

Interpreting the Bible

Steps to Follow (John MacArthur)	How to Study Your Bible (Kay Arthur)	Gaps to Bridge (John MacArthur)
<p><i>Be literal</i> . Seek to understand Scripture in its literal, normal, and natural sense. Although symbolism and figures of speech appear in the Bible, they will be obvious from the context. When you study apocalyptic passages in Zechariah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Revelation, you will read about beasts and images. Those are symbols, but they convey <i>literal</i> truth.</p> <p><i>Know the context</i> . The Bible must be studied in its historical context. What did it mean to whom it was spoken or written? You must also study its literary context. How does the passage or verse you're studying relate to the surrounding text? It has been said that a text apart from context is a pretext.</p> <p><i>Analyze the sentence structure</i> . Identify the verbs, nouns, prepositions, and other parts of speech to find out what it is saying. Apply that to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20: As you first read it, "Go", "make disciples", "baptizing", and "teaching" all sound like verbs. But when you study the sentence structure, you find there's only one verb, <i>matheuo</i>, "make disciples." "Go", "baptizing", and "teaching" are only participles, which means they modify the main verb. So the Great Commission is to make disciples, which involves going to them, baptizing them, and teaching them. You have to examine the grammar carefully to fully comprehend and appreciate the meaning of the text.</p> <p><i>Compare your interpretation with the totality of Scripture</i> . This vital principle of interpretation is what the Reformers called <i>analogia Scriptura</i>, meaning that all Scripture fits together. One part of the Bible doesn't teach something that another part contradicts.</p> <p><i>Look for principles to apply</i> . Reread the text and find out what spiritual principles there are that apply to you and fellow believers in Christ.</p>	<p>How to Study Your Bible (Kay Arthur)</p> <p>A. Observation: Discover what it says</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin with prayer 2. Identify the context 3. Observe the obvious 4. Deal with the text objectively 5. Read with a purpose <p>B. Getting the Big Picture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin on your knees 2. Read and re-read the book 3. Identify the type of literature 4. Let the text speak for itself 5. Use the 5 "W"s and an "H" 6. Discover the facts about people and events 7. Mark the keywords 8. Discern the main theme 9. Develop an "at-a-glance" chart 10. Discover the theme of each chapter 11. Identify clearly defined segments <p>C. Focusing in on the Details</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remember to pray 2. Keep the context in mind 3. Does the text answer the 5 "W"s & "H"? 4. Look for and mark keywords 5. List what you learned about each word 6. Look for contrasts, comparisons, terms of conclusion and expressions of time 7. With historical or biographical books – location, timing, characters, doctrines, events 8. Check chapter themes 9. Develop paragraph themes <p>D. The Search for Meaning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remember that context rules 2. Always seek full counsel of the Word of God 3. Scripture will never contradict itself 4. Do not base doctrine on an obscure passage 5. Interpret Scripture literally 6. Look at the author's intended meaning 7. Check your conclusions by using reliable commentaries 	<p>To interpret the Bible properly we have some gaps to bridge:</p> <p><u>Language</u> . We speak English, but the Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic (which is similar to Hebrew). Many of the Bible translations available today are excellent, but no translation can get across everything that the original language conveys.</p> <p>W. E. Vine's <i>An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Chicago: Moody, 1985) is helpful for someone who doesn't know Greek. In addition, there are several language helps that are keyed to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, which has a numerical code to English definitions of all the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words in the Bible.</p> <p><u>Culture</u> .Parts of the Bible may have been written as long as four thousand years ago. Times have certainly changed since then! If you don't understand the culture of the ... you'll never understand its meaning.</p> <p>Some books to help bridge the culture gap are <i>The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah</i> by Alfred Edersheim (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) and Eerdmans's varying handbooks on Bible culture.</p> <p><u>Geography</u> . There are many geographical references in Scripture. For instance, we read of going <i>down</i> to Jericho and <i>up</i> to Jerusalem.</p> <p>Consult a good Bible atlas (Barry J. Beitzel, <i>The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands</i> [Chicago: Moody, 1985]) or geography text and reap the benefits.</p> <p><u>History</u> . Knowing the historical background of the text also enriches your understanding Bible dictionaries and <i>The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) are good sources for historical background</p>

Some Bible Study Methods

Warren, Richard, with William A. Shell, 12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods, Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1987.

