

SHOSHANA PUBLICATIONS

How? to Study Scripture



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How to Study Scripture
Answers to Encourage the Habit Book 2

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How to Study Scripture?

Answers to Encourage the Habit

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Shoshana Publications

*Dedicated to all new Christians yearning to
know more about God.*

1

How do you study scripture?

We know we should. We may even understand a bit as to why we should. But *how* do we study scripture?

The Bible is a big book! If you are serious about studying it is because you love its Author.

God wrote the Holy Bible. God preserved scripture. It is not locked away in some ancient language. You do not need to learn Greek or Hebrew. He has kept His words for you today just like He promised.

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. Psalm 12:6-7

Scripture has been protected over the ages. It has been safe-guarded for you to study today.

How to Study Scripture

Just like He had them written in a universal language in its day (Greek), He has saved them for us today in our universal language.

English is the universal language of today. God has preserved His words in English.

Don't get me wrong: the Bible has been translated in many languages. There are many reliable translations. The point here is that you can study the Bible with confidence knowing you have God's words.

How do you study scripture? First you must believe it!

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15

Timothy knew the holy scriptures from childhood. Did he have the tablets of stone written by God's finger? No.

Did Timothy have the original writings of any Old Testament authors? No. But what Timothy had was able to make him wise unto salvation.

How to Study Scripture

God has given you His scripture. It can give you wisdom—if you believe it.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. 1 John 5:13

Everything you study in the Bible—believe it. Do not doubt what it says. Do not question what it says. Embrace what it says.

You begin studying scripture with an attitude of belief.



Example

In John 14:6, Jesus is quoted as stating, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Do you believe this statement?

How to Study Scripture

Do you believe “all roads lead to heaven?” If you do, you are not believing what the Bible says.

Do you believe there are other ways to reach God outside of Jesus Christ? Again, you are not believing what you are reading.

The foundation to Bible study is believing what you read. Based upon John 14:6, you cannot reach heaven through any other person or any other means except through Jesus Christ.

2

You begin to study scripture when you read it.

New Christians thirst to know the Bible. They want to learn what God says. It is exciting!

They want to jump into Bible commentaries. They may even buy books online to help understand the Bible.

All that is good.

There is just one problem: you cannot study something you have not read.

The next step in studying scripture is to simply start reading it.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Timothy 4:13

This was written to an individual, not a church. Timothy was encouraged to intentionally read.

How to Study Scripture

This is not a text commanding local churches to have public bible readings. This is God telling YOU to read your Bible.

Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read. Isaiah 34:16

You start learning God's word by reading it. Before finding out what others say about a scripture text, why not read it first, in its own context?

As you read the Bible, do not read INTO it. Just read the words and BELIEVE what you are reading.

You may not understand what you are reading. That is okay. You are just starting out on your journey. You are taking the first step.

When you were in school, you were encouraged to learn new subjects. Whether it was mathematics, a new language, or one of the sciences, you were a beginner.

Beginners do not know all the terms associated with their subject. They do not understand all the concepts of their course. They never will unless

How to Study Scripture

they simply begin to study. And those studies include reading about the topic.

After you have read your Bible through once, start all over. Determine that you will read Scripture every day of your life for the rest of your life.

Believe it!

Read it!

Those are the first two steps in studying the Bible.



Example

I know the Bible has been preserved as a book. You will eventually get to the place where you start in Genesis and read all the way through Revelation—just like a book!

But I would not recommend that right now.

I always encourage people to start with the Gospel of John. It is important to meet your Savior first.

How to Study Scripture

From there you can go to 1 Thessalonians. You will learn Jesus is alive and coming back for you!

After reading 1 Thessalonians, start with the Book of Romans and read through Philemon. You can skip over 1 Thessalonians if you want because you already read it—but then again it is only 5 short chapters and they are very encouraging!

Now you are ready to read the other New Testament books. Matthew, Mark, Luke, (you already read John), and Acts. Then you can read from Hebrews to the end. That would be the entire New Testament!

Maybe from there you could start with Matthew and read through Revelation all in one go? It does not really matter how you begin. It is just important that you start.

With the Old Testament, be sure to start with the Psalms and then Proverbs. You will probably end up reading from these most days of your life.

Keep going. Eventually you will read the entire Bible!

3

Reading the Bible over and over again is the foundation to genuine Bible study.

