



LOVE GOD

STUDY GOD

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

We come to better know God by studying Him. The Observation-Interpretation-Application method is a way of in-depth study of scripture that's different than reflective reading. The key is realizing it's flexible. You usually will not answer every question below or find every category useful for every passage—use what fits, be flexible, but train yourself to first ask questions and make observations before interpreting what it means and how it applies.

OBSERVATION (Text - What does it say?)

A. TRANSLATION

Read the entire passage through several times using several different translations (NIV, NAS, RSV, NKJV, etc.) and making note of the differences. This will help you identify key words and possible translational problems (www.biblegateway.com has multiple translations online)

B. CONTEXT – use these questions to make observations about context

This is a great link for Introductions to books of the Bible:

www.ibsstl.org/niv/studybible/index.php

1. WHO is writing/speaking and to whom? What is their relationship?
2. WHAT is discussed? What is happening?
3. WHERE does the event/communication take place?
4. WHEN does this take place relative to other significant events?
5. WHY does the speaker say what he does? (What problems were the recipients facing?)
6. HOW does this passage fit into the context? (e.g. What comes before and after?)

C. STRUCTURE - Examine the structure of the passage and make note of any significant connecting words that help you understand the author's argument (e.g. therefore, but, and, etc.). You may want to diagram a long sentence or paraphrase the argument of the passage.

D. WORD STUDY - List all the key words of the passage or translational problems as identified in "A" and use a Bible Dictionary, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Greek Words, or a Greek Dictionary to understand their meaning (www.studylight.org/isb has an Interlinear English/Greek Bible (type in the passage you want)--you can click on words to get a full understanding of it in the original language). For Greek verb forms reference also check www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm



E. QUESTIONS - Bombard the text with questions as you reread the passage. You won't answer every question suggested below, but asking questions like these helps you look from different angles. Write your observations.

1. What are the commands?
2. What are the promises?
3. What do I learn about God? about Jesus? the Holy Spirit?

4. Repeated words, ideas, themes?
5. Comparisons/Contrasts
6. Lists
7. Cause effect relationships

INTERPRETATION (Message - What does it mean?)

A. DEVELOP PRINCIPLES

Proceed verse by verse and record your new understanding as you interpret the passage. (eg. Why is it important to understand this? What does the writer mean to convey in each verse? How did this relate to the original audience? What is the opposite of this truth? When should this be applied?)

Cross-reference other passages to help interpret this passage (what other passages seem to support or conflict with my interpretation? You always want to interpret within the broader context of other scriptures)

List specific timeless principles that you derive from your observation of the passage

B. COMMENTARIES

Consult any commentaries you can and write down insights they had that you might have missed.

C. UNANSWERED

Make a list of unanswered questions for future study.

D. THEME

Write down in a sentence the main idea or point you think the author is trying to get across. You can use this as your title if you're leading a study!

APPLICATION (My Life - What does this imply for me?)

A. TEACHING (How does this truth apply to my life?)

B. REPROOF (Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short?)

C. CORRECTION (What will I do about it? What will I change?)

D. TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (What specific things can I do to make this principle a habitual part of my life?)



Thing to help and consider as you try it out:

- When you read “Therefore” – look to see what was said previously to find out what the “therefore” is there for
- What’s the context of a command or statement? - Context matters!
- The Bible can never say what it never meant!
- Use scripture to interpret scripture.
- Prescription vs. Description – just because we read a story of ___ (description) doesn’t mean that we are commanded (prescription) to ___. Commands (imperatives) are often very clear to be commands.
- Online tools – check out different translations, commentaries, etc..
- Use Commentaries – after you’ve done the reading for yourself