(http://www.eachnewday.com/HowToStudyTheBible/the_Bible_study_methods.htm#Method_11)

Method 1 - The Devotional Method

In the Devotional Method of Bible study a passage of the Bible, large or small, is read and meditated on until the Holy Spirit guides you to an application of the passage into your life in a way that is personal, practical, possible, and measurable. It is the simplest and least costly in terms of time of all the Bible study methods in this outline. The goal is to take the Bible seriously and to do what it says to do.

Method 2 - The Chapter Summary Method

In the Chapter Summary Method of Bible study we attempt to gain an understanding of the contents of any given chapter of the Bible by reading it in its entirety several times (at least five), asking a series of questions relating to the content of the chapter, and ending with a general summary of the chapter. Note that the chapter divisions currently in our Bible are not in the original manuscripts but were added later (about 1,200 AD) by Bishop Stephen Langton in order to make the various parts of the Bible more accessible to the general reader. Although usually well done, at some points the chapter divisions interrupt the natural flow of the text. There are 1,189 chapters in the Protestant Bible so there is a wealth of material to study.

Method Three - The Character Quality Method

In the Character Quality Method of Bible study we begin to use tools other than the Bible itself in order to discover what the Bible has to say of specific personal characteristics. A major emphasis of this study method is on personal application of the lessons you will be learning into your own life. The main goal of this method of Bible study is to learn God's view of personal characteristics.

Method Four - The Thematic Method

In the thematic method of Bible study you will approach a theme within the Bible and perform a basic study of it. It is shorter than the Topical Method of Bible study, which comes later in these notes, and is much less exhaustive in its scope. In a topical study you would examine each possible verse that relates to your topic of study, including each sub-theme; in a thematic study you will study only those verses that apply directly to a single theme

Method Five - The Biographical Method

Method Six - The Topical Method

Previously you encountered the Thematic Method of Bible study in which you studied a narrow theme of the Bible in simple detail asking prepared questions of verses from a chosen list. With the topical study you will study a topic of the Bible, which may contain several themes, and you will not be asking prepared questions, instead you will be recording all insights you find from your study. The topical

method will usually take longer than the thematic so you will want to assure yourself that sufficient time is available to at least make a significant start on the study.

Method Seven - The Word Study Method

Method Eight - The Book Background Method

Method Nine - The Book Survey Method

The Book Survey Method of Bible study is the first of three methods of Bible study that, together, give you an extremely comprehensive view of each book of the Bible. These three will require the greatest effort on your part but will ultimately yield the best results when used properly. The basic goal of the Book Survey Method of Bible study is to gain a detailed understanding as to why the book was written, its context, its theme, its structure, and its content.

Method Ten - The Chapter Analysis Method

The Chapter Analysis Method of Bible study picks up where the Book Summary Method of Bible study leaves off. You now have a reasonable grasp of the overall picture of the book, what it means, why it was written, etc. and you are now able to begin to examine the individual items making up the book. The best way of subdividing a book of the Bible is to use the chapter divisions, since these are generally accurate, and to study each chapter in detail. You will examine each paragraph, sentence, and word in a detailed and systematic manner.

Method Eleven - The Book Synthesis Method

In the Book Synthesis Method of Bible study we will summarize and condense the lessons learned previously. The word synthesis indicates the putting together of the discrete items that together compose a whole; thus in the Book Synthesis Method of Bible study we will put back together the details we extracted from the book through our previous two studies.

Method Twelve - The Verse by Verse Method

In the Verse by Verse Method of Bible study you will select a passage of the Bible and examine it in great detail, asking questions of it, finding cross references to it, and paraphrasing each verse within it. The Verse by Verse Bible study concludes with your obtaining a practical, personal application for each verse in the study.

Bible Memorization Methods

Personal benefits of Bible memory

1. It multiplies the effect of God's Word lives.
2. It conditions our thought life.
3. It gives the Holy Spirit wide access to us.
4. It keeps us alert for spiritual battle.
5. It facilitates and transforms our Bible study,

Ministry value

1. It makes group worship more meaningful.
2. It can give spiritual authority.
3. It gives freedom in teaching and preaching.
4. It is indispensable for our evangelism.
5. It facilitates follow-up of new believers.