As you read, you become familiar with the overall story. You begin to notice different details between accounts. When this happens, you will naturally start comparing scripture with scripture.

The next step in Bible study is to COMPARE it.

When I say compare scripture, I am not saying to compare it to secular authors. I am not saying to compare it with religious authors. I am saying compare scripture with scripture.

Comparing scripture with scripture is a major step in Bible study. That is why you have to read it first. You must become familiar with its text.

Comparing scripture with scripture is a natural progression from reading through the Bible.

How to Study Scripture

Do not forget the premise that you believe everything you are reading!

When you find a difference—or even a similarity—that is your opportunity to learn important precepts.

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. Isaiah 28:10

You learn about God and God's thoughts by comparing lines of scriptures with other scriptures.

We already know by experience how God's way of thinking is not how we think.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

We are tainted with a sinful nature. We cannot comprehend divine thinking on our own. That is why we study God's word.

How to Study Scripture

Peter, who saw Jesus transfigured into His glorified body, taught that God's written revelation is more sure than any vision he or others may have seen (2 Peter 1:19).

Peter explained God gives us divine power to live godly (2 Peter 1:3-4). How? Through knowing God.

How do we know God?

We compare scripture with scripture. Scripture we have read. Scripture we have believed.



Example

John 10:27-28 reads, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Look at the lines of scripture and identify the concepts.

How to Study Scripture

- Jesus said if you believe Him you are His sheep.
- Jesus said if you are His sheep He knows who you are.
- Jesus said those He knows have eternal life.

There is a concept of eternal life from these lines.

Human concept is that we can lose our salvation. Jesus said no man is able to pluck them out of His Father's hand. That does not make sense. Surely a Christian who sins is in danger of losing their salvation?

Compare this with Matthew 7:23: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jesus gives us the words He will say to those who are His sheep. He will say "I NEVER knew you."

Scripture with scripture teaches eternal life is just that: eternal. Once you receive it you cannot lose it.

We will talk about context of scripture texts later. But this example challenges us with the question: Do you believe what you are reading?

4

Study is a thorough search to know something.

The next stage in Bible study is very exciting. Jesus instructed, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” John 5:39.

As you read through your Bible and compare scripture with scripture, you are searching for Jesus in every passage! According to Jesus, the scriptures all testify of Him!

That means when we read about the sacrifices in Leviticus, we can find Jesus. When we read about Saul chasing David, we are reading about Jesus.

Jesus confirmed this concept after His resurrection. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” Luke 24:27.

How to Study Scripture

Jesus left no doubt that the entire Old Testament speaks of Him: “which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” Luke 24:44.

To study the Bible you must SEARCH it. What are you searching for? References and pictures of Jesus. This opens up scripture texts normally closed to our thinking.

Now all of a sudden when we read about Abraham telling Isaac, “God will provide himself a lamb,” we see a prophecy pointing to Jesus Christ being given by the Father for our sin (Genesis 22:8).

This precept of Bible study is reinforced by John in his Revelation where he writes, “worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” Revelation 19:10.

Believing what we read, the spirit of prophecy—the underlying message of the prophets—is Jesus Christ.

The prophecies of Moses, David, Isaiah and all the rest are about Jesus Christ at their core.

Believe scripture as you read them.

How to Study Scripture

Read scripture systematically.

Compare scriptures.

Search for Jesus Christ as you read and compare.



Example

Our Lord claimed it was “Moses” who “wrote of me” (John 5:46). How can we find Jesus in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy?

The answer is what is called “typology.” Typology preserves the historic meaning of the text while identifying examples of Jesus Christ and His work.

It is important that you understand we are not talking about “allegory.”

Allegory does not take the text literally. It reads scriptures such as Noah’s Ark as a metaphor for spiritual growth. Instead of not believing in the

How to Study Scripture

literal Flood, allegory simply believes it is a story from which to draw spiritual lessons.

Typology is not like that. It believes the events of scripture as literally true. It also sees them as God-given to point us to Jesus.

Using Noah's Ark, Bible-believers preserve there was an actual flood and a real vessel built that endured those waters. But they also see how the ark was type of the cross in that it was the means of salvation for Noah and his family.

The ark "typifies" the work of Jesus at Calvary but the ark is not the cross. It is only a type of that cross. The ark was real and was not merely a representative of a spiritual truth.

Using typology, the Old Testament comes alive with so many images of our Savior!

