

PART 4: HOW TO KEEP YOUR BIBLE STUDY FRESH

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Your Bible study time may occasionally go "stale" if you use the same method over and over. To remedy this problem try to have several methods for studying the Bible and vary them from time to time. In this part, you will find learn four popular methods for keeping your Bible study fresh.



- How to study a Bible book
- How to study a Bible chapter
- How to study a Bible topic
- How to study devotional books

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What the best thing to do when Christians in a Bible study group disagree on the interpretation of a passage?
2. Why do you suppose most Christians in America who have a Bible, simply don't read it?
3. What part of the Bible interests you most and why?

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE BOOK

Before studying an individual chapter or passage in the Bible it is strongly recommended that you do a study of the entire book first. This will help you understand its overall context. Much of the following information can be found in Bibles which have study notes.

- Who: Who is the author? Who are the intended recipients?
- When: When was this book written?
- Why: Why did the author write this book?
- What: What is the main purpose of the book?
- Where: Where were the author and the intended audience?
- How: How is the book structured? Look for an outline of the book which will show its main points, subpoints, etc. You may also want to try outlining the book yourself.

Shown below are a few great Bible books to consider.

BOOK	DESCRIPTION
Psalms	Expressive, poetic
Matthew	The bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament
John	Teaches sound Bible doctrine
Romans	Teaches sound Bible doctrine
Proverbs	Practical advice for everyday living
Genesis	Understand creation, original sin, Abraham, Moses Joseph
Luke	A historical-like account of Jesus
1 Corinthians	Struggles of the early church
Isaiah	Prophecies about the Messiah
Acts	How the church began

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE CHAPTER

Chapter studies can be the most exciting way to study the Bible since they contain short but meaty passages that don't require much time yet they yield so much. Chapter studies should be done only after you've read the entire Bible book and understand its overall context.

Rick Warren offers a great way to study individual Bible studies in steps beginning with the letter "C."¹

- **C_____**: Give a short descriptive title. The shorter the title the easier it will be to remember it.
- **C_____**: Describe, summarize, paraphrase, outline, or simply make a list of major points in a chapter.
- **C_____**: List the most important people in the chapter and state why they are included.

¹ Adapted from "Personal Bible Study," by Rick Warren (pastors.com, 1984).

- **C_____**: Choose a verse that summarizes the whole chapter or one which speaks to you personally.
- **C_____**: List any difficulties you may have with the passage, statements that are not clear to you.
- **C_____**: Write down the major principles, insights, and lessons you learn from this chapter.
- **C_____**: This is the application portion of your study. Write down some actions you would like to take from this chapter.

Shown below are some great Bible chapters to consider.

CHAPTER	SUBJECT
Genesis 1	Creation
Genesis 37	Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors
Exodus 20	Ten Commandments
Daniel 3	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
Daniel 6	Daniel & the Lion's Den
Matthew 28	The Resurrection of Jesus the Christ
Luke 2	The Nativity
John 1	The Word
1 Corinthians 13	Unconditional Love
Hebrew 11	The Hall of Faith

Table 1: Popular Bible chapters

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE TOPIC

Have you wondered what the Bible says about various topics such as anger, love, tithing, worship, baptism, etc.? Doing a biblical study on any given topic can be fun and very informative as long as basic hermeneutical principles are followed.

Topical studies will help you know what God thinks about any major issue, and help you to become familiar with God in a personal way. They will often stimulate your

love for him and give you a deeper understanding of what God wants you to know about a given subject.

Here is a simple four-step S-E-A-T process for doing topical studies:²

- **S** _____ a topic: Most Bibles have a list of topics (concordance) that can be found in the back of your Bible. Several other recommended concordances are "The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance" by Edward W. Goodrick and "John R. Kohlenberger III and Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible" by James Strong. See the table below.
- **E** _____ the topic: Look up each reference shown in the concordance and note what each passage says about the topic, taking its context into account. Be sure to look up both Old and New Testament references.
- **A** _____ your notes: Read through them several times observing what they say. Don't rush this step. Try to reduce your analysis of the topic to about one paragraph, half a page at most. This is necessary so that you don't become overwhelmed by too much information but at the same time you are not oversimplifying your conclusions.
- **T** _____ against extra-biblical sources. Test your conclusions against a sound Bible dictionary. If your analysis is inconsistent with the Bible dictionary, go back over your analysis to see why there might be a difference. Identify where you agree and where you disagree. (It might be tempting to skip Steps 2 and 3 and simply go directly to your dictionary but in doing so you'll miss some of the "meatier" aspects of doing a thorough biblical study on your own).