The System

(<http://simplycharlottesmason.com/timesavers/memorsys/>)



Step One: Get an index card box and forty-one tabbed dividers that fit inside it. It doesn't matter if the dividers have letters on them; you can flip them over and use the other side for labeling.

Step Two: Label the dividers as follows and place them in the box in this order:

- 1 divider — Daily
- 1 divider — Odd
- 1 divider — Even
- 7 dividers — Days of the Week (Sunday, Monday, etc.)
- 31 dividers — Numbered 1-31

Step Three: Copy onto index cards (or slips of paper) any verses your family already knows. Record both the reference and the text of the passage. If you don't know any yet, don't worry — you will very soon. Place the verses you already know behind the numbered dividers, distributing them evenly.

Next write cards or papers for verses you want to memorize. Put one verse card or paper behind the

Daily divider; this will be the passage you'll work on memorizing first. Then stack the rest of the verses to be learned in front of the Daily divider to learn at a later time. At the beginning, you won't have any verses in the Odd and Even or Days of the Week slots. Don't worry, they'll fill in; see the next two steps.

Step Four: Each day you will say together the verses behind four dividers:

- Daily
- Odd or Even
- Day of the Week
- Date of the Month

So if today is Tuesday, the 3rd, you will say the verses behind Daily, Odd (because 3 is an odd number), Tuesday, and 3. The next day (Wednesday, the 4th), you will say the verses behind Daily, Even, Wednesday, and 4. Keep in mind that only the verse behind Daily is a new one that you are memorizing; all the others are just review.

Step Five: As you master the verses behind the Daily divider, advance that card and move the replaced verses farther back in the box. So when you have memorized a Daily, move it behind either the Odd or Even divider. Move the verse that was in that Odd or Even slot back to a Day of the Week slot. And move the verse it replaces in the Day of the Week slot back behind a numbered divider. You can then put a new verse or passage to memorize behind the Daily divider and you're ready to go again.

In this way, you will review a new verse every day, then graduate to every other day, once a week, and finally, once a month. Use the system every day of the month and you will review all the verses you know every month of the year! Of course, not all months have thirty-one days; the verses behind 31 will be reviewed seven months out of the year. We recommend putting verses that you know quite well behind that number since it gets reviewed less frequently.

When you have advanced enough verse cards that you have one placed behind each numbered divider, start at 1 again and add another card to each. Soon you'll have several cards behind each numbered divider. And eventually, you'll have memorized so many verses that you'll have enough cards to expand to two boxes! What a wonderful milestone that will be!

