

How to Study the Bible and Enjoy It

Lesson 3: Methods of Bible Study

I. Introduction

1. The previous lessons have been concerned with right attitudes in Bible study.
2. We must open our minds to truth, be willing to study it, and then be willing to put it into practice. Review *Ezra 7:10*.
3. Except for such beautiful teachings as the Ten Commandments, the Bible is NOT a series of one sentence "propositions." God did not write the Bible this way.
4. On the other hand, God placed His will in books of poetry, history, prophecy, and letters to both individuals and churches.
5. The Bible must be studied by following the same principles that would be followed in reading and studying any secular book.
 - a. The Bible is written by "inspired" men in the language of human beings (*2Timothy 3:14-17; 2Peter 1:20, 21*)
 - b. One should NEVER just flip open the pages of the Bible and select a verse or verses by "accident"
6. It is incorrect to "pull out" verses from a setting or context and place a meaning on them that is contrary to what God wants. As an extreme example, take the verse that says, "he went away and hanged himself" (*Matthew 27:5*), combine it with, "Go and do the same" (*Luke 10:37*), and add "What you do, do quickly" (*John 13:27*). Such a twisting of the Scripture will cause something untrue to be taught. See the twisting of Scripture discussed in *2Peter 3:14-16*.

II. Studying and Entire Book of the Bible

1. Studying an entire book is probably the best method of Bible study, but it is surely more difficult for some to do.
 - a. It is a very good method of Bible study, for one will learn the background of the specific book he desires to study.
 - b. It also helps us NOT to take particular verses out of their setting or context.
2. Getting started with the study of a book of the Bible
 - a. Select first a book of the Bible that is relatively short, so that the task will not be so large so that you will not be discouraged.
 - b. Select a book that is relatively easy to understand. In other words, do NOT begin with the book of Revelation, etc.

- c. In the New Testament, some good suggestions would be Philippians, 1Thessalonians, Philemon, James, 1John, 2John, or 3John.
3. Get an understanding of the overall content of the book
 - a. This can be done by reading the book from the first to the last chapter.
 - b. Read through the book a number of times, perhaps as many as ten times. You will be surprised how much this reading will help you understand. You will also begin to see the several sections of the book.
 - c. In these several readings of the book, you should NOT stop to ponder difficult verses that you cannot understand. This can be done later.
4. Prepare an "introduction" of the book. In doing this, you are trying to learn the answers to many questions that will give you a good background. Some necessary questions to ask?
 - a. Who wrote this book? Who is the "inspired" author?
 - b. To whom was it written? An individual? Or a congregation?
 - c. From where was the book written?
 - d. When was it written? Does not have to be a specific date.
 - e. What was the condition or situation of the author when he wrote?
 - f. What was the condition of the person or persons who received the book?
 - g. What was the purpose of the author in writing the book? What was the theme of the writing?
 - h. What does the book say about the character or the kind of person the author is?
 - i. What does the book say about the character of the people who received the book?
 - j. What are the major ideas or topics in the book?
 - k. What are the main words in the book?
5. Now, read the book slowly and answer the questions given above. Record the information in a notebook or on sheets of paper and then review and study it.
6. This material is valuable to you because you have prepared it yourself. If is your material for further study.
7. Some people want to omit this part of their study. However, many particular passages of Scripture cannot be understood if the general content of the book is not known.
8. Prepare an outline of the book. Select the main points that are discussed in each chapter. Write them down.
9. Then, study the book verse by verse (see next lesson).

III. Studying One Particular Chapter of the Bible

1. There are some problems and disadvantages of studying the Bible by using this method.
 - a. Sometimes, the chapters are NOT really divided at the best place. For example, it would be better to include Hebrews 2:1-4 with Hebrews chapter 1.
 - b. Also, studying the Bible by picking out a particular chapter may separate that chapter from the book and may fail to consider the context of that chapter. For example, 1Corinthians 13, the chapter on "love," cannot be understood correctly without placing it in the context of spiritual gifts discussed in chapter 12 as well as chapter 14. The phrase, "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels..." (*1Corinthians 13:1*), and "If I have the gift of prophecy," (*1Corinthians 13:2*) etc. refers back to the spiritual gifts listed in *1Corinthians 12*.
2. There are some advantages in studying one chapter at a time.
 - a. This is a smaller unit with which the student will work
 - b. You are able to master the material, and remember it better
3. A procedure to follow in studying a chapter of the Bible:
 - a. Reader the chapter a number of times
 - b. Divide it into its main points. Here is an example of 1Corinthians 13:
 - 1) The great importance of love (*1Corinthians 13:1-3*)
 - 2) A great description of love (*1Corinthians 13:4-7*)
 - 3) The permanence of love (*1Corinthians 13:8-13*)
 - c. Questions that may be asked concerning the particular chapter of study:
 - 1) What is the principal or main subject of this chapter?
 - 2) What is the leading lesson of this chapter?
 - 3) What is the focal or foundation verse of this chapter?
 - 4) Who are the main or principal persons in this chapter?
 - 5) What does this chapter say concerning Christ?
 - 6) Is there an example for me to follow in this chapter?
 - 7) Is there an error or false teaching in this chapter for me to avoid?
 - 8) Is there a duty in this chapter for me to obey?
 - 9) Is there a promise in this chapter for me to receive?
 - 10) Is there a prayer in this chapter for me to pray?