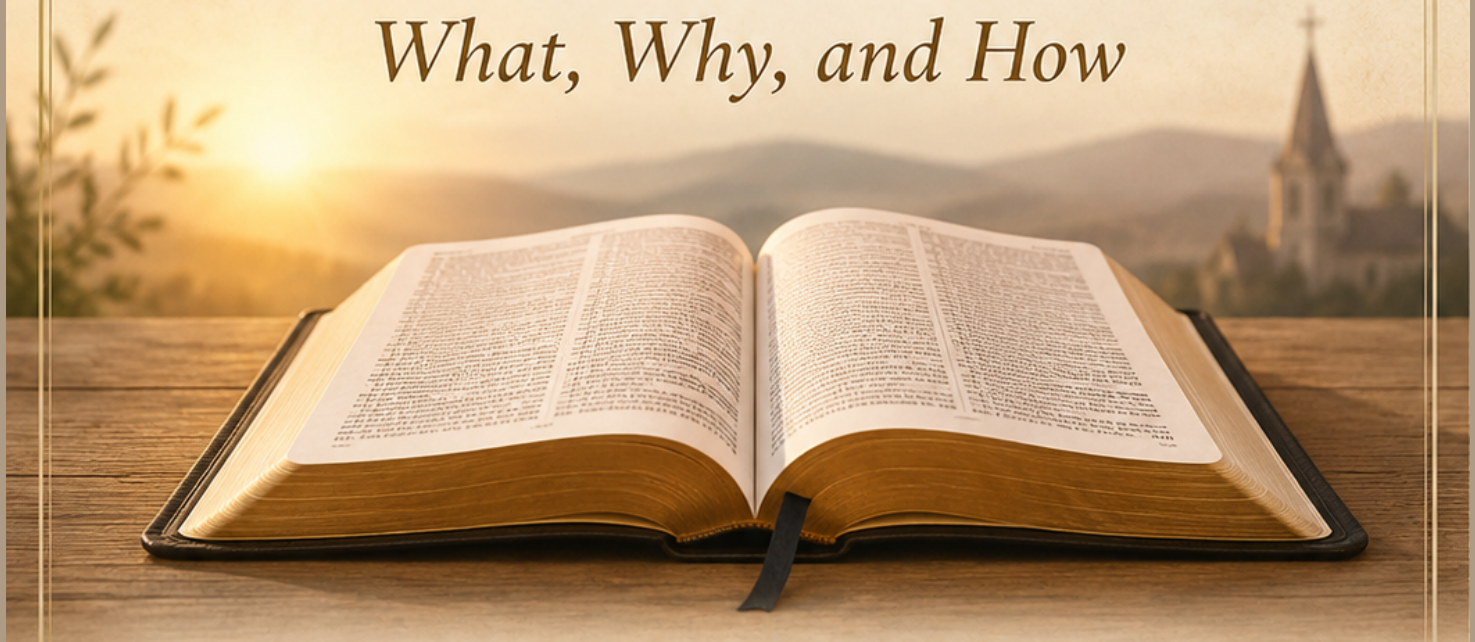
HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

What, Why, and How



A Practical Guide to Reading, Understanding, and Applying God's Word

Rev. Shannon Canoy

LifeChurch

A LETTER FROM PASTOR SHANNON

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Dear LifeChurch Family,

I wanted to put together this guide because learning **how to study the Bible for ourselves** is foundational to everything we do as followers of Jesus.

We live in a time when we have greater access to biblical teaching than perhaps any generation before us. We can listen to sermons, watch Bible studies, read books, search the internet, and find someone explaining almost any passage of Scripture within seconds. Those resources can be helpful, but they can never replace learning how to open the Bible, read it carefully, understand what it says, and allow God's Word to shape our lives.

My desire for this study is not simply to give you more information about the Bible. I want to help equip you to become a better student of the Bible.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Those words remind us that studying Scripture requires intentionality. We should never be afraid to ask questions, look carefully at the context, compare translations, follow cross-references, research historical background, and use good study tools. At the same time, the goal is not simply to become knowledgeable about the Bible. **The goal is to know the God who gave us the Bible.**

Throughout this guide we will look at what the Bible is, why there are different English translations, how to choose and use a Study Bible, and how to approach a passage using a simple method of observation, interpretation, and application.

What does the Bible SAY? What does it MEAN? What should I DO because of it?

Good Bible study begins with humility. We do not open Scripture trying to make it agree with what we already believe. We open Scripture willing to allow God to correct our thinking. We are not looking for a verse that supports our opinion; we are seeking to understand what God has said.

Study Bible notes, commentaries, teachers, pastors, podcasts, and other resources are tools. They can be incredibly valuable, but none of them carry the authority of Scripture itself.

THE TEXT IS THE AUTHORITY. EVERYTHING ELSE IS A TOOL.

As you use this guide, put these principles into practice. Read the passage before a class or personal study. Make observations. Write down your questions. Look at the context. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Use the resources available to you. Most importantly, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand and respond to God's Word.

My hope is that you will continue using these principles whenever you open your Bible. I do not simply want to teach you what I have learned from Scripture. **I want to help you learn how to discover it for yourself.**

May we become a church that loves the Word of God, knows the Word of God, rightly understands the Word of God, and most importantly, lives the Word of God.

Blessings,
Rev. Shannon Canoy
Senior Pastor | LifeChurch

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Introduction - What Is the Bible and Why Should We Study It?

Before we learn a method for studying Scripture, we need to understand what we are holding when we open the Bible - and why learning to study it carefully matters. The Bible is not simply a collection of religious writings. It is God's written Word, revealing who He is, what He has done, and His plan to redeem fallen humanity through Jesus Christ.

1. WHAT IS THE BIBLE? | God's Written Word

The Bible is God's written Word, given through human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It contains 66 books, written by more than 40 authors across roughly 1,500 years. Though written in different languages, cultures, places, and historical periods, Scripture tells one unified story - God's work of creation, humanity's fall, His covenant promises, redemption, and final restoration through Jesus Christ.

66 books	One complete canon of Scripture
40+ human authors	Kings, prophets, shepherds, fishermen, physicians, and others
About 1,500 years	Written across many generations and historical settings
Different languages and cultures	Yet unified in its message and purpose
One unfolding story	God's plan of redemption fulfilled in Jesus Christ

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, correction, training, and equipping God's people for every good work.

Key truth: Scripture is God-breathed - it carries His authority because He is its ultimate source.

2. THE BIBLE CONTAINS DIFFERENT KINDS OF WRITING | Read Each Book According to Its Genre

The Bible is one unified story, but it is not one kind of literature. Recognizing the kind of writing we are reading helps us understand it correctly.

TYPE OF WRITING	EXAMPLES
Historical Narrative	Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Acts
Poetry & Wisdom	Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Letters / Epistles	Romans, Ephesians, Philippians
Apocalyptic Prophecy	Daniel 7-12, Revelation

WHY THIS MATTERS

We do not read a proverb exactly like a historical narrative, or a prophetic vision exactly like a New Testament letter. Good Bible study pays attention to the kind of literature God chose to use.

3. THE WRITTEN WORD REVEALS THE LIVING WORD | Jesus Christ at the Center

John 1:1-5 identifies Jesus Christ as the eternal Word - the One who was with God and who is God. John 1:14 then tells us that the Word became flesh. The Bible is God's written Word; Jesus is the eternal, living Word whom Scripture reveals.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

The Bible itself is not God. Rather, Scripture is God's inspired and authoritative written revelation. It bears witness to Christ, reveals God's character and purposes, and teaches us how He calls us to live.

See John 1:1-5, 14; John 5:39

So when we study Scripture, we are doing more than collecting information about religion. We are learning what God has revealed about Himself. To know the Word faithfully is to grow in our knowledge of the God who gave it.

4. WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE? | Reading Is Good - Studying Goes Deeper

Many people read the Bible, but studying Scripture requires us to slow down, ask questions, understand context, and seek the meaning God intended. We study because God wants His Word not merely in front of us, but in us.

☐	**God calls us to know His Word**	Keep it in our hearts, teach it, and make it part of daily life	Deut. 6:4-9
☐	**Studying Scripture helps us know Christ**	We cannot faithfully follow Someone we do not know	John 5:39
☐	**God's Word grounds us in truth**	It gives us a standard when culture, feelings, and opinions change	John 17:17
☐	**God's Word strengthens our faith**	It reminds us who God is and what He has promised	Rom. 10:17
☐	**God's Word guides our decisions**	It gives light for the path in front of us	Ps. 119:105
☐	**God's Word equips us to live faithfully**	It teaches, corrects, trains, and prepares us for good works	2 Tim. 3:16-17

5. READING THE BIBLE VS. STUDYING THE BIBLE | Both Matter

READING	STUDYING
What does the passage say?	What does the passage mean?
Follows the flow of Scripture	Slows down to observe details and context
Builds familiarity with God's Word	Builds understanding of God's Word
Helps us see the big picture	Helps us understand how the pieces fit together
Feeds us daily	Trains us to handle Scripture accurately

THE GOAL OF BIBLE STUDY

Bible study is not merely an academic exercise. We study the Bible to know God, understand truth, obey what He says, become more like Christ, and be equipped to live faithfully.

KNOW THE WORD > UNDERSTAND THE WORD > LIVE THE WORD

6. WHERE WE ARE GOING NEXT | The How of Bible Study

Once we understand what the Bible is and why we need to study it, we are ready for the practical question: How do we study it? We will use a simple three-step approach that can be applied to any passage of Scripture.

☐	**OBSERVATION**	What does the text SAY?
☐	**INTERPRETATION**	What does the text MEAN?
☐	**APPLICATION**	What should I DO with what I have learned?

OUR APPROACH

SEE IT > UNDERSTAND IT > LIVE IT

Observation > Interpretation > Application

CLASS NOTES

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Section 2 - English Translations of the Bible

Before we can study the Bible well, it helps to understand how the Scriptures came to us in English. The Bible was not originally written in English, so every English Bible is a translation. Different translations may use different words, but their goal is the same: to faithfully communicate the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures.

1. WHAT IS A BIBLE TRANSLATION? | From the Biblical Languages into English

The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, with some portions in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, the common Greek of the first-century world. Every time we open an English Bible, we are reading the work of translators who have sought to communicate those ancient texts faithfully and clearly.