Method 2 - Chapter Summary Method	Method Seven - Word Study Method	Method Eight - Book Background
<p>In the Chapter Summary Method of Bible study we attempt to gain an understanding of the contents of any given chapter of the Bible by reading it in its entirety several times (at least five), asking a series of questions relating to the content of the chapter, and ending with a general summary of the chapter.</p> <p>2.1 - Tools 2.1.1 - Bible 2.1.2 - Cross references</p>	<p>7.1 - Tools 7.1.1 - Bible and several alternate translations 7.1.2 - Exhaustive concordance 7.1.3 - Bible dictionary or encyclopedia 7.1.4 - Set of word studies 7.1.5 - English dictionary</p>	<p>8.1 - Tools 8.1.1 - Bible dictionary and/or bible encyclopedia 8.1.2 - Bible handbook 8.1.3 - Bible atlas 8.1.4 - Various tools that allow you to experience in your time the environment of the Biblical cultures</p>
<p>2.2 - Hints 2.2.1 - Read the chapter from a Bible without notes in order to encourage fresh insights 2.2.2 - Read the chapter without stopping in order to get a feel for the flow of the chapter. 2.2.3 - Read the chapter in various translations noting important differences discovered. 2.2.4 - Read the chapter to yourself as an aid to concentration.</p>	<p>7.2 - Hints 7.2.1 - Remember that often a single word in the original language may be replaced by many different words, or even phrases, when translated into English. 7.2.2 - An exhaustive concordance such as Strong's or Young's are especially valuable for this study since they associate each discrete original word to its English translation.</p>	
<p>2.3 - Steps Step 1 - Caption - Give the chapter a short but descriptive heading. Headings that are short and/or convey a vivid image of the chapter are especially beneficial. Step 2 - Contents - Make a list or outline of the major point of the chapter. Step 3 - Chief People Step 4 - Central Verse Step 5 - Crucial Word(s) - Make a list of the key word(s). Step 6 - Challenges Step 7 - Cross References - - You should evaluate cross references in steps: 2.3.7.1 - Internal - within the book you are studying. 2.3.7.2 - External - other books by the same author. 2.3.7.3 - Compare within the same Testament 2.3.7.4 - Compare in the Bible 2.3.7.5 - Pure Cross Reference 2.3.7.6 - Illustrative Cross Reference 2.3.7.7 - Contrasting Cross Reference Step 8 - Christ Revealed Step 9 - Central Lesson(s) Step 10 - Conclusion: 2.3.10.1 - How do these insights apply personally? 2.3.10.2 - What am I going to do about them?</p>	<p>7.3 - Steps Step 1 - Choose the word you will study Step 2 - Find its English definition Step 3 - Compare various translations Step 4 - Note the definition of the original word (Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic) Step 5 - Discover where the word is in the Bible 7.3.5.1 - How often does it occur? 7.3.5.2 - In which books is it found? 7.3.5.3 - In which book is it used most? 7.3.5.4 - Where does the word first appear? 7.3.5.5 - Where does it first appear in the book you are studying? 7.3.5.6 - Which writers used the word? Step 6 - Find the origin and root meaning of the word, how the word was used by the secular culture of the day Step 7 - Determine how the word was used in the Bible and how it would have been understood in the culture to which the Bible was originally addressed Step 8 - Write an application</p>	<p>8.2 - Steps Step 1 - Choose the subject or book of the Bible Step 2 - List your reference tools so that at the end of the study you can see which were of the greatest help in your study. Step 3 - Discover what you are able of the following: 8.2.3.1 - Who is the writer of the book 8.2.3.2 - What is the date of the book 8.2.3.3 - Where was the book written 8.2.3.4 - For whom was the book written 8.2.3.5 - Why was the book written 8.2.3.6 - How does the book fit into the Bible overall; in addition, what light can be shed on the study when the book is evaluated in the following contexts: - Geographical setting - Historical events - Culture of the day - Political situation - Anticipation of coming events Step 4 - Summarize your research Step 5 - Write out your personal application</p>