Some suggested topics are shown below.

CATEGORY	TOPIC
Character	Holy, courage, patience, self-control, wisdom, righteousness, obedience, humility, respect, meekness, thankfulness
Discipleship	Prejudice, accountability, trials, transformation, commitment, disciple, discipleship, teaching
Emotions	Anger, attitude, compassion, fear, frustration, hope, joy, loneliness, love, peace, sadness,

² Tim LaHaye, *How to Study the Bible for Yourself* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1976, 1998), pp. 137-139.

Ethics	Abortion, gambling, violence, sin, truth, lying, immorality, discernment,
Knowing God	Attributes of God, Holy Spirit, knowing God, God's names, trusting God, worship, praise

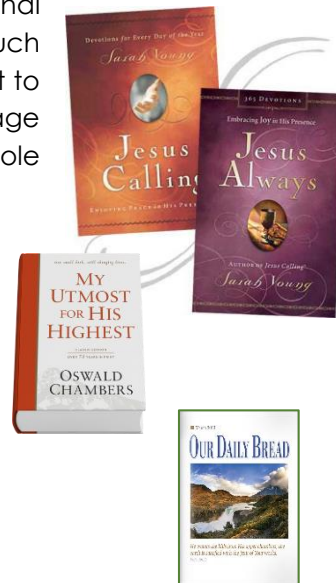
Table 2: Suggested topical studies

HOW TO READ DEVOTIONAL BOOKS

J. P. Moreland provides excellent guidelines for devotional readings.³ The goal of devotional reading is not so much gathering of new information or mastering content, but to deepen and nourish the soul by entering into the passage and allowing it to be assimilated into one's whole personality.

Popular devotional books include:

- My Utmost for His Highest (Oswald Chambers)
- Jesus Calling (Sarah Young)
- Streams in the Desert (L. W. Cowman)
- The Imitation of Christ (Thomas A' Kempis)
- Our Daily Bread (Daily Bread)



Certain steps are required to enter correctly into the process of devotional reading.

1. _____: Prepare yourself to listen to the Holy Spirit as he speaks to you quietly as you are reading. Be sure to find a place that is quiet and free of distractions as you do this. Invite God to speak to your heart about what you are reading.
2. _____: Have a spirit of expectancy and openness as you read the passage slowly and deliberately with a sense of humility. The goal here is not to read lots of material but to focus on a small portion of the Scripture.
3. _____: periodically stop and reflect on what you've read. Don't rush the process. Talk to God about the passage and think deeply about its specific meaning.

³ J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1997), 164-165

BIBLE STUDY TOOLS



Lastly, a word about Bible study tools. They can be very insightful for your regular Bible studies, but use them only after you have spent time in the Bible. Remember, they are secondary sources and should always be viewed as such—the Bible is your primary source!

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Bible Atlases	Bible atlases help to put Bible events into their geographical and historical context. They give a visual representation of nations and empires of the Ancient Near East.
Bible Charts	There are many books made up exclusively of charts, diagrams, summary tables, and timelines of Bible topics. With modern readers being more visually oriented these offer vast amounts of information in summary form.
Bible Commentaries	Commentaries provide helpful information on difficult passages. They can also provide insight into the broader message of the book. Use commentaries after you've done your own study.
Bible Dictionaries and Handbooks	Bible dictionaries and handbooks are helpful in providing information about cultural and historical backgrounds of a book. They can also provide insights into customs of the Ancient Near East and word definitions in their original context.
Bible Software	Bible software applications provide the Bible student with quick access to words or phrases. They are excellent for word studies and quick Bible text searches. Most software applications include other resources such as commentaries, handbooks, word definitions, and other secondary sources.
Bible Translations	Helpful for gaining a clear understanding of the text. Use at least three translation types (free, functional, and formal).

Concordances	A concordance is an index to Bible passages. By looking up a particular word or phrase, you can find the references where the phrase occurs in the Bible. Many Bible software applications also have this capability and are faster than looking up words manually in books.
Expository Dictionaries and Interlinear Texts	These are helpful when doing word studies based on original Greek and Hebrew word meanings (you don't have to know Greek or Hebrew). Some words in the Bible have meanings that are different from their modern English meanings.
Internet Sources	Excellent resources for any of the above tools, but make sure that the website you use is reliable and doctrinally sound.

Table 3: Bible Study Tools

Note: Free Bible study tools can be found at www.TaylorNotes.Info/resources-details

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

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