KEY QUESTION

If there is one Bible, why are there so many English translations?

Because languages do not match word-for-word, translators must make careful choices about wording, grammar, idioms, context, and meaning.

☐ **Hebrew**	Primary language of the Old Testament
☐ **Aramaic**	Used in portions of the Old Testament
☐ **Koine Greek**	Language of the New Testament
☐ **English**	A translation of those original biblical languages

2. WHY DO TRANSLATIONS SOUND DIFFERENT? | Different Wording Does Not Always Mean Different Meaning

Translation is more complicated than replacing one ancient word with one English word. A Hebrew or Greek word may have several possible English meanings depending on context. An ancient idiom may sound strange if translated literally. Greek sentence structure may also need to be rearranged to sound natural in English.

GENESIS 1:2 - A SIMPLE EXAMPLE

Some English Bibles describe the earth as "without form, and void," while others use wording such as "formless and empty." The English wording differs, but both are attempting to communicate the same Hebrew expression.

Different wording does not necessarily mean a different message.

3. THE TRANSLATION SPECTRUM | Formal Equivalence to Functional Equivalence

Bible translations generally fall somewhere along a spectrum. Some translations try to preserve more of the words and grammatical structure of the original languages. Others place more emphasis on expressing the meaning in clear, natural English. Neither end of the spectrum is completely "word-for-word" or completely free from interpretation.

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APPROACH	EMPHASIS	COMMON EXAMPLES
Formal Equivalence	Stays closer to original wording and structure	NASB, LSB, NKJV, ESV
Balanced / Optimal	Balances original form with clear modern English	BSB, CSB, NIV, NET
Functional Equivalence	Expresses the meaning in clear contemporary English	NLT

AN IMPORTANT POINT

"Literal" does not automatically mean "more accurate," and "readable" does not automatically mean "less faithful." Every translation must make decisions. The better question is: **How faithfully does this translation communicate the meaning of the original text?**

4. A SIMPLE TRANSLATION SPECTRUM | Think Continuum, Not Separate Boxes

MORE FORMAL ---------- MORE FUNCTIONAL

LSB / NASB -> NKJV / KJV -> ESV -> BSB -> CSB -> NIV -> NLT

The exact placement of a translation can vary by passage, so use the spectrum as a helpful guide rather than a rigid ranking. The BSB is intentionally designed to combine close attention to the source text with clear modern English, placing it near the middle of this continuum.

- **Formal translations** Helpful for close study, repeated words, syntax, and detailed comparison
- **Balanced translations** Helpful for study, teaching, and smooth everyday reading
- **Functional translations** Helpful for clarity, devotional reading, and difficult passages

5. WHERE DO OUR ENGLISH BIBLES COME FROM? | Manuscripts and Textual Study

Modern translators normally work from ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts rather than simply translating another English Bible. For the Old Testament, scholars work primarily with the Hebrew text while consulting other ancient witnesses. For the New Testament, scholars compare the many surviving Greek manuscripts and other ancient evidence.

Hebrew manuscripts	Primary textual basis for the Old Testament
Dead Sea Scrolls	Ancient witnesses that help us compare the Old Testament text
Septuagint	Ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament
Greek manuscripts	Primary witnesses used in studying the New Testament text

6. WHY ARE SOME VERSES DIFFERENT OR IN FOOTNOTES? | Manuscript Differences

When you compare translations, you may notice brackets, footnotes, or differences around certain verses and passages. This usually reflects differences among the ancient manuscripts available to translators. Good translations do not hide these places; they normally tell you about them in the footnotes.

- Mark 16:9-20 - Longer ending of Mark
- John 7:53-8:11 - The woman caught in adultery
- Acts 8:37 - A verse found in some later manuscript traditions

WHY FOOTNOTES MATTER

Footnotes allow the reader to see where significant manuscript differences exist. They are a valuable part of serious Bible study, not something to ignore.

7. TWO NEW TESTAMENT TEXT TRADITIONS YOU MAY HEAR ABOUT | Understanding Common Terms

TERM	WHAT IT REFERS TO
Textus Receptus	The printed Greek text tradition that underlies the New Testament of the KJV and NKJV. The NKJV also notes many places where other manuscript traditions differ.
Modern Critical Text	Modern scholarly Greek editions that compare a much larger body of manuscript evidence, including manuscripts that became available after the KJV era. Used by translations such as NASB, ESV, BSB, CSB, NIV, and NLT.

THE BIG POINT

These differences should not cause us to distrust Scripture. The abundance of manuscript evidence allows scholars to compare the text openly and carefully, and no central Christian doctrine depends on one disputed textual variant.

8. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE | From Wycliffe to the Modern Era

DATE	TRANSLATION / MILESTONE	WHY IT MATTERS
1300s	Wycliffe Bible	One of the earliest complete English Bibles; translated primarily from the Latin Vulgate.
1520s	William Tyndale	Translated directly from Greek and Hebrew; profoundly influenced later English Bibles.
1560	Geneva Bible	Influential English Protestant Bible before the KJV.
1611	King James Version	One of the most influential English translations in history.
1880s	Revised Version	Major revision using advances in scholarship and manuscript evidence.
1901	American Standard Version	Important American revision that influenced later translations.

THE MODERN TRANSLATION ERA

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, new English translations were produced as the English language changed, biblical scholarship advanced, and additional manuscript evidence became available.

9. MAJOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS TODAY | Different Strengths for Different Purposes

TRANSLATION	APPROACH	USEFUL FOR
NKJV	More formal	Study, preaching, memorization, public reading
NASB	Highly formal	Detailed study and close word comparison
ESV	Formal	Study, teaching, preaching, memorization
BSB	Balanced / literal-leaning	Study, teaching, public reading, comparison
CSB	Balanced	Study, teaching, everyday reading
NIV	Balanced to functional	General reading, study, teaching
NLT	Functional	Devotional reading, newer readers, clarity
NET	Balanced	Serious study; extensive translator notes

10. WHAT ABOUT PARAPHRASES? | Useful Supplement, Not Usually a Primary Study Bible

A paraphrase goes farther than a standard translation in restating biblical ideas in contemporary language. The Message is a well-known example. A paraphrase can sometimes help us hear a familiar passage in a fresh way, but for detailed study we should begin with a recognized translation produced from the original biblical languages.

A GOOD RULE

Use paraphrases as a supplement, not as the foundation for detailed interpretation.

11. WHICH TRANSLATION SHOULD I USE? | Use More Than One

There is no single English translation that is best for every purpose. A good Bible student learns to use several translations, because comparing them can help us see where the original-language wording is straightforward and where translators have had to make interpretive choices.

PURPOSE	HELPFUL OPTIONS
Primary study Bible	NKJV, NASB, ESV, BSB, CSB
More formal comparison	NASB or LSB
Balanced comparison	BSB, CSB, or NIV
Readable comparison	NLT
Translation notes	NET

WHEN TRANSLATIONS DIFFER

When several translations communicate essentially the same idea with different wording, comparison can clarify the meaning. When they differ significantly, slow down - there may be something worth studying more carefully.

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12. A WARNING ABOUT BIBLE STUDY | Do Not Shop for the Translation You Prefer

Do not keep checking translations until you find one that says what you want it to say. That is not Bible study. Different translations should help us investigate the text, not avoid what the text teaches.

OUR QUESTION IS NOT

"Which translation agrees with me?"

Our question is: "What did God actually say, and what did He intend us to understand?"

13. THE BIG PICTURE | How the Bible Reaches Us in English

GOD INSPIRED HIS WORD

Hebrew / Aramaic / Greek -> Ancient manuscripts copied and preserved -> Manuscript evidence carefully compared -> Translators make careful translation decisions -> We receive the Scriptures in English

☐	**READ IT CAREFULLY**	Pay attention to the words and context
☐	**STUDY IT FAITHFULLY**	Compare translations and use good tools
☐	**UNDERSTAND IT CORRECTLY**	Seek the meaning the author intended
☐	**LIVE IT OBEDIENTLY**	Allow God's Word to shape your life

14. CLASS TAKEAWAY | What Should We Remember?

☐	**Why are there different translations?**	Because translation requires careful choices about how to communicate ancient languages in understandable English.
☐	**Which translation is best?**	Different translations have different strengths; no single English version is best for every purpose.
☐	**What should I use for Bible study?**	Use a reliable primary translation and compare it with several others.
☐	**What is our goal?**	Not to find wording we prefer, but to understand faithfully what God has said.

THE GOAL

The goal is not to find the Bible that says what we want. The goal is to understand what God has said.

READ IT > STUDY IT > UNDERSTAND IT > LIVE IT

CLASS NOTES

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

A Simple, Repeatable Method for Studying Any Passage

We have established what the Bible is and why English translations sometimes differ. Now we come to the practical question: How do we actually study Scripture? Good Bible study is not about finding something new or clever. It is about slowing down long enough to see what the text says, understand what it means, and respond faithfully to what God has revealed.

KEY VERSE - 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Bible study takes diligence. Our goal is to handle God's Word carefully, accurately, and faithfully.

THE METHOD AT A GLANCE

PRAY > PREPARE > OBSERVE > INTERPRET > APPLY > SHARE

The heart of the method is simple: Observation > Interpretation > Application

1. BEGIN WITH PRAYER | Prepare Your Heart Before You Prepare Your Notes

Bible study requires careful thinking, but it is never merely an intellectual exercise. We come to Scripture humbly, asking the Holy Spirit to help us receive, understand, obey, and live the truth God has already given in His Word.

☐	**Receive**	Give me a willing and teachable heart.
☐	**Understand**	Help me see clearly what Your Word says.
☐	**Respond**	Convict me where my thinking or living needs to change.
☐	**Obey**	Give me the faith and courage to do what You show me.

A SIMPLE PRAYER

"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."

Psalm 119:18

Prayer does not replace study. Prayer prepares us to study with humility, dependence, and a willingness to obey.

2. PREPARE: STUDY A BOOK IN CONTEXT | Read the Envelope Before You Read the Letter

There are many useful ways to study the Bible - topical studies, character studies, word studies, chronological reading, and others. But one of the best ways to learn Scripture is to study a biblical book from beginning to end. This helps us follow the author's thought instead of jumping from verse to verse.

