

How to read and study God's Word

Ask

The best way to begin looking at God's Word is to ask God for insight and understanding as you read it. A great prayer to pray is found in Psalm 119:17-19.

Read

The biggest challenge for many people who want to start reading the Bible seems to be knowing where they should start reading. **Some books that are "good" beginner books in the Bible (in my opinion) would be Ephesians, Proverbs, or 1 Peter.** 1 Peter is short and to the point, Ephesians is rich and applicable and Proverbs is straight forward with its principles. You don't have to start there, anywhere would be great. It's all good!

Some things to remember when you start reading are **making sure you're not over/underwhelming yourself and you are reading a complete thought in scripture.** If you're not reading enough chances are you will not get an idea of the context in the passage. If you over read you can burn yourself out. You can avoid all this by committing to reading one complete thought which is usually indicated in Bibles with paragraph indentions, blank space in between verses and/or a subtitle. Some Bibles will only have big chapter numbers as the indicator and you will have to use your best judgment on when the thought is complete.

Observe

When you read the passage ask yourself what is happening in it. You need to be aware of all the lenses in the passage before you can come to a conclusion on what it is saying to you. Lenses, in this case, are all the factors that can give you the intended meaning of the passage. **The most important lense you have to be aware of is what the Bible is about as a whole.** Hint: It's about Jesus, Who He is and what He has done to save us from who we are and what we have done. **Other lenses are what type of writing style the book is written in, who the passage is being written to, the culture and circumstances around the audience, and why the author is writing the passage.** With that said, some times all those answers can't be found and therefore should not be a concern. God reveals what He wants us to know and if we can't find the answers we will be alright.

Some ideas as you observe the passage: 1. Mark up the passage. Don't be afraid to write in your Bible. Circle, underline and highlight. Write in the margins. Get creative. 2. List 2-3 overarching themes or words you see in the passage. 3. List at least two observations per verse. The more the merrier. 4. Write down questions to think through in the Reflect step.

Reflect

After reading and observing ask yourself what is being said in the passage. The answer to this question will give you clarity in what the author wanted to communicate to the people he was writing to. While you determine this, **trust the Holy Spirit to lead you to the correct interpretation.**

Some things to reflect on:

Who is...the author?...the audience?...being discussed? ...accomplishing the action?

Where is...the author?...the audience?...the action taking place?

What is the...meaning of this word? ...significance of this phrase? ...implication of this statement? ...overarching theme?

Why did the author...choose this word? ...include this phrase? ...use this command? ...connect these ideas? ...not say ____?

Try and get your interpretation to the most basic truth in the passage. To practice this, narrow the thought down to one sentence.

Example: In this passage Paul is telling the Ephesians to walk a godly walk.

Once you have come to a conclusion on what you think is going on in the passage, use some “good” bible resources to check your work and make sure you’re not off your rocker! A very good and easily accessible resource is the website blueletterbible.org. If you look up your passage in the KJV version with a few clicks you can have tons of commentaries from good bible commentators. Anything by David Guzik on the site is good because he explains why he comes to certain conclusions on passages and organizes his thoughts so they are easy to read. If you find that you differ in your conclusion and don’t understand why, you can always contact a good bible teacher you know to help you process through what you have found.

Apply

Once you have concluded what is being said in a passage you can ask yourself what you should do because of this passage. Bible study is incomplete until you have thought through how to apply the particular passage to your life. Some passages will be more readily applicable than others, but all Scripture is useful and helpful (2 Tim. 3:16-17). An easy way to train yourself in how to do this is to **use the acrostic S.P.A.C.E. P.E.T.S. to apply what is being said.**

Ask yourself if this passage contains a/an: **S**in to confess, **P**romise to claim, **A**ttitude to change, **C**ommand to obey, **E**xample to follow, **P**ray to pray, **E**rror to avoid, **T**ruth to believe, **S**omething to praise God about

Once that is determined you can form an application for your life that you can act on! Your application should include an action step for your life that is measurable and specific for you. The more specific the better!

Example: Paul is telling the Ephesians to walk a godly walk. This is a command I should obey by making sure my actions are godly by being humble when I talk with my parents

May the Lord be with you as you dive into His WORD and seek to do what He says! If you have any questions or need more help let me know.