

APK's Basic Guide to Studying the Bible:

Tools for consistent Bible Study:

Required:

A Bible of an accepted translation (not paraphrase, include New and Old Testaments).

Suggested translations: ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, NIV

A high-quality concordance of the same translation.

As study grows, an exhaustive concordance is highly suggested.

Dictionary

Optional Resources:

Bibles of other accepted translations.

Today's Parallel Bible includes KJV, NIV, NLT, and NASB.—great tool!

The Amplified Bible or Wuest's expanded translation give insight into the shades of meaning in the original Greek.

Various study Bibles can help with cross-referencing and occasional notes, but commentary in study

Bibles is NOT Scripture, they are merely comments, and sometimes wrong.

Suggested study Bibles:

Life Application Study Bible (available in any major translation)

NIV Study Bible

Discovering Jesus Study Bible (suggested for new believers only)

Paraphrased Bibles (for helpful interpretive perspective)

The Message, The Living Bible, Williams, Beck, etc.

The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

Commentaries

One or Two Volume

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary

Matthew Henry Commentary

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Beginning Bible Study: the process to understanding the Bible:

I. Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you in study and to reveal to you the actions you need to take in response to your study. Also, pause and pray at various points along the process of the study, as the Lord leads. Remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.

II. **Meaning:** the *pattern of meaning* the author consciously willed to convey by the words he used.

III. **Understanding:** the correct mental grasp of the author's meaning.

Interpretation: the verbal or written expression of a reader's understanding of the author's meaning.

A. Although often separated, *Understanding* and *Interpretation* are combined, for an unarticulated understanding is really no understanding at all.

B. This step is the reading and re-reading of the text, considering:

1. the author,

2. the circumstances,

3. the intended readers,

4. the scriptural context, and

5. the literary genre

6. in order to determine the author's original meaning in such a way that you understand what he is saying and can articulate it.

C. When seeking to understand a text, do not move on from this step until you can convey the message of the text in your own words. If you can not articulate it, you haven't fully grasped the meaning.

D. Try to determine the meaning on your own before turning to commentaries. If the meaning is difficult to discover, try developing a detailed outline of the passage.

E. A proper interpretation of a text includes the author and his meaning.

1. Example from Matt 6:1-18: "According to Matthew, Jesus told his disciples during the sermon on the

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mount that the motives of righteous acts determine the reward.”

- IV. **Implications:** those meanings in a text that fit within the author's pattern of meaning, even if they were not specifically intended by the author.
- A. In this step, it is helpful to reword the interpretation in terms of a “universal principle.”
 1. Take the meaning of the text and remove the historical trappings:
 - a. Example from Matt 6:1-18: “The motives of acts of righteousness determine the reward.”
 - B. After establishing the universal principle, brainstorm a list of ways in which the principle could be applied to people's lives.
 1. Example from above:
 - a. If I help feed the poor at a local homeless shelter, my motive could be:
 - i To look like a nice person.
 - ii To help raise the standard of living in the community.
 - iii To spend time with a friend who works at the shelter.
 - iv To demonstrate my love for God by following his commands.
 - C. Through cross-referencing in your Bible, determine which of these possible implications are affirmed by Scripture, and which ones need to be eliminated as nonbiblical.
 1. Example from above:
 - a. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these motives, the only proper motive is obedience to God's commands as a response to our love for Him.
 2. *Remember, God is the main character in the Bible, and His work in history is the main theme. The primary implications of every passage should center around what we can learn about God, and then how that should affect our lives.*
- V. **Significance:** how a reader responds to the meaning of a text.
- A. Ask key questions that bridge the implications to your own life.
 1. Does this text reveal a sin in my life that I need to change?
 2. Does this text call to attention something about my thought-life and conversations that I need to work on?
 3. Does this text reveal something about my relationship with God that I need to realize?
 4. Does this text tell me something about my relationships with other people?
 5. Does this text tell me something about the things I do that affect my relationship with God?
 6. Anything else that comes to mind?
 - B. Once you have determined what it is about your life that needs to change or grow in response to understanding this text, make a tangible goal to meet that change or growth.
 1. Make the goal measurable:
 - a. “Study my Bible more” is not measurable
 - b. “Study my Bible at least 5 days a week” is measurable.
 - c. “Spend at least 20 minutes a day in a comprehensive study through the book of 1 John between now and the end of May” is even better.
 2. Write down the findings you have discovered and your goal in a journal, so you can review your progress later.
 3. If there is a major decision to be made, find someone to help hold you accountable to your goal . . . someone who will ask the tough questions and confront you when you willfully fail, but gracious when you realize the goal is unattainable and needs to be adjusted.