READ THE ENVELOPE

Before studying the details of a book, gather the basic information that surrounds it. Just as an envelope tells you something about a letter before you open it, the background of a biblical book helps you understand what you are about to read.

☐ **AUTHOR**	Who wrote the book?
☐ **AUDIENCE**	To whom was it originally written?
☐ **DATE / SETTING**	When and where was it written? What was happening?
☐ **GENRE**	Narrative, Law, Poetry, Wisdom, Gospel, Letter, Prophecy, Apocalyptic?
☐ **PURPOSE**	Why was this book written?
☐ **KEY THEMES**	What major ideas are repeated or developed?
☐ **GEOGRAPHY**	What places or movements matter to the story?

WHERE TO FIND THIS INFORMATION

Begin with the introduction in a good study Bible. A Bible dictionary, atlas, and trusted introduction or commentary can add helpful background.

Background should illuminate the text - not replace reading the text.

3. READ BEFORE YOU DIG | Get the Big Picture First

Before marking words, consulting commentaries, or chasing cross-references, read the passage. If the book is short, read the whole book in one sitting. If it is longer, read the chapter or complete thought-unit several times before slowing down for detailed study.

☐ **FIRST READING**	Read for the flow. What is happening? What is the main idea?
☐ **SECOND READING**	Read more slowly. Notice repeated ideas, structure, people, places, and questions.
☐ **THIRD READING**	Begin marking observations and tracing connections.

USE YOUR TRANSLATIONS WISELY

Start with your primary Bible so you hear the passage as a whole. Then compare one or two other reliable translations when wording is difficult or when you want to see how translators handled a phrase.

Do not keep searching translations until you find the wording you prefer. Use comparison to understand the text, not to make the text agree with you.

4. OBSERVATION | What Does the Text SAY?

Observation is where good Bible study begins. Before asking what a passage means to us, we first ask what is actually there. Slow down. Pay attention. Let the words on the page set the agenda.

ASK	LOOK FOR
WHO?	Who is speaking, acting, receiving, opposing, or being described?
WHAT?	What happens? What is commanded, promised, explained, or emphasized?
WHEN?	What time markers, sequence, or historical setting are given?
WHERE?	Where does this happen? Is anyone traveling or changing locations?
WHY?	Does the text give a reason, purpose, cause, or explanation?
HOW?	How does something happen? How do people respond? How does God act?

MARK WHAT YOU SEE

☐	**Repeated words or phrases**	Repetition often signals emphasis.
☐	**Commands and promises**	Who receives them? Are conditions attached?
☐	**Comparisons and contrasts**	Watch for “but,” “as,” “like,” “rather,” and opposites.
☐	**Cause and effect**	Look for “because,” “therefore,” “so that,” and “for.”
☐	**Lists and sequences**	Notice steps, patterns, names, or repeated actions.
☐	**People and places**	Identify characters, relationships, and geography.
☐	**Important words**	Define words you cannot explain in your own words.
☐	**Questions**	Write down what you do not yet understand.

ANNOTATION IS A TOOL - NOT THE GOAL

Circle, underline, highlight, draw arrows, or write in the margin if it helps you see the text. The purpose is not to create a beautifully marked Bible. The purpose is to notice what God actually put in the passage.

5. INTERPRETATION | What Does the Text MEAN?

Once we have carefully observed the text, we begin interpretation. The first question is not, “What does this verse mean to me?” The first question is, “What was the author communicating to the original audience?” Meaning begins with authorial intent and context.

A FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE

A passage cannot legitimately mean something today that is disconnected from what the inspired author was communicating in its original context.

Meaning is discovered in the text. Application is how that truth reaches our lives.

THREE LEVELS OF CONTEXT

CONTEXT	ASK	WHY IT MATTERS
Historical / Cultural	What was happening in that time, place, and culture?	It helps us hear the passage as the first audience would have heard it.
Literary	What comes before and after? What genre is this? How does the argument or story flow?	A verse takes its meaning from the paragraph, chapter, and book around it.
Biblical / Theological	How does this fit with the rest of Scripture and God's redemptive story?	The Bible is one unified revelation and Scripture helps interpret Scripture.

ASK INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is the main point the author is making?
2. Why is this word, phrase, event, or command important here?
3. What would the original audience have understood from this?
4. How does the genre affect how I should read the passage?
5. Are there other passages that explain or clarify this truth?
6. What does this passage reveal about God, humanity, sin, faith, covenant, redemption, or obedience?
7. Can I summarize the meaning of this passage in one clear sentence?

6. RULES FOR SOUND INTERPRETATION | Handle the Word Carefully

☐ **CONTEXT IS KING**	Never build an interpretation by isolating a verse from its surrounding passage.
☐ **SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE**	Use clearer passages to help understand more difficult passages.
☐ **READ ACCORDING TO GENRE**	Narrative, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, and letters communicate in different ways.
☐ **DO NOT FORCE THE TEXT**	Do not open the Bible determined to prove what you already believe.
☐ **DESCRIPTION IS NOT ALWAYS PRESCRIPTION**	Something the Bible records happening is not automatically something it commands us to do.
☐ **DO NOT BUILD DOCTRINE ON AN OBSCURE VERSE**	Interpret individual verses within the teaching of the whole Bible.

HUMILITY + CURIOSITY

Good Bible study requires both. Humility says, "I may need to change what I think." Curiosity says, "I want to understand why the text says what it says."

PARAPHRASE THE PASSAGE

After studying a passage, try to explain it in your own words as if you were telling a friend what it means. This is not a new translation of the Bible. It is a test of your understanding. If you cannot explain the passage simply, you may not yet understand it clearly.

7. CONSULT YOUR RESOURCES | Check Your Work - Do Not Replace Your Work

After you have read, observed, asked questions, and worked through the context, consult trusted resources. This allows you to test your conclusions, answer difficult questions, and benefit from the work of other faithful students of Scripture.

RESOURCE	BEST USE
Cross-references	See where Scripture addresses the same words, themes, people, or events.
Study Bible notes	Get concise historical, literary, and interpretive help.
Bible dictionary / atlas	Understand names, places, customs, geography, and background.
Multiple translations	Compare how difficult words or phrases are rendered in English.
Commentaries	Compare your conclusions with careful scholarship and interpretation.
Trusted teaching	Listen to pastors and teachers who handle Scripture carefully and in context.

THE ORDER MATTERS

Bible first. Your observations second. Outside resources third.

Do not begin by asking, "What does the commentary say?" Begin by asking, "What does the text say?"

8. APPLICATION | What Should I DO With What I Have Learned?

Bible study is incomplete if it ends with information. Once we understand what a passage means, we ask how that truth should shape our beliefs, attitudes, priorities, relationships, and actions. The meaning of the text does not change from person to person, but faithful application can look different in different lives.

☐	**GOD**	What does this teach me about God's character, ways, promises, or purposes?
☐	**BELIEF**	Is there truth I need to believe, remember, or correct in my thinking?
☐	**SIN**	Is there a sin to confess or a warning to take seriously?
☐	**COMMAND**	Is there something God calls me to obey?
☐	**PROMISE**	Is there a promise that truly applies in this context that I should trust?
☐	**EXAMPLE**	Is there an example to follow - or one to avoid?
☐	**ATTITUDE**	Does my heart, motive, or perspective need to change?
☐	**ACTION**	What specific step of obedience should I take?
☐	**PRAYER**	What should this passage cause me to pray?

MAKE APPLICATION SPECIFIC

Instead of "I need to trust God more," ask: "What situation am I refusing to trust God with, and what will obedience look like this week?"

Good application moves from a biblical truth to a concrete response.

9. SHARE WHAT GOD IS TEACHING YOU | Learning Deepens When We Give It Away

One of the best ways to strengthen your understanding is to explain what you have learned to someone else. Share a truth with your spouse, family, friend, small group, or another believer. Teaching forces us to organize our thoughts clearly and can encourage someone else at the same time.

EZRA 7:10 - A HEALTHY ORDER

Ezra prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, to do it, and to teach it.

STUDY IT > LIVE IT > SHARE IT

10. HOW TO USE THIS METHOD EVERY TIME | A Repeatable Study Rhythm

Whenever you study a passage, keep returning to the same process. The goal is not simply to learn facts about one biblical book. The goal is to become more confident opening **any passage of Scripture** and studying it faithfully for yourself.

PRAY	Ask God for humility, understanding, and obedience.
READ	Read the passage several times and follow the flow.
OBSERVE	Mark what is actually in the text.
INTERPRET	Study context, compare Scripture, and determine the main point.
CHECK	Use translations and trusted resources to test your work.
APPLY	Identify the truth and the response it calls for.
SHARE	Put what you learned into words and encourage someone else.

REMEMBER

Do not rush to ask, “What does this mean to me?” First ask: **What does it say?** Then: **What does it mean?** Finally: **How should I live because it is true?**

SEE IT > UNDERSTAND IT > LIVE IT

PRACTICE TOGETHER - JAMES 1:22

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” We can practice the entire method with a single, familiar verse.

STEP	QUESTION	WHAT WE SEE
Observation	What does it say?	The verse contrasts hearing with doing. It commands believers to be doers and warns that hearing without obeying can become self-deception.
Interpretation	What does it mean?	God's Word is meant to be received with a response. Mere exposure to truth is not the same as obedient faithfulness.
Application	How should I respond?	Identify one truth I already know but am not consistently obeying, and take a specific step of obedience.

BIBLE STUDY WORKSHEET | Use This With Any Passage

STUDY	
Book:	_____
Passage:	_____
Date:	_____

PRAY

What do I need to ask God for before I begin?

READ THE ENVELOPE

QUESTION	NOTES
Author / Audience	
Date / Setting	
Genre	
Purpose / Themes	

OBSERVATION - WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Repetition? Commands? Promises? Contrasts? Questions?

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

What is the main point? What does the context show? What other Scriptures help? What can I summarize in one sentence?

APPLICATION - WHAT SHOULD I DO?

What does this reveal about God? What should I believe, confess, obey, change, trust, or pray?

ONE TRUTH TO REMEMBER OR SHARE

PICK A STUDY BIBLE

Choosing the Right Tool - and Learning to Use It Well

A good Study Bible can become one of the most useful tools in your Bible study. It can give you background, maps, word studies, cross-references, theological help, and explanations of difficult passages. But not every Study Bible is designed to do the same job, and the notes beneath the biblical text do not carry the same authority as the biblical text itself.

