

# How to Study the Bible and Enjoy It

## Lesson 4: Methods of Bible Study (Continued)

---

### IV. Studying Individual Verses of the Bible

1. There are problems or disadvantages also in studying individual verses:
  - a. The tendency of students is to only study their “favorite” verses, and so, their knowledge is INCOMPLETE! Vital verses could be neglected.
  - b. Also, there is the danger of isolating these verses without looking at the context, the verses BEFORE and AFTER the selected verse. In this case, the true meaning of the verse is not found. It is possible to use a verse “out of context,” and place a meaning on it that even the inspired author would NOT recognize.
    - 1) For example, one heavily quoted verse is *John 3:16*: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Taken out of context, this verse results in a salvation that is based on a belief of mind only with no regard to obedience. However, if we keep reading, we read that our obedience is vitally connected to our belief. “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (*John 3:36*). See also vv. 20, 21.
2. But there are also advantages in studying individual verses.
  - a. If done carefully and correctly, this method can help greatly in understanding an entire passage.
  - b. Many times, our minds can store up and remember a smaller amount of truth found in a verse easier than trying to remember so much more. The student can be encouraged to think about the beautiful meaning of one verse as he fulfills his daily work responsibilities.
3. The procedure to follow in studying individual verses:
  - a. Try to get the meaning of EACH WORD in the verse.
    - 1) This does not mean that you must go to the secular dictionary

- 2) The best way is to let the Bible explain itself. See how a word is used in other parts of the same book, or elsewhere in the Bible.
  - a. For example, note how the word “justify” is used in the book of Romans, or the words “eternal life” in the gospel of John. Note also how the word “believe” or “believing” is defined in John and other places.
- b. Carefully STUDY the CONTEXT!
  - 1) Always study the verses above and below the verse being examined.
  - 2) For example, *John 6:44* must be studied along with *John 6:45*. They must go together! *John 12:32* must be combined with *John 12:33*. *John 5:24* and *John 5:25* must be examined TOGETHER.
- c. If there are similar verses in other chapters or books, these can also be studied to assist in a correct interpretation of the text. For example, the commandments in the “household” passages of *Ephesians 5:22-6:9* may be compared to similar verses in *Colossians 3:18-4:1*.

## V. Studying Specific Words Found in the Bible

1. This can be a very encouraging and exciting method of study.
2. There are at least two different ways that this kind of study may be done.
  - a. One may obtain a Bible concordance, go to a specific word, and then consider every passage where this word is found.
  - b. Or, one may write down the occurrences of a particular word in a book of the Bible that he is reading and studying.
3. Note the following examples of words that may be discovered a number of times in a book of the Bible:
  - a. Study the meaning of the word “believe” in the gospel of John.
  - b. See how the word “saints” is used in the book of Ephesians.
  - c. Examine how the word “know” is used in the gospel of John as well as 1John, 2John, and 3John.
  - d. You may even look at a phrase such as “in Christ,” and how it is used throughout the New Testament. For example, you can discover the “blessings” that are found “in Christ” as noted in the book of Ephesians.
  - e. Another example would be to examine the word “Spirit” in the book of Romans, and how it is in great contrast to the word “flesh.”
  - f. Or you may study carefully how the word “hate” is used in Scripture to mean to “love less” than someone else (*Study Genesis 29:30, 31; Romans 9:13; John 12:25; Luke 14:26*).

4. The study of Biblical words is somewhat different from the subject method of studying the Bible.
  - a. The subject method includes a more wide-ranging study
  - b. For example, if one studies the subject of “worship,” he will examine not only the word “worship” as it is used in the Bible, but he will add a study of other words such as “praise,” or “sacrifice.” He will search for other words that deal with the same subject.

## VI. Practical Suggestions Concerning Bible Study

1. Study regularly
  - a. Do NOT just study when you “feel” like it, or when you think you have time.
  - b. Set aside a definite time, a specific time for Bible study. For example, each morning for one half hour at 6:00am etc.
  - c. Studying the Bible on a regular schedule does NOT waste time. A person can do a better job during the day when he takes time to read and study the word of God.
2. Study at the best time of day for you! This will be different in the lives of different people. Study the Bible when you have a few minutes to relax.
3. Write down notes. Mark your Bible! Write in your Bible!
4. Learn the difference between literal and figurative language.
  - a. Learn what a “parable” is, and why it was used by Jesus.
  - b. Study concerning the meaning of figures of speech such as a metaphor. For example, “This is my body...” (*Matthew 26:26-28*) is a metaphor. The phrase, “Go and say to that fox...” (*Luke 13:32*) is a metaphor.
  - c. Study the meaning of the figurative language called “metonymy,” such as used in the phrase, “He took a cup...” (*Matthew 26:26-28*)
  - d. Learn about the beautiful visions such as those found in the book of Revelation.
5. Read the Scriptures aloud. This helps students to remember!
6. Memorize the Scripture! The Psalmist “hid” God’s Word in his heart that he might not sin against the Lord (*Psalms 119:11*)
7. Paraphrase what you read. This means that you should try to explain the Scripture in your own words. Learn to explain!
8. Learn all that you can from parallel texts in the Bible. For example, examine ALL passages that speak about Malchus’ ear.
  - a. Someone cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest (*Matthew 26:51*)
  - b. The same information is found in Mark (*Mark 14:47*)
  - c. It was the right ear of this servant (*Luke 22:50*)
  - d. Peter did it, and the servant’s name was Malchus (*John 18:10*)

9. Do not be discouraged! In the parable of the sower, Satan came and snatched away the “seed,” the word of the Lord from the heart (*Matthew 13:4, 19*). If you stop studying, start again!
10. Pray your life into what is studied! Pray that your life will truly conform to the Scripture you have studied.