applicable to fruitful inductive study of the Scriptures.

Observation is not just seeing but perceiving what one sees, so that one becomes mentally aware of what one observes. We live in a fast-paced society and honing the vital skill of observation is not the natural inclination for most of us. We want answers fast (How many times have you heard someone say, "Just Google it"?) and are loathe to linger too long observing a section of Scripture.

But frankly, what better object to linger upon lovingly and long, than the eternal Word of Truth, the very revelation from the Creator to His creatures!” (Preceptaustin.org/observation)

Helpful Observation Tips:

Think of yourself as a detective at a crime scene. Your only goal is to observe and collect all the evidence available. To do this:

A. Remember to take a F.O.T.O: Focus on the Obvious!

B. Ask: Who – What – Where – When - Why – How?

- You won't be able to answer every question in every text. That is OK.

C. Take note of the following:

- What words or phrase are repeated multiple times?
- Are there any lists?
- Where do I see cause and effect (*Examples: if, then*)
- What figures of speech, metaphors or illustrations do you see?
- Are there any Conjunctions (*Examples: But / Therefore*)
- Look for verbs – where is the action?

2. Interpretation

The goal of interpretation is to determine the clear meaning of the text as intended by God.

Interpretation asks, **“What does the text mean?” NOT “What does this text mean to me?”**

Interpretation answers this question through **Biblical Exegesis.**

- Exegesis is a word that literally means, “to lead out of.”
- This means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text – through careful, objective analysis of what the text clearly says.

The opposite and errant method of Biblical interpretation is called **Eisegesis.**

- Eisegesis is a word that literally means, “to lead into.”
- In this method of Bible interpretation, the interpreter is led by his sinful heart - and subjective desires - Injecting his own ideas into the text - making it mean what he wants.

Principles for Sound Biblical Exegesis

1. KEEP CONTEXT KING

Context Definition: *the parts of a discourse which precede or follow the sentence quoted; the passages of scripture which are near the text, either before it or after it. (Webster 1828)*

There are 3 types of contexts to consider in Bible Study

1. Biblical Context
2. Historical Context
3. Cultural Context

Biblical Context means considering the text you are studying in relation to the verses, chapters, and books of the Bible that surround it.

It means placing the text you are studying in the larger context of scripture, rather than taking it out of its proper scriptural surroundings.

When you interpret Scripture, whether it is a single word, a verse, or a paragraph, you must always consider the Scripture in light of the surrounding verses, chapters and book in which it is found and finally in the context of the entire Bible.

Your interpretation should never contradict the context of the book, chapter, or paragraph you are studying. If you ignore context, the accuracy of your interpretation will suffer and may even be "spiritually dangerous." (Preceptaustin.org)

Martin Luther describes well how we Keep Context King

I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree...then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf.

I shake the Bible as a whole, like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb—like studying book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense.

Then I shake every twig [as a] a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings

Understanding the **Historical and Cultural Context** that a book of the Bible was written in helps the modern reader better understand the original meaning of the text.

Historical/Cultural Context asks and answers questions like:

- What did the specific passage mean to the people to whom it was spoken or written?
- What were the times like?
- What was the attitude toward Christianity?
- When is this taking place?

2. CONSULT THE BIBLICAL MAP

Consulting the Biblical Map means interpreting scripture with scripture.

A core principle of sound biblical exegesis is that Scripture never contradicts scripture.

- This means that scripture determines the meaning of the text you are studying.
- It means that you turn to scripture for answers when you have questions.

Understand - the text you are studying is 1 puzzle piece of the larger puzzle. You must consult the larger puzzle to understand the true meaning of the text.

Tips for interpreting scripture with scripture:

1. Identify the literary genre (Narrative, Epistle, Poetry, Wisdom Literature, History, Apocalyptic).
2. Distinguish between prescriptive and descriptive texts.
3. Examine all cross references.
4. Allow clear texts to explain less-clear texts.
5. Connect the study text back to the overarching truths of scripture.

3. STUDY AND DEFINE WORD & TOPICS BIBLICALLY

Study and define all important words, phrases, and topics using your Bible Study resources.

- Study and define terms Biblically using a Bible Dictionary.
- Study important topics using a systematic theology and topical Bible.
- Use your Study Bible and Commentary to understand the cultural/historical context of the text.

Tips for Interpretation

1. **Look for the plainest interpretation first** – avoid the temptation to find “hidden meaning.”
2. **Check your assumption** – continually ask, “what assumptions have I made?”
3. **Keep feelings in check** – Consciously seek the truth of a text regardless of how it makes you feel.

3. Application

The goal of application is the adoption and implementation of the timeless theological truth you found in interpretation.

Application asks, “How should I live out the timeless theological principle of this text today?”

Determine the appropriate application step using the following question - How does this truth affect or change:

- My priorities?
- My use of time and resources?
- My relationship?
- My decision making?
- My approach to life?
- The thought process of my heart and mind?

Application Tips

- **Consult Godly council** before making major life changing decisions.
- **Consult Church History:** if your application is contrary to the consensus of church history – you are probably wrong.
- **Don't Travel Alone:** Applications often require sacrifice, cost, and change which requires disciple, self-control, and perseverance. You will be far more successful doing this with company than in isolation.