KEY VERSE - ACTS 17:11

The Bereans received the word with readiness and “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

A good Study Bible should help you search Scripture - not replace the need to search Scripture.

THE FIRST RULE

THE BIBLE TEXT IS SCRIPTURE. THE STUDY NOTES ARE COMMENTARY.
The text is inspired. The notes are written by pastors, scholars, theologians, and editors who are trying to explain the text faithfully.

1. WHAT IS A STUDY BIBLE? | A Bible With a Reference Library Built Around It

A Study Bible normally combines the biblical text with tools such as book introductions, maps, charts, timelines, cross-references, word studies, articles, and commentary notes. Some are **reference-driven**, like the Open Study Bible (The Open Bible), which emphasizes topical links, cross-references, outlines, and study tools with relatively light commentary. Others provide extensive verse-by-verse notes.

BACKGROUND	Author, audience, date, culture, history, and setting.
EXPLANATION	Notes that clarify difficult verses, customs, and ideas.
CONNECTIONS	Cross-references that connect one passage with another.
WORDS	Hebrew and Greek information on important biblical terms.
VISUALS	Maps, charts, timelines, photographs, and illustrations.
THEOLOGY	Articles and notes that organize biblical teaching by subject.
APPLICATION	Help moving from the meaning of a passage to faithful living.

NO STUDY BIBLE IS COMPLETELY NEUTRAL

Every set of study notes reflects interpretive and theological judgments. That does not make the notes useless. It means we should know who produced them, what tradition they represent, and always test their conclusions by Scripture.

2. FIRST CHOOSE YOUR TRANSLATION | Then Choose the Kind of Help You Need

We have already studied English Bible translations. That lesson comes first here. Before choosing a Study Bible, choose a translation you are comfortable reading and studying. Then ask what kind of study help you want beside that text.

QUESTION	ASK YOURSELF
TRANSLATION	Do I want NKJV, NASB, ESV, BSB, CSB, NIV, NLT, or another reliable translation?
DEPTH	Do I want concise help or an enormous amount of study material?
BACKGROUND	Do I struggle most with history, culture, customs, and geography?
WORDS	Do I want help tracing important Hebrew and Greek words?
THEOLOGY	Do I want notes that connect doctrine and themes across Scripture?
APPLICATION	Do I need extra help moving from interpretation to daily life?
PERSPECTIVE	Do I understand the theological viewpoint represented in the notes?

REMEMBER

Do not buy a Study Bible simply because someone says it is “the best.” The better question is: **What do I need this Study Bible to help me do?**

3. THE MAJOR TYPES OF STUDY BIBLES | Different Tools for Different Jobs

TYPE	WHAT IT EMPHASIZES	EXAMPLES
General Study	A broad mix of notes, introductions, maps, word studies, and articles.	Open Study Bible; NKJV Study Bible; ESV Study Bible; NIV Study Bible; CSB Study Bible
Historical / Visual	Culture, archaeology, geography, ancient life, photographs, maps, and reconstructions.	Archaeological Study Bible; Cultural Backgrounds; Baker Illustrated; NLT Illustrated
Application	How biblical truth should affect everyday life.	Life Application Study Bible
Word Study	Hebrew and Greek words, Strong's numbers, grammar, and original-language helps.	Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible
Biblical Theology	Themes, covenants, and how the whole Bible fits together.	NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible
Cross-Reference / Topical	Lets Scripture interpret Scripture through linked topics and passages.	Open Study Bible; Thompson Chain-Reference Bible
Spirit-Filled	The Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, prayer, kingdom life, and Pentecostal/charismatic interpretation.	Spirit-Filled Life Bible; FireBible
Theological Tradition	Extensive notes shaped by a defined theological tradition or teacher.	Reformation Study Bible; MacArthur Study Bible

ONE BIBLE MAY FIT MORE THAN ONE CATEGORY

These categories are not rigid boxes. Many Study Bibles combine several kinds of tools. The point is to identify what each one does especially well.

4. STRONG GENERAL-PURPOSE STUDY BIBLES | Good Places to Begin

STUDY BIBLE	STRENGTH	BEST FOR
Open Study Bible	Extensive topical index, cross-references, book introductions, outlines, word studies, visual survey, and reference tools with lighter commentary.	Text-first study, topical tracing, preaching, and letting Scripture interpret Scripture.
NKJV Study Bible	15,000+ study notes, word studies, cultural notes, cross-references, maps, charts, and articles.	A strong all-around commentary Study Bible for NKJV readers.
ESV Study Bible	Very extensive notes, cross-references, charts, maps, and theology articles.	The student who wants depth and a large reference library.
NIV Study Bible	Extensive notes, articles, introductions, maps, charts, and visual helps.	A balanced combination of scholarship and readable English.
CSB Study Bible	Extensive notes, word studies, introductions, photos, maps, timelines, and articles.	Readable study with strong word-study and visual aids.

5. FROM MY OWN SHELF | Five Study Bibles I Rank for My Own Use

I own several Study Bibles, and I do not reach for all of them for the same reason. This ranking is personal - it reflects how I study, teach, and preach. It is not a claim that one Bible is universally best for everyone.

1. OPEN STUDY BIBLE (THE OPEN BIBLE - NKJV)

Best for text-first study, cross-references, topical tracing, and preaching

- Extensive topical index connecting thousands of subjects and passages.
- Book introductions, outlines, word studies, charts, maps, and a visual survey of Scripture.
- Reference-driven approach with less verse-by-verse commentary than many Study Bibles.

BEST FOR: Someone who wants strong study tools while keeping the biblical text - rather than commentary - in the foreground.

PERSPECTIVE: Broadly evangelical and reference-driven; particularly useful for studying Scripture with Scripture.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: This best matches the way I want to study. It gives me connections, outlines, topics, and background without constantly telling me what every verse means.

2. NKJV STUDY BIBLE

Best all-around NKJV commentary Study Bible

- Extensive verse and passage notes throughout Scripture.
- Word studies, cultural notes, doctrinal articles, maps, charts, and timelines.
- Strong cross-references and book introductions for serious study.

BEST FOR: When I want a broad, one-volume study library beside the NKJV text.

PERSPECTIVE: Conservative evangelical; more commentary-driven than the Open Study Bible.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: It is my strongest all-around NKJV commentary resource when I want to check interpretation, word studies, and background in one place.

5. FROM MY OWN SHELF - CONTINUED | My Personal Ranking

3. NIV ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY BIBLE

Best for archaeology, historical setting, and the ancient world

- About 520 articles covering sites, cultures, peoples, ancient texts, artifacts, and reliability questions.
- Approximately 500 full-color photographs plus maps, charts, and archaeological notes.
- Book introductions and bottom-of-page notes that focus on historical and cultural facts.

BEST FOR: Understanding the world behind the text - places, empires, artifacts, customs, and archaeological discoveries.

PERSPECTIVE: Evangelical and historical-cultural in focus; it is an older NIV resource but remains extremely useful for background study.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: It gives me a depth of archaeological and historical information that a general Study Bible usually cannot provide.

4. CSB BAKER ILLUSTRATED STUDY BIBLE

Best for visual, historical, and comprehensive study

- Broad evangelical scholarship with extensive articles and study commentary.
- Maps, photographs, illustrations, reconstructions, charts, timelines, and word definitions.
- Combines commentary with strong visual and background resources.

BEST FOR: Seeing the world around the text and quickly understanding geography, objects, history, and complex background.

PERSPECTIVE: Broadly evangelical.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: It functions almost like a Study Bible, atlas, illustrated Bible dictionary, and handbook in one volume.

5. NLT ILLUSTRATED STUDY BIBLE

Best for visual learners and highly readable background study

- Full-color photographs, illustrations, infographics, maps, and study notes.
- Background material, theme articles, people profiles, word-study material, and cross-references.
- Pairs visual study tools with the highly readable New Living Translation.

BEST FOR: Reading unfamiliar or difficult passages in clear English while seeing the historical and visual world around them.

PERSPECTIVE: Evangelical study material paired with a functional, highly readable translation.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: The NLT often helps me hear a difficult passage more clearly, while the visual material adds useful context.

MY RANKING AT A GLANCE

1 Open Study Bible - text first | **2 NKJV Study Bible** - all-around commentary | **3 Archaeological** - historical context | **4 Baker Illustrated** - visual reference | **5 NLT Illustrated** - clarity and visuals

6. SPECIALIZED STUDY BIBLES WORTH KNOWING | Choose Them for Their Particular Strength

STUDY BIBLE	WHAT IT DOES WELL	PERSPECTIVE / CAUTION
Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible	Ancient culture, customs, geography, literature, and historical context. Excellent for asking what the original audience would have understood.	Context-focused scholarship; background should illuminate the text, not control it.
NIV Archaeological Study Bible	Archaeological sites, ancient peoples, artifacts, historical notes, photographs, maps, and charts.	Excellent historical companion; archaeological conclusions can be revised as discoveries develop.
Life Application Study Bible	Notes and resources focused heavily on practical living, character profiles, maps, charts, and application.	Very useful after interpretation. Do not begin with “What does this mean to me?” before establishing what the passage means.
NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible	Verse-by-verse notes and biblical-theology articles that trace themes through Scripture.	Especially useful for seeing the unified story of Scripture and how themes develop from Genesis to Revelation.
Open Study Bible / The Open Bible	Topical index, robust cross-references, book outlines, word studies, charts, and other reference tools with relatively light commentary.	Excellent for text-first study and Scripture-with-Scripture comparison; topical chains still need context.
Thompson Chain-Reference Bible	Extensive topical chain system that follows subjects through Scripture with minimal commentary.	Excellent for Scripture interpreting Scripture; topical chains still need to be read in context.

SPIRIT-FILLED / PENTECOSTAL OPTIONS

STUDY BIBLE	WHAT IT DOES WELL	PERSPECTIVE
NKJV Spirit-Filled Life Bible - Third Edition	Verse notes, Word Wealth studies, Kingdom Dynamics, Truth-in-Action, prayer resources, maps, charts, and introductions.	Spirit-filled / charismatic; strong on the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, prayer, and kingdom living.
FireBible	Extensive verse commentary, articles, book introductions, ThemeFinders, maps, charts, and practical application.	Explicitly Pentecostal; published by Life Publishers International, a ministry of Assemblies of God World Missions.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A Pentecostal believer may benefit greatly from a broadly evangelical Study Bible - but should know when notes come from a cessationist or non-Pentecostal viewpoint on the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. Read the notes thoughtfully and keep Scripture primary.

