

Bible Study Tools

Why study the Bible?

1. It is essential for spiritual growth... “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.” 1 Pe. 2:2. Is your attitude toward the Bible like that attitude of a hungry baby? Do you have an appetite for the Word? You can develop that. As we have de-emphasized the scriptures, we have paid a very high price in behavior and morality.

2. It is essential in maintaining spiritual health. Ps. 19:7-14.

3. It is essential for fulfilling your purpose in life... “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Tim. 3:16.

READING the Bible is a healthy habit. MEMORIZING the Bible is even better. But STUDYING the Bible makes the greatest impact on our lives and the lives of others. I have spent 43 years as a pastor because of my love for the scriptures...

This is a course on how to study your Bible. Without a basic understanding of how to study the Bible we run the risk of misunderstanding who God is and what He created us to be and to do. When we fail to study God’s word we inevitable end up separating what God has joined together and joining together what God has separated. The danger of faulty Bible study shows up in one of my favorite stories:

A young seminary graduate was invited to interview with a small, country church. His meeting with the pastor search committee began with a question from the chairman. “Young man, do you know your Bible?” The young man replied, “Yes sir. I know the Bible from front to back.” Another member of the committee asked, “Do you know the stories and parables?” The candidate answered, “Oh yes! I know all the stories and parables.” Another committee member said, “Tell us one of the parables of Jesus—let’s say the parable of the Good Samaritan.” And so he did. It went like this.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, who went down to Jericho by night and fell among stony ground. And the thorns rose up and choked him nearly half to death. He said, ‘What shall I do?’ Then he said, ‘I shall arise and go to my father’s house.’ And he arose, and climbed up into a sycamore tree. The next day Solomon and his wife Gomorrah came by, and they carried him down to the ark for Moses to take care of him. And as he was going into the ark, he caught his hair in a tree limb and he hung there for 40 days and 40 nights.

And afterwards, he hungered and the ravens came and fed him. The next day the three wise men came and carried him down to Nineveh. And when he got down there, he found Delilah sitting on the wall. He cried out, ‘Chunk her down, boys.’ And they said, ‘How many times shall we chunk her down, unto seven times?’ And he said, ‘Nay, but unto seventy times seven.’ So they chunked her down, 490 times and they picked up twelve baskets of her fragments. And they asked him, ‘Lord, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?’”

The committee sat silent until the chairman finally said, “Folks, I say we call him. I know he’s young, but he sure knows his Bible.”

It’s a silly story with a serious point – it is dangerous to string Bible stories together with no understanding of the connection (or lack of connection) between them. Just because you are using the Bible doesn’t mean you are using it properly or for its intended purpose. It is not a magic book. Herdsmen in Africa seen holding the Bible in the air to protect their herds...Serious Bible study frees us from the misguided attempts to use the Bible as a good luck charm. Remember, the devil used the scriptures improperly to tempt Jesus go around the cross.

There are two resources that are essential to fruitful, satisfying Bible study:

Bible study takes TIME. So does every worthwhile discipline. Before you take a course on calculus it’s a good idea to learn to add, subtract, divide and multiply.

Bible study takes TOOLS:

Concordance – an exhaustive concordance lists every word in the Bible.

Bible Dictionary – the difference between Caesarea Maritima and Philippi.

Study Bible – notes, cross references, QR code.

Version options – translations and paraphrases. Let's consider John 1:14.

Translation options

And the word flesh became and tabernacled among us and we gazed the glory as only-begotten beside the Father full of grace and truth. (Greek)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (KJV)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV)

Paraphrases or “dynamic equivalence”

So, the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.” (NLT)

The Word became a human and lived among us. We saw his glory—the glory that belongs to the only Son of the Father—and he was full of grace and truth. (NCV)

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.” (The Message)

One final resource – the Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the scriptures. “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Pe. 1:20-21

The Holy Spirit illuminates the mind of the believer...1 Cor. 2:12-16

Scripture is normal, logical communication. Therefore, it is possible for the person without God’s Spirit (the unbeliever) to mentally grasp the meaning of Scripture, at least in terms of its logical content. On the other hand, the man without God’s Spirit cannot understand God’s Word in the fullest sense, for he does not and cannot have a real appreciation of the spiritual implications of biblical truth, especially in relation to himself. He may grasp the thoughts, but he misses the spirit, the life-changing purpose behind the thoughts.

“If all you see is what you see then you do not see all there is to be seen.” Tony Evans

So, let’s see if we can see more of what there is to be seen in our next lesson.