Method Nine - Book Survey Method	Method Ten - Chapter Analysis Method	Method Eleven - Book Synthesis Method
<p>The basic goal of the Book Survey Method of Bible study is to gain a detailed understanding as to why the book was written, its context, its theme, its structure, and its content.</p>	<p>You will examine each paragraph, sentence, and word in a detailed and systematic manner.</p>	<p>In the Book Synthesis Method of Bible study we will summarize and condense the lessons learned previously.</p>
<p>9.3 - Steps Step 1 - Read the book following the suggestions below: 9.3.1.1 - Read through the book in one sitting. 9.3.1.2 - Read through the book in a recent translation 9.3.1.3 - Read through the book as though the verse and chapter divisions are non-existent so as to get the flow. 9.3.1.4 - Read through the book several times, 9.3.1.5 - Read through the book without referring to any external notes of any kind, 9.3.1.6 - Read through the book with prayer. 9.3.1.7 - Read through the book with pen or pencil in hand. Step 2 - Make notes on what you read - your impressions 9.3.2.1 - Genres. 9.3.2.2 - First impressions - What purpose of the author? 9.3.2.3 - What words does the author use frequently? 9.3.2.4 - Is there a key verse? 9.3.2.5 - Literary style & relationship to the message? 9.3.2.6 - Author's emotions? Your reaction? Readers? 9.3.2.7 - Main theme(s) of the book. 9.3.2.8 - How is the book structured? Around what aspects of reality (people, events, etc.) is the book centered? 9.3.2.9 - How do people fit into book? Central characters? Step 3 - Do a background study of the book. Step 4 - Make a horizontal chart of the book's contents. 9.3.4.1 - Make as many vertical columns as chapters. 9.3.4.2 - Headings relating to divisions in a few words. 9.3.4.3 - Think of a short title for each chapter and record them just below the divisions of the previous step, above each of the columns. 9.3.4.4 - Create a series of titles for the paragraphs Step 5 - Make a preliminary outline 9.3.5.1 - Concentrating on the major points. 9.3.5.2 - Organized in sequence of descending importance. 9.3.5.3 - Use paragraphs. 9.3.5.4 - Compare your outline to those done by others. Step 6 - Write out a personal application</p>	<p>10.2 - Steps Step 1 - Create a chapter summary.: 10.2.1 - Paraphrase the chapter. 10.2.2 - Outline the chapter. 10.2.3 - Rewrite leaving out all clauses and phrases - just subjects, verbs, and objects. Step 2 - Note your observations and insights. Step 3 - Ask detailed questions of the chapter. 10.2.3.1 - Observe the context 10.2.3.2 - Define the words and phrases 10.2.3.3 - The structure and grammar. 10.2.3.4 - Use other translations 10.2.3.5 - Background (historic, cultural, geographic, economic, social, current events) 10.2.3.6 - See what other passages say 10.2.3.7 - Refer to a commentary. Step 4 - Correlate with other passages. Step 5 - Make a list of some possible applications. Step 6 - Formulate some conclusions. Step 7 - Write out one application from your list.</p> <p><u>What to Look for in a Chapter Analysis Study</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask the six vital observation questions: What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? - Look for key words, repeated words and phrases., questions asked, answers given. - Look for commands. Warnings, comparisons, contrasts, illustrations, causes and effects. - Look for promises and their conditions, progression from general >specific, from specific> general, steps in narrative or bio. - Look for lists of things, results, for advice, admonitions, and attitudes. - Look for the tone - emotional atmosphere. - Look for connectives, articles & prepositions. - Look for explanations, OT quotes in the NT. - Look for the literary form, paradoxes. - Look for emphasis thru space - proportion. - Look for exaggerations or hyperboles, grammatical construction, current events, force of the verbs, anything unusual or unexpected. 	<p>11.3 - Steps Step 1 - Reread the book several times i Step 2 - Write out a detailed, final, outline using the preliminary outline from your Book Survey and the passage summaries from your Chapter Analysis. These, when coupled with your current readings, will allow you to put this outline in its final form. Step 3 - Write down a descriptive book title. Step 4 - Make a summary of your insights. You will here summarize the major and minor themes as well as the conclusions of the book as you discovered them in the previous two studies. Step 5 - Write out a personal application. Step 6 - Share the results of your study</p>

Method 2 - The Chapter Summary Bible Study Method Form

Passage:	Read five times: __
1. Caption:	
2. Contents:	
3. Chief People:	
4. Choice Verse:	
5. Crucial Word(s):	
6. Challenges (Difficulties I need to study):	
7. Cross References:	
8. Christ Seen:	
9. Central Lessons:	
10. Conclusion (Personal application):	

Method 7 - The Word Study Bible Study Method Form

1. English Word:	3. Comparison of Translations:
2. English Definition:	
4. Original Word and Short Definition(s):	
5. Occurrences in the Bible:	
6. Root Meaning and Origin:	
7. Biblical Usage:	
8. Application/Evaluation:	

Method 8 - The Book Background Bible Study Method Form

1. Subject:	
2. a. Reference Works Used:	2. b. Usefulness:
3. Context/Background Information:	
4. Insights:	
5. Application/Evaluation:	

Method 9 - The Book Survey Bible Study Method Form

1. Book:	Number of Chapters:	Number of Times Read:
2. Notes on the Book:		
Reference Works Used:		
3. Book Background:		
4. Horizontal Chart (use blank sheet of paper and attach):		
5. Preliminary Outline:		
6: Application/Evaluation:		

Method 10 - the Chapter Analysis Bible Study Method Form

Chapter:	Chapter Title:
1. Chapter Summary:	
2. Observation	
3. Interpretation	
4. Correlation	
5. Application	
6. Conclusions:	
7. Personal Application/Evaluation:	

Method 11 - The Book Synthesis Bible Study Method Form

1. Book:	Chapters:	Number of Times Read:
2. Detailed, Final Outline:		
3. Descriptive Title:		
4. Summary of Insights:		
5. Personal Application:		
6. People with Whom to Share this Study:		