7. STUDY BIBLES WITH A DISTINCT THEOLOGICAL VOICE | Know Whose Commentary You Are Reading

REFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

Best for historic Reformed theology

- Verse-by-verse commentary and theological articles.
- Historic creeds and confessions in many editions.
- Designed to help readers understand Scripture from a Reformed theological framework.

BEST FOR: Someone who wants to understand Scripture from the historic Reformed tradition.

PERSPECTIVE: Edited by R.C. Sproul and intentionally Reformed.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: Useful for understanding that tradition, but the notes should still be tested by Scripture like any other commentary.

MACARTHUR STUDY BIBLE

Best for detailed verse-by-verse exposition from one teacher

- Extensive verse-by-verse study notes, maps, charts, diagrams, and cross-references.
- Systematic-theology helps, timelines, harmonies, book introductions, and doctrine indexes.
- Notes largely reflect John MacArthur's own theological conclusions.

BEST FOR: Someone who values detailed expository notes and wants one teacher's interpretation beside the text.

PERSPECTIVE: Conservative evangelical with important disagreements from Pentecostal theology in areas such as spiritual gifts.

WHY I RANK IT HERE: It can sharpen study, especially when I know I am reading an interpretation rather than inspired text.

THIS IS NOT A REASON TO AVOID OTHER VIEWPOINTS

Reading a Study Bible from another evangelical tradition can sharpen us. The key is knowing when we are reading Scripture and when we are reading an interpretation of Scripture. We test every interpretation by the text in context.

8. WHICH STUDY BIBLE SHOULD I CHOOSE? | Match the Tool to the Need

IF YOU ARE SAYING...	CONSIDER...
“I want one good all-around Study Bible.”	Open Study Bible; NKJV Study Bible; ESV Study Bible; NIV Study Bible; CSB Study Bible; NKJV Evangelical Study Bible
“I want to understand the ancient world.”	NIV Archaeological Study Bible; Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible; Baker Illustrated Study Bible; NLT Illustrated Study Bible
“I want help applying Scripture.”	Life Application Study Bible
“I want to investigate Hebrew and Greek words.”	Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible
“I want to trace themes through the entire Bible.”	Open Study Bible; Thompson Chain-Reference Bible; NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible
“I want a Spirit-filled / Pentecostal perspective.”	Spirit-Filled Life Bible; FireBible
“I want to study a defined theological tradition.”	Reformation Study Bible; MacArthur Study Bible - while recognizing their distinct viewpoints

9. HOW TO USE A STUDY BIBLE | Let the Notes Help You - Not Do the Study for You

A Study Bible becomes most useful when we use it in the same order we have already learned for Bible study. The temptation is to read a verse and immediately drop our eyes to the notes. Resist that habit. Give Scripture the first word.

1. PRAY	Ask the Holy Spirit for humility, understanding, and willingness to obey.
2. READ THE TEXT	Read the whole passage before reading the notes. Read it again.
3. OBSERVE	Mark people, places, repeated words, commands, promises, contrasts, cause and effect, and questions.
4. READ THE ENVELOPE	Use the book introduction for author, audience, date, purpose, genre, setting, and major themes.
5. FOLLOW CROSS-REFERENCES	See where Scripture itself addresses the same words, themes, quotations, people, and events.
6. USE MAPS / CHARTS / TIMELINES	Let visual tools clarify geography, sequence, history, and relationships.
7. CHECK WORD STUDIES	Investigate important Hebrew or Greek words when they genuinely affect the meaning.
8. READ THE STUDY NOTES	Now compare your observations with the explanations of trusted scholars and teachers.
9. TEST THE NOTES	Ask whether the conclusion fits the immediate context and the teaching of the whole Bible.
10. INTERPRET AND APPLY	State what the passage means, then ask how that truth should shape your life.

OPEN STUDY BIBLE TIP

The Open Study Bible is especially strong at Step 5. Use its topical index and cross-reference system to follow themes through Scripture - but always read every linked passage in its own context.

THE ORDER MATTERS

TEXT FIRST > YOUR OBSERVATIONS > CONTEXT AND CROSS-REFERENCES > STUDY TOOLS > COMMENTARY NOTES > APPLICATION

Do not begin Bible study by asking, “What do the notes say?” Begin with, “What does the Bible say?”

10. A WARNING ABOUT WORD STUDIES | Context Still Determines Meaning

Original-language tools can be extremely helpful, but they are also easy to misuse. Looking up a Hebrew or Greek word and finding several possible definitions does not mean that every definition belongs in every verse. The sentence, paragraph, and book determine which meaning is intended.

A SIMPLE EXAMPLE

The English word “bank” can mean a financial institution or the side of a river. You determine the intended meaning from context. Hebrew and Greek work the same way. Ask: **What does this word mean HERE?**

11. HOW I WOULD BUILD A SIMPLE STUDY LIBRARY | Start Small and Add Tools With Purpose

STEP	WHAT TO HAVE	WHY
1	A primary Bible translation you will read consistently.	You need familiarity with the text more than you need a shelf full of resources.
2	One strong general Study Bible.	This gives you introductions, notes, maps, cross-references, and basic background in one place.
3	One different English translation for comparison.	A second translation can expose places where wording or interpretation deserves closer study.
4	One specialized tool when a real need develops.	Add background, word study, biblical theology, application, or another perspective because it solves a specific problem.

FOR ANY BOOK OR PASSAGE | Build Around the Questions the Text Raises

A general Study Bible is enough to begin. As you study, add a specialized resource only when the passage gives you a reason to do so - background, archaeology, word study, biblical theology, application, or another perspective.

USE	HELPFUL OPTIONS
PRIMARY GENERAL STUDY	Open Study Bible; NKJV Study Bible; NKJV Evangelical Study Bible; ESV Study Bible; NIV Study Bible; CSB Study Bible
HISTORICAL / ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	NIV Archaeological Study Bible; Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible; Baker Illustrated Study Bible; NLT Illustrated Study Bible
WORD STUDY	Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible
TRACE THEMES / CROSS-REFERENCES	Open Study Bible; Thompson Chain-Reference Bible; NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible
PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE	Spirit-Filled Life Bible; FireBible

IF YOU ONLY BUY ONE

Choose a reliable general Study Bible in a translation you enjoy reading. If you prefer a **text-first, reference-driven approach**, the Open Study Bible is especially useful. If you want more verse-by-verse commentary, a traditional general Study Bible such as the NKJV Study Bible may fit better.

CLASS TAKEAWAY

PICK A TRANSLATION	Choose a reliable translation you will actually read and understand.
KNOW THE NOTES	Know who produced the Study Bible and what theological perspective is represented.
MATCH THE TOOL TO THE NEED	Background, word study, theology, application, cross-reference, and Spirit-filled Bibles do different jobs.
READ SCRIPTURE FIRST	Do your own observation before allowing someone else's notes to frame the passage for you.
TEST THE NOTES	Let study notes clarify and challenge your work, but test every interpretation by Scripture.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AT A GLANCE | A Quick Comparison for Study

No English translation can reproduce every feature of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek at the same time. Use this chart as a practical guide - not as a ranking. Comparing translations helps expose places where wording, grammar, or interpretation deserves closer study.

APPROXIMATE SPECTRUM

MORE FORMAL LSB / NASB - NKJV - ESV - BSB - CSB - NIV - NLT **MORE FUNCTIONAL**

TRANSLATION	GENERAL APPROACH	PARTICULAR STRENGTH	USE IT FOR
LSB / NASB	Highly formal	Close attention to wording and grammar	Detailed study; sentence structure
NKJV	Formal	Traditional theological vocabulary; manuscript notes	Primary study; preaching; memorization
ESV	Formal	Literary English with close attention to wording	Study; teaching; preaching
BSB	Balanced / literal-leaning	Transparent modern English; strong study/readability balance	Study; teaching; public reading; comparison
CSB	Balanced	Intentionally balances accuracy and readability	General study; teaching; everyday reading
NIV	Balanced to functional	Clear contemporary English	Reading; teaching; discipleship
NLT	Functional	Highly readable and explanatory	Clarity checks; devotional reading; newer readers
NET	Balanced	Extensive translator notes	Investigating difficult translation decisions

A PRACTICAL COMPARISON SET

Start with your primary Bible, then compare one translation from a different place on the spectrum. A useful set might be: **NKJV** for primary study, **NASB** for formal comparison, **BSB or CSB** for balanced comparison, and **NLT** for clarity.

WHEN TRANSLATIONS DIFFER

Slow down. Ask why. The difference may involve an idiom, grammar, manuscript evidence, or an interpretive decision. Do not simply choose the wording that agrees with what you already believe.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE - APPENDIX | Quick-Reference Guides, Worksheets, and a Worked Passage Example

These appendix pages are designed to be used repeatedly after the class is over. Keep them with your Bible-study materials and return to them whenever you need help identifying a biblical genre, choosing a study tool, comparing translations, doing a word study, avoiding common mistakes, or working through a passage step by step.

THE PURPOSE OF THE APPENDIX

The main study teaches the method. The appendix gives you practical tools for using that method on your own.

READ CAREFULLY -> OBSERVE HONESTLY -> INTERPRET IN CONTEXT -> APPLY FAITHFULLY

APPENDIX CONTENTS

A	Books of the Bible and their major literary groupings
B	How to read and interpret the major biblical genres
C	Bible-study tools: what each one is designed to do
D	English translation quick-reference guide
E	How to do a responsible Hebrew or Greek word study
F	Common Bible-study mistakes to avoid
G	Reusable Bible-study worksheet
H	Completed sample study: James 1:19-25
I	The Bible story at a glance - the big redemptive storyline

ONE RULE TO KEEP IN MIND

Tools can help you study the Bible, but no tool replaces the Bible itself. Start with the text. Let Scripture set the agenda for your study.

APPENDIX A - BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AND THEIR GENRES | Know What Kind of Book You Are Reading

The Bible contains many kinds of literature. Knowing where a book fits helps you know what questions to ask and how to read it responsibly. These categories are broad, but they give us a useful starting point.