5

We have now come to the central tool for Bible study.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

This is how you discover the doctrinal application of an text. This is where you identify where the text fits into “God’s Plan For the Ages.”

Remember, God has preserved His word as a book. That means there is one overarching story. That story may not be what you think it is all about.

After you read through the Bible several times, you begin to realize there is an overall story. It is a dramatic clash at a cosmic level.

I don’t want to disappoint you but the Bible is not all about you. It also is all about the Church. In

How to Study Scripture

fact, it is not all about the Gospel. What do I mean? I mean it is all about God.

Let me just double-down and tell what the Bible is NOT.

- The Bible is not a self-help book for you to discover an alternative life.
- The Bible is not a magic book of spells for you to memorize and curse people and demons.

We are so focused on ourselves that we think the Bible is all about us! But the Bible is all about God.

God is communicating to us. He created us. He loves us. So the Bible is God's way of communicating to us. It tells us how we can give Him glory.

Now if you actually read the Bible, you begin to realize there is a story. We find our story began with a Covenant of Life but humans broke that covenant.

The story goes on and we see that God establishes new covenants each time humanity fails.

How to Study Scripture

“Rightly dividing the word of truth” is reading the Bible with an understanding that there is a story and we are not the entire story.

You know this already. You already know that you divide between the Old Testament and the New Testament. And even though both testaments are the word of God, yet the way to God is not through sacrificing animals as it was in the Old Testament.

You have just “rightly divided” the word of truth!

Studying helps you discover hidden gems of truth. And there is a treasure trove of riches learned when you exercise right division.



Example

The key to studying scripture is to “rightly divide the word of truth.” How can we do this practically? The answer is to use a system that treats the Bible.

How to Study Scripture

The study system is called “Dispensationalism.” It does not treat the Bible as a collection of individual books. It recognized the writings of God are preserved as a whole.

Dispensationalism is a “dispensing”. In particular it is a dispensing of God’s grace. It helps you read the story of Genesis - Revelation. There are seven distinct dispensations of God’s grace in humans history: past, present, and future.

We currently live under the Dispensation of the Church. That means doctrinally what applies to the Church are Paul’s epistles. The other scriptures doctrinally speak to different time periods.

When Jesus gave His sermon on the mount, He was not speaking to the Church. The Church was not even formed yet! He was giving His manifesto for His coming kingdom. Until Jesus sets up His throne in Jerusalem, the Sermon is a great source of spiritual growth. The Sermon on the Mount is not the way of salvation.

“Rightly divide the word of truth.”

6

One of the hallmarks of Christianity since the time of Reformation ca. 1500 A.D. is the belief all Christians can read and understand the Bible for themselves.

The idea that only scholars can understand scripture is a dangerous teaching. That would mean God did not give His word to everyone. That would imply only the educated have the Holy Spirit to lead them and guide them into all truth.

That simply is not true.

The next step in studying your Bible is to “Context It!” By that we mean you need to read scripture text in its context. There is an old adage that says,

Text without context is pretext.

What that means is that you must look at the context of your passage. It will help you understand what it means. Without context, you

How to Study Scripture

can create false teaching. And you can use scripture to do it! Dangerous indeed.

The things is, God instructed the congregation of Israel to teach their children His words (see Deuteronomy 4:9-11).

Obviously it is easy enough to understand if children can learn them. Many twist scripture to make it say what they want it to say. Others use education and say you cannot understand without university training.

*and thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy **mind**, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. Mark 12:30*

When you love the Lord with all your mind, you use common sense. You can ask simple questions like: “Who is doing the talking in this passage?” and “Who is the audience of this passage?” or “Who was this passage written to when it was first penned?”

Remember when we said earlier do not read “into” the text?

How to Study Scripture

What you are looking for is the historic meaning. You know, like the time of its writing, place of events, circumstances of message, etc.

Believe what you read. Compare what you reading with other scripture. Search for Jesus and be sure to rightly divide the word of truth. If you follow that pattern, you will have the doctrinal context. That will guide you how to view the historical context of the passage.

You do. It need a university degree to study the Bible. You only need a heart, mind, and soul that loves God, the Author of scripture.



Example

Let us practice with a familiar text of scripture.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. John 3:7

Who is talking? Jesus. To whom is He speaking? Nicodemous, a religious leader of the Jews. What

How to Study Scripture

is the context? Entering the kingdom (verse 3).