OLD TESTAMENT GROUP	BOOKS	WHAT YOU WILL FIND
Law / Pentateuch	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Creation, patriarchs, Exodus, covenant, Law, wilderness, and the foundation of Israel's story.
History	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	Israel in the land, judges, kings, division, exile, and return.
Poetry / Wisdom	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	Worship, suffering, wisdom, relationships, meaning, and life before God.
Major Prophets	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel	Prophetic warning, judgment, hope, restoration, and large prophetic books.
Minor Prophets	Hosea through Malachi	The same prophetic authority as the Major Prophets in shorter books.

MAJOR AND MINOR DO NOT MEAN MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT

The labels refer primarily to the length of the prophetic books, not their spiritual importance.

NEW TESTAMENT GROUP	BOOKS	WHAT YOU WILL FIND
Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Four inspired accounts centered on the person, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
History	Acts	The spread of the gospel and the growth of the early church through the work of the Holy Spirit.
Pauline Epistles	Romans through Philemon	Letters addressing doctrine, church life, Christian living, and specific pastoral situations.
General Epistles	Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude	Letters and sermons to broader Christian audiences dealing with faithfulness, doctrine, endurance, and holy living.
Apocalyptic / Prophecy	Revelation	Symbolic and prophetic visions revealing Christ's victory, judgment, and final restoration.

GENRE AFFECTS INTERPRETATION

We do not read Proverbs exactly like Romans, Psalms exactly like Acts, or Revelation exactly like Genesis. The kind of literature helps determine how the words should be understood.

APPENDIX B - HOW TO INTERPRET BIBLICAL GENRES | Different Literature - Different Questions

Every passage is true, but not every passage communicates truth in the same literary way. Genre helps us recognize what the author is doing and prevents us from forcing one style of interpretation onto every book.

GENRE	WATCH FOR	ASK	COMMON MISTAKE
Narrative	Plot, characters, conflict, repeated themes, narrator comments, God's actions.	What happened? Why is this event included? What does the narrator want us to see?	Assuming everything described is something God commands us to imitate.
Law	Covenant setting, commands, holiness, sacrifice, civil and ceremonial life.	Who received this command? What covenant role did it serve? How does it fit the whole Bible?	Applying Israel's covenant laws directly without considering covenant and fulfillment.
Poetry	Imagery, metaphor, emotion, parallelism, exaggeration for effect.	What picture is the poet creating? What truth does the imagery communicate?	Treating every poetic image as a literal physical description.
Wisdom	General principles, observations, contrasts, consequences, fear of the Lord.	What kind of life is wise? Is this a general principle or an unconditional promise?	Turning a proverb into a guaranteed promise in every circumstance.
Prophecy	Historical crisis, covenant faithfulness, judgment, hope, near and future horizons.	What did this message mean to the first hearers? What did God confront or promise?	Jumping immediately to current events before understanding the original setting.
Gospel	Jesus' words and actions, fulfillment, discipleship, kingdom, each writer's emphasis.	What is this revealing about Jesus? How does this episode advance the Gospel's message?	Flattening all four Gospels so that each writer's inspired emphasis is lost.
Epistle	Author, audience, problem, argument, commands, doctrine, connecting words.	Why was this letter written? How does the argument flow? What does "therefore" point back to?	Pulling one sentence out of the argument and treating it as an isolated saying.
Apocalyptic	Symbols, visions, Old Testament echoes, cosmic conflict, hope, final victory.	How does Scripture itself explain the symbols? What hope is being given to God's people?	Speculation that ignores the book's original audience and biblical symbolism.

DESCRIPTION IS NOT ALWAYS PRESCRIPTION

The Bible faithfully records many sinful, foolish, or tragic actions. A narrative may tell us what someone did without telling us to do the same thing.

Ask what the narrator approves, condemns, or leaves for the larger biblical context to evaluate.

WHERE THE BIBLE IS CLEAR, LET IT HELP WITH WHAT IS DIFFICULT

Interpret difficult or symbolic passages in light of clearer passages. Scripture is its own best interpreter.

APPENDIX C - BIBLE-STUDY TOOLS QUICK GUIDE | Use the Right Tool for the Right Question

You do not need every tool on this page to study the Bible well. Start with Scripture, then use the tool that answers the question you actually have.

TOOL	WHAT IT DOES	WHEN TO USE IT
Study Bible	Combines Scripture with introductions, notes, maps, charts, word studies, articles, and/or reference systems.	For quick background, book structure, difficult verses, and reference help. The Open Study Bible is especially strong for topical and cross-reference study.
Cross-References	Links related passages throughout Scripture.	Before reaching for commentary; use Scripture to illuminate Scripture.
Concordance	Finds where a word or phrase occurs in the Bible.	Tracing repeated words, themes, names, and related passages.
Bible Dictionary	Explains people, places, customs, objects, and biblical terms.	When the passage assumes knowledge of the ancient world you do not have.
Bible Atlas	Shows biblical geography, routes, regions, kingdoms, and battles.	Whenever location, distance, terrain, or movement matters.
Multiple Translations	Shows how different translation teams rendered the same Hebrew or Greek text.	When wording is difficult or translations differ noticeably.
Lexicon	Explains Hebrew or Greek words and their range of meanings.	For careful word study after you identify the original word.
Interlinear	Displays original-language words alongside an English gloss.	For seeing word order and identifying the underlying Hebrew or Greek term.
Commentary	Provides detailed interpretation by pastors and scholars.	After you have read, observed, checked context, and compared Scripture.

A GOOD ORDER

BIBLE FIRST -> CROSS-REFERENCES -> BACKGROUND TOOLS -> WORD TOOLS -> COMMENTARIES LAST
Let other teachers check and deepen your work, not replace your work.

A SIMPLE TOOL KIT FOR MOST BIBLE STUDENTS

PRIMARY BIBLE	A reliable translation you will actually read and mark.
STUDY BIBLE	The Open Study Bible or another good general/specialized Study Bible that meets your needs.
SECOND TRANSLATION	A translation from a different place on the translation spectrum.
DICTIONARY / ATLAS	For background, people, places, customs, and geography.
COMMENTARY	One or two trusted commentaries for questions that remain after your own study.

APPENDIX D - ENGLISH TRANSLATION QUICK REFERENCE

Every English Bible is a translation from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Translation involves choices. The spectrum below is approximate, but it helps explain why reliable translations can sound different while communicating the same passage.

APPROXIMATE TRANSLATION SPECTRUM

MORE FORMAL <- LSB / NASB - NKJV - ESV - BSB - CSB - NIV - NLT -> **MORE FUNCTIONAL**

Formal translations emphasize original wording and structure. **Functional translations** emphasize clear, natural English meaning.

TRANSLATION	GENERAL STRENGTH	USE IT FOR
LSB / NASB	Very close attention to original-language wording and grammatical structure.	Detailed comparison, sentence structure, and careful study.
NKJV	Formal translation with literary continuity to the KJV tradition and extensive manuscript footnotes.	Primary study, preaching, memorization, and comparison.
ESV	Formal, literary English with close attention to original wording.	Study, teaching, preaching, and cross-translation comparison.
BSB	Modern English that aims for a careful balance of source-text transparency and readability.	Study, teaching, public reading, memorization, and comparison.
CSB	Intentionally balances accuracy and readability.	General study, teaching, and everyday reading.
NIV	Clear contemporary English with a balanced translation approach.	Reading, teaching, discipleship, and comparison.
NLT	Highly readable functional translation.	Devotional reading, difficult passages, newer readers, and clarity checks.

WHEN TRANSLATIONS DIFFER

Do not panic and do not shop for the wording you prefer. Slow down. Differences often reveal an idiom, textual question, grammatical decision, or interpretive issue worth studying.

THE GOAL

We are not looking for the translation that says what we want. We are using translations together to understand what the biblical author communicated.

APPENDIX E - HOW TO DO A WORD STUDY | Helpful When Done Carefully - Misleading When Done Carelessly

Hebrew and Greek word studies can deepen Bible study, but they do not reveal secret meanings hidden from ordinary readers. The goal is to understand how an important word functions in its actual sentence, paragraph, book, and biblical context.

1 **Choose an important word**
Look for a repeated, emphasized, theologically important, or unclear word. Do not try to study every word in the passage.

2 **Identify the original word**
Use a Key Word Study Bible, concordance, interlinear, or trusted software to identify the underlying Hebrew or Greek word and its Strong's number if available.

3 **Read a reliable lexicon entry**
Notice the range of meanings the word can have. A lexicon gives possibilities; it does not tell you that every possible meaning belongs in your verse.

4 **Study the immediate context**
The sentence and paragraph usually narrow the meaning. Grammar, subject, object, and surrounding ideas matter.

5 **Compare other uses**
Look at several places where the same original word appears, especially in the same biblical author or book.

6 **Compare translations**
See how reliable translations render the word in this passage and in similar contexts.

7 **State the meaning in context**
Finish with one clear sentence: "In this passage, this word means..." Then return to the author's main point.

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD-STUDY RULE

A WORD DOES NOT MEAN EVERYTHING IT CAN MEAN EVERY TIME IT APPEARS.

Context determines which part of a word's possible meaning the author intends.

APPENDIX E - HOW TO DO A WORD STUDY - EXAMPLE 2 Timothy 2:15: “Rightly Dividing”

MINI EXAMPLE - 2 TIMOTHY 2:15 | Greek: orthotomeo (G3718)

STEP	WHAT YOU FIND	WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO
Identify	“Rightly dividing” represents the Greek verb orthotomeo (Strong's G3718).	Do not assume a Strong's number itself gives the interpretation.
Lexicon	The word carries the idea of cutting straight or handling correctly/accurately.	Do not force a wooden image of physically “cutting” Scripture into the verse.
Context	Paul describes an approved worker who handles “the word of truth” in a way that leaves no reason for shame.	Do not build the meaning from etymology alone while ignoring Paul's sentence and argument.
Synthesize	In this passage, Paul is urging Timothy to handle and teach the word of truth accurately and faithfully.	Do not use Greek to make the verse say something no responsible translation or context supports.

A GOOD WORD STUDY ENDS BACK IN THE PASSAGE

The purpose is not to collect impressive Greek or Hebrew facts. It is to understand the inspired author more accurately.

FOUR COMMON WORD-STUDY TRAPS

TRAP	BETTER PRACTICE
Root fallacy	Do not assume a word always means the sum of the parts from which it developed. Use the word as it was actually used in the author's time and context.
Totality transfer	Do not pour every dictionary definition into one verse. Choose the meaning that fits the sentence.
English-word fallacy	The same English word can translate different Hebrew or Greek words, and one Hebrew or Greek word can be translated several ways.
Concordance overload	Do not assume every occurrence is equally relevant. Give greatest weight to the same author, same book, and similar contexts.

APPENDIX F - COMMON BIBLE-STUDY MISTAKES | Good Intentions Still Need Good Method

Most Bible-study errors do not begin with a desire to mishandle Scripture. They often begin when we move too quickly, ignore context, or allow a preferred conclusion to control the text.

☐	**VERSE ISOLATION**	Taking a verse out of its paragraph, chapter, book, or historical situation.
☐	**ME-FIRST READING**	Beginning with "What does this mean to me?" before asking what the author meant.
☐	**PROOF-TEXTING**	Collecting verses to prove a belief rather than allowing Scripture to shape the belief.
☐	**ONE-VERSE DOCTRINE**	Building a major doctrine on a single obscure or disputed passage while ignoring clearer texts.
☐	**DESCRIPTION = COMMAND**	Assuming every action recorded in a narrative is approved or meant to be copied.
☐	**MODERNIZING THE TEXT**	Reading modern customs, politics, assumptions, or definitions back into the ancient world.
☐	**HIDDEN-MEANING HUNTING**	Searching for secret codes or meanings that the text itself does not support.
☐	**TRANSLATION SHOPPING**	Checking versions until one appears to say what we already want to believe.
☐	**STUDY-NOTE AUTHORITY**	Treating commentary notes as though they were inspired Scripture.
☐	**WORD-STUDY ABUSE**	Using a dictionary definition, root word, or Strong's number without context.
☐	**COMMENTARY FIRST**	Reading what everyone else says before carefully reading the passage yourself.
☐	**REFUSING CORRECTION**	Ignoring a clear biblical conclusion because it challenges something we already believe or practice.

THE POSTURE OF A GOOD BIBLE STUDENT

We do not open Scripture determined to prove that we are right. We open Scripture willing to be taught, corrected, encouraged, and changed.

Humility + curiosity + obedience make a strong foundation for Bible study.

A SIMPLE TEST

Can I show my conclusion from the text, in context, and in harmony with the rest of Scripture? If not, I should keep studying.

APPENDIX G - MY BIBLE-STUDY WORKSHEET | Use This With Any Passage

START WITH PRAYER

Ask God to give you understanding, humility, conviction, and a willingness to obey what you learn.

PASSAGE	DATE
_____	_____

READ THE ENVELOPE *Author - Audience - Date - Setting - Genre - Purpose*

OBSERVATION - WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY? *Who? What? When? Where? Why? Repetition? Commands? Contrasts? Connecting words?*

QUESTIONS I NEED TO ANSWER *Words, customs, people, places, theology, apparent difficulties*

INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN? *Authorial intent - historical context - literary context - biblical/theological context*

APPENDIX G - MY BIBLE-STUDY WORKSHEET - CONTINUED | From Understanding to Obedience

CROSS-REFERENCES / RELATED PASSAGES *Let Scripture help interpret Scripture*

TRANSLATION COMPARISON *What changes in wording? Does it clarify anything?*

WHAT DO I LEARN ABOUT GOD?

APPLICATION - WHAT SHOULD I DO? *Sin to confess? Command to obey? Promise to trust? Example to follow? Attitude to change?*

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY *If I had to explain the main point to someone else...*

PRAYER / WHAT I WILL SHARE *Turn what you learned into prayer and consider who may be encouraged by it*

APPENDIX H - COMPLETED SAMPLE STUDY: JAMES 1:19-25

This example is intentionally simple. The goal is not to exhaust James 1:19-25, but to demonstrate how the same method can guide your study before you consult a commentary.

PASSAGE

James 1:19-25 - hearing the Word, receiving it humbly, and becoming a doer rather than a hearer only.
Read the passage at least twice before using the notes below.

1. PREPARE - READ THE ENVELOPE

QUESTION	SAMPLE NOTES
Book	James - a wisdom-shaped New Testament letter emphasizing practical, lived faith.
Audience	Believers “scattered abroad,” facing trials and needing mature, consistent faith.
Genre	Epistle with strong wisdom-literature features: commands, contrasts, examples, and practical exhortation.
Immediate setting	James has just discussed trials, temptation, God's goodness, and the new birth through the word of truth.

2. OBSERVE - WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

- **LISTENING** Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.
- **ANGER** Human wrath does not produce the righteousness of God.
- **RECEIVING** Lay aside moral filthiness and receive the implanted word with meekness.
- **DOING** Believers are commanded to be doers of the word, not hearers only.
- **WARNING** Hearing without doing can deceive us.
- **MIRROR** The hearer-only is compared to someone who looks in a mirror and immediately forgets.
- **CONTINUING** The blessed person looks into the perfect law of liberty, continues in it, and acts on it.

QUESTIONS THAT ARISE

How do hearing and doing relate? What does James mean by “the implanted word”? Why does he call God's instruction “the perfect law of liberty”? How does the mirror illustration expose self-deception?

3. INTERPRET - WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

CONTEXT	WHAT IT CONTRIBUTES	SAMPLE CONCLUSION
Literary	The paragraph moves from receiving the Word to obeying it, using a mirror illustration to expose hearing without response.	James is not contrasting faith with obedience; he is showing that genuine reception of God's Word produces action.
Biblical	Jesus repeatedly connected hearing His words with doing them (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 11:28).	Scripture consistently treats obedience as the proper response to revealed truth.
Theological	God gives truth and calls His people to receive it humbly and live in response to it.	Bible study is incomplete when truth is merely heard but never obeyed.

4. COMPARE SCRIPTURE

- **MATTHEW 7:24-27** Jesus compares the one who hears and does His words to a wise man building on rock.
- **LUKE 11:28** Jesus blesses those who hear the word of God and keep it.
- **ROMANS 2:13** Paul distinguishes mere hearers of the law from those who do what God says.
- **JOHN 13:17** Jesus connects knowing truth with blessing in actually doing it.

5. APPLY - WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH IT?

- **LISTEN** Approach Scripture ready to hear before speaking or reacting.
- **RECEIVE** Lay aside what resists God's truth and receive His Word with humility.
- **OBEY** Identify one truth the passage calls me to act on rather than merely understand.
- **EXAMINE** Use Scripture as a mirror that exposes where my life does not match what I say I believe.
- **CONTINUE** Stay in the Word long enough for truth to shape patterns, not just moments.

ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY

James 1:19-25 teaches that God's Word must be humbly received, carefully heard, and faithfully obeyed; hearing without doing can become spiritual self-deception.

NOTICE THE ORDER

We did not begin with a commentary. We began with the passage, made observations, asked questions, checked context, compared Scripture, formed a conclusion, and then applied it.

APPENDIX I - THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE | Where Does My Passage Fit?

Every passage belongs to a larger story. This simple timeline helps us locate a passage within the Bible's unfolding account of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

1	**CREATION** God creates the heavens and the earth and makes humanity in His image. - Genesis 1-2
2	**FALL** Humanity rebels against God; sin and death enter the human story. - Genesis 3
3	**FLOOD AND NATIONS** Sin spreads; God judges the world in the Flood, preserves Noah, and the nations are later scattered. - Genesis 4-11
4	**PATRIARCHS** God calls Abraham and begins the covenant family through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. - Genesis 12-50
5	**EXODUS AND COVENANT** God delivers Israel from Egypt, brings them to Sinai, and gives His covenant and Law. - Exodus-Deuteronomy
6	**PROMISED LAND** Joshua leads Israel into Canaan; the period of the Judges follows. - Joshua-Judges
7	**KINGDOM** Saul, David, and Solomon lead the united monarchy; God makes covenant promises to David. - 1 Samuel-1 Kings 11

APPENDIX I - THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE - CONTINUED | From Division to New Creation

8	**DIVIDED KINGDOM** Israel divides into northern Israel and southern Judah; prophets call both kingdoms back to God. - 1 Kings 12-2 Kings
9	**EXILE** Israel falls to Assyria and Judah later falls to Babylon; Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed. - 2 Kings 17; 24-25
10	**RETURN** Under Persian rule, Jewish exiles return, rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem, and renew covenant life. - Ezra-Nehemiah
11	**MESSIAH** Jesus Christ comes, announces the kingdom, dies for sin, rises from the dead, and fulfills the redemptive promises. - The Gospels
12	**CHURCH AND MISSION** The Holy Spirit empowers the church to carry the gospel to the nations. - Acts and the Epistles
13	**FINAL RESTORATION** Christ returns, evil is finally judged, and God brings His people into the new creation. - Revelation

THE BIG STORY

CREATION -> FALL -> REDEMPTION -> RESTORATION

When studying any passage, ask: Where am I in the story, what has already happened, and what has not happened yet?

FINAL REMINDER

The goal of Bible study is not merely to fill notebooks with information. It is to know God through His Word, understand what He has said, and faithfully live in response to it.

THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE

Major Events of the Old Testament

This handout traces the major people, events, covenants, and turning points of the Old Testament. Use it as a simple map for seeing how the individual books fit together into one unfolding story.