What is meant? A Spiritual birth (verses 4-6 before our text and verse 8 after). When was He speaking? When Israel was still under the Law and looking for their Messiah (chapters 1-2).

Does this mean a person must be born again to go to heaven? Well that is a very good application (the last step in next chapter). But that is only application.

“Ye” is second person plural. He was addressing all the leaders through Nicodemous. Doctrinally, Jesus will not rule on earth until the Jewish leaders receive Him as their Messiah.

We know how the story goes. The Jews reject Jesus. He delays His physical kingdom. Instead, He rules today through a spiritual kingdom manifested in the Church as the world’s Savior.

Context provides deeper understanding of scripture.

7

Living out the word of God is the entire purpose of Bible study.

When you believe God's word you read it. When you read God's word you compare scripture with scripture. When you compare God's word you search for Jesus in every passage. When you search God's word you rightly divide it.

Rightly dividing the word of truth gives you the doctrinal interpretation of the passaged.

Finding the context of the passage gives you the historical understanding.

Personal application of scriptures you read are the height of Bible study. They give you an inspirational interpretation that is personal.

The last step in "How to Study Your Bible" is to **APPLY IT!**

How to Study Scripture

It is important to note that inspirational interpretation is NOT the doctrinal interpretation of scripture. It is just something special God encouraged you through His scripture.

Many foolishly think and teach personal applications the only application of a scripture text. Truthfully, there are as many *applications* of a passage as there are the number of God's children.

God reveals Himself personally to each of His children. Those personal revelations are to apply the scripture to your life. That means scripture guides what you do, where you go, who you fellowship with and all other aspects of life.

Personal application is not the doctrinal interpretation of a passage. I know that was already said but it needs to be emphasized.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 2 Peter 1:20

Applying a passage of scripture to yourself means you will ask a different set of questions such as:

“What is God wanting from me?” and “What is God telling me?” or “How can I live this today?”

How to Study Scripture

Although not all of scripture is doctrinally for you to live out today, ALL of scripture can instruct you how to give God glory through your life.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16-17



Example

Let us use one text as an example of the difference between doctrinal interpretation, historical understanding, and personal application.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14

How to Study Scripture

Historically this was a promise given to Israel as a nation. It is part of covenant between God and Israel in the context of the story from Abraham up to Solomon.

Doctrinally this passage points forward to the time when Israel will go through a Great Tribulation and look to Jesus as their Messiah. When they do, God will place Israel at the head of all nations. Christ will rule and reign over the earth from a throne in Jerusalem.

Inspirationally this passage has been applied by Christians as a promise for their own nation. Although God is not obligated to fulfill the promise to a Gentile nation, He will not ignore if this is applied spiritually to their own country.

Personal application of scripture is *why* you study the Holy Bible. All the steps as to *how* lead up to a practical application of God's word.

8

What is your purpose in life? Do you know why you are here on earth today? Why are you here?

The answer is very simple: your entire purpose for being in existence is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.

Let us restate that for it is very important: the main goal you are living for is to glorify God in this life and when it is over enjoy God forever.

You exist to give God glory.

You do not exist for any other purpose: not to get married; not to build a business; not to become rich; not to get an education.

Those are good things. They are wonderful goals to pursue. But they are not your reason for living. Your whole purpose of being who you are is to give God glory.

How to Study Scripture

If your purpose is to give God glory, how can you do that? Has God given anything to help you know how to glory Him and enjoy Him forever?

If He has, what is it? You can not see Him with your physical eyes. He is not available online for you to chat with.

What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify him?

The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him.

Shoshana Catechism #2

The Bible is God's word. It is given by God to us so we know what He expects from us. How do we approach the Holy Bible? We study scriptures to know what God expects from us.

How to Study Scriptures?

1. Believe it!
2. Read it!
3. Compare it!
4. Search it!

How to Study Scripture

5. Divide it!
6. Context it!
7. Apply it!

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:1-2

How to Study Scripture

ANSWERS TO ENCOURAGE THE HABIT

Answers to Encourage the Habit is a series of challenges to encourage new Christians in their faith. The first challenge is *Why Study Scripture?*

You know you should study scripture, but why is that so? What is the purpose of Bible study? Why is it important? Find the answers to those questions and more!

Future titles being prepared include: *Why Should I Pray? How Should I Pray?* And other topics to help encourage habits for spiritual growth.