1. THE BEGINNING | *Genesis 1-11*

☐	God Creates the Heavens and the Earth	**Genesis 1-2**
☐	Sin Enters the World	**Genesis 3**
☐	Sin Spreads Through Humanity	**Genesis 4-6:9**
☐	Noah and the Great Flood	**Genesis 6:10-9:17**
☐	The Nations Scatter at Babel	**Genesis 11**

2. THE PATRIARCHS | *Genesis 12-50*

☐	God Calls Abram	**Genesis 12-14**
☐	God Establishes His Covenant with Abram	**Genesis 15**
☐	Abram Becomes Abraham	**Genesis 17**
☐	The Birth and Life of Isaac	**Genesis 21-24**
☐	Jacob and the Beginning of the Twelve Tribes	**Genesis 25-35**
☐	Jacob Is Renamed Israel	**Genesis 32:22-32**
☐	Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers	**Genesis 37**
☐	Joseph Rises to Power in Egypt	**Genesis 39-41**
☐	Joseph's Family Comes to Egypt	**Genesis 42-50**

3. GOD DELIVERS ISRAEL | *Exodus*

☐ Moses Is Called by God	**Exodus 2-4**
☐ God Confronts Pharaoh Through the Plagues	**Exodus 5-11**
☐ The First Passover	**Exodus 12**
☐ Israel Leaves Egypt	**Exodus 12-14**
☐ God Leads Israel Through the Wilderness	**Exodus 15-18**
☐ God Establishes His Covenant with Israel at Sinai	**Exodus 19**
☐ The Ten Commandments Are Given	**Exodus 20**
☐ God Gives Instructions for the Tabernacle	**Exodus 25-31**
☐ The Tabernacle Is Completed and God's Glory Fills It	**Exodus 35-40**

4. ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS | *Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy*

☐ God Establishes Israel's Sacrificial System	**Leviticus 1-7**
☐ The Day of Atonement	**Leviticus 16**
☐ Israel Refuses to Enter the Promised Land	**Numbers 13-14**
☐ Israel Wanders in the Wilderness	**Numbers 14-36**
☐ Moses Reviews God's Covenant and Law	**Deuteronomy 1-30**
☐ Joshua Is Commissioned to Lead Israel	**Deuteronomy 31**
☐ Moses Gives His Final Blessing	**Deuteronomy 33**
☐ The Death of Moses	**Deuteronomy 34**

5. ISRAEL ENTERS THE PROMISED LAND | *Joshua, Judges & Ruth*

☐ Israel Crosses the Jordan River	**Joshua 3-4**
☐ The Fall of Jericho	**Joshua 5-6**
☐ Israel Takes Possession of the Land	**Joshua 7-21**
☐ Joshua Challenges Israel to Remain Faithful	**Joshua 23-24**
☐ Israel Enters the Period of the Judges	**Judges 2**
☐ Ehud Delivers Israel	**Judges 3:12-30**
☐ Deborah and Barak Lead Israel	**Judges 4-5**
☐ Gideon Delivers Israel from Midian	**Judges 6-8**
☐ Jephthah Serves as Judge	**Judges 11**
☐ Samson Battles the Philistines	**Judges 13-16**
☐ Israel Falls into Moral and Spiritual Chaos	**Judges 17-21**
☐ Ruth Demonstrates Faithfulness and Redemption	**Ruth 1-4**

6. THE RISE OF THE MONARCHY | *Samuel, Saul & David*

☐ Samuel Is Born and Called by God	**1 Samuel 1-3**
☐ Israel Demands a King	**1 Samuel 8**
☐ Saul Becomes Israel's First King	**1 Samuel 9-10**
☐ Saul Is Rejected Because of His Disobedience	**1 Samuel 13-15**
☐ David Is Anointed as Israel's Future King	**1 Samuel 16**
☐ David Defeats Goliath	**1 Samuel 17**
☐ David Flees from Saul	**1 Samuel 18-31**
☐ David Becomes King over Israel	**2 Samuel 2-5**
☐ Jerusalem Becomes David's Capital	**2 Samuel 5; 1 Chr. 11**
☐ The Ark Is Brought to Jerusalem	**2 Samuel 6**
☐ God Establishes His Covenant with David	**2 Samuel 7; 1 Chr. 17**
☐ David Sins with Bathsheba	**2 Samuel 11-12**
☐ David Prepares Solomon to Build the Temple	**1 Chronicles 22; 28-29**

7. SOLOMON AND THE UNITED KINGDOM | *1 Kings & 2 Chronicles*

☐ Solomon Becomes King	**1 Kings 1-2**
☐ Solomon Asks God for Wisdom	**1 Kings 3; 2 Chr. 1**
☐ Solomon Builds the Temple	**1 Kings 5-7; 2 Chr. 2-5**
☐ The Temple Is Dedicated to God	**1 Kings 8; 2 Chr. 6-7**
☐ Solomon's Heart Turns Away from God	**1 Kings 11:1-40**
☐ Solomon Dies and Rehoboam Becomes King	**1 Kings 11:41-43**

8. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM | *Israel & Judah*

☐ The Kingdom Divides	**1 Kings 12; 2 Chr. 10**
☐ Elijah Confronts Ahab and the Prophets of Baal	**1 Kings 17-19**
☐ Elisha Is Called to Follow Elijah	**1 Kings 19:19-21**
☐ Elijah Is Taken Up and Elisha Continues His Ministry	**2 Kings 2**
☐ Elisha Ministers Throughout Israel	**2 Kings 2-13**
☐ Jonah Is Sent to Nineveh	**Jonah 1-4**
☐ The Northern Kingdom of Israel Falls to Assyria	**2 Kings 17**
☐ King Josiah Leads Reform in Judah	**2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chr. 34-35**
☐ Babylon Begins Deporting the People of Judah	**2 Kings 24**
☐ Jerusalem and the Temple Are Destroyed	**2 Kings 25; 2 Chr. 36**

9. THE BABYLONIAN EXILE | *Daniel*

☐	Daniel and His Friends Remain Faithful in Babylon	**Daniel 1**
☐	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Face the Fiery Furnace	**Daniel 3**
☐	Daniel Is Thrown into the Lions' Den	**Daniel 6**
☐	Daniel Sees the Vision of the Son of Man	**Daniel 7:9-14**
☐	Daniel Receives Prophecies Concerning Israel's Future	**Daniel 8-12**

10. THE RETURN FROM EXILE | *Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther*

☐	Cyrus Allows the Jewish Exiles to Return	**2 Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1**
☐	The First Group Returns to Jerusalem	**Ezra 1-2**
☐	The Temple Is Rebuilt	**Ezra 3-6**
☐	Esther Helps Preserve the Jewish People in Persia	**Esther 1-10**
☐	Ezra Returns and Teaches God's Law	**Ezra 7-10**
☐	Nehemiah Returns to Rebuild Jerusalem's Walls	**Nehemiah 1-7**
☐	The People Hear the Word of God and Renew the Covenant	**Nehemiah 8-10**
☐	Jerusalem Is Reestablished Following the Exile	**Nehemiah 11-13**

THE BIG PICTURE

CREATION > FALL > FLOOD > PATRIARCHS > EXODUS > LAW > PROMISED LAND > JUDGES > KINGDOM > DIVIDED KINGDOM > EXILE > RETURN

Through all of it, God is moving His plan of redemption forward, ultimately preparing the way for Jesus Christ. The Bible is not merely a collection of disconnected stories; it is one unfolding story of God's work to redeem fallen humanity.

THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE | Major Events of the New Testament

This continuation completes the timeline begun with the Old Testament. It traces the major people, events, teachings, and turning points of the New Testament so you can see how the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation fit into one unfolding story.

11. THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST | The Gospels

■ The angel announces the births of John and Jesus	Luke 1
■ Jesus is born in Bethlehem	Matthew 1-2; Luke 2
■ Jesus is baptized and begins His public ministry	Matthew 3-4; Mark 1
■ Jesus calls His disciples	Matthew 4; Mark 1-3; John 1
■ Jesus teaches the kingdom of God	Matthew 5-7; Mark 4; Luke 6
■ Jesus performs signs, healings, and deliverances	The Gospels
■ Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ	Matthew 16:13-20
■ Jesus is transfigured	Matthew 17; Mark 9; Luke 9
■ Jesus raises Lazarus	John 11
■ Jesus enters Jerusalem as King	Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12

12. THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION | The Climax of the Gospels

■ Jesus shares the Last Supper with His disciples	Matthew 26; Luke 22; John 13-17
■ Jesus is arrested and tried	Matthew 26-27; John 18-19
■ Jesus is crucified and buried	Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19
■ Jesus rises from the dead	Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20
■ Jesus appears to His disciples and gives the Great Commission	Matthew 28:18-20; John 20-21
■ Jesus ascends to heaven	Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11

THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE | Major Events of the New Testament - Continued

13. THE BIRTH AND EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH | Acts

■ The Holy Spirit is poured out at Pentecost	Acts 2
■ Peter preaches and the church grows	Acts 2-5
■ Stephen becomes the first recorded Christian martyr	Acts 6-7
■ The gospel spreads to Samaria and an Ethiopian official	Acts 8
■ Saul encounters Christ and is converted	Acts 9
■ Peter brings the gospel to Cornelius and Gentiles	Acts 10-11
■ The church at Antioch becomes a missionary center	Acts 11-13
■ Paul and Barnabas begin the first missionary journey	Acts 13-14
■ The Jerusalem Council addresses Gentile believers and the Law	Acts 15
■ Paul's second and third missionary journeys expand the gospel	Acts 16-21
■ Paul is arrested, appeals to Caesar, and travels to Rome	Acts 21-28

14. THE APOSTOLIC LETTERS | Doctrine and Life in the Church

■ Paul writes to churches about the gospel, justification, holiness, unity, gifts, and Christian living	Romans-2 Thessalonians
■ Paul writes pastoral and personal letters	1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
■ Hebrews presents Christ as the greater High Priest and fulfillment of the old covenant shadows	Hebrews
■ James emphasizes practical, obedient faith	James
■ Peter calls believers to holiness and endurance in suffering	1-2 Peter
■ John emphasizes truth, love, assurance, and faithfulness to Christ	1-3 John
■ Jude urges believers to contend for the faith	Jude

THE BIBLE STORY AT A GLANCE | From the Church to Final Restoration

15. REVELATION AND THE FINAL HOPE | Revelation

■ Christ addresses the seven churches	Revelation 1-3
■ John sees the throne of God and the Lamb	Revelation 4-5
■ God judges evil and brings history toward its appointed end	Revelation 6-18
■ Jesus Christ returns in victory	Revelation 19
■ Christ reigns and Satan is finally defeated	Revelation 20
■ The final judgment takes place	Revelation 20:11-15
■ God creates a new heaven and new earth	Revelation 21
■ The New Jerusalem is revealed and God dwells with His people forever	Revelation 21-22

THE BIG PICTURE

CREATION > FALL > REDEMPTION > RESTORATION

The entire biblical story moves toward God's final restoration of all things in Christ.

Creation -> Fall -> Promise -> Israel -> Messiah -> Church & Mission -> Christ's Return -> Final Restoration