

STUDYING THE BIBLE

THE MINDSET OF BIBLE STUDY

Expose Oneself To GOD.

Mark 4:23 "If anyone has ears to hear let him hear."

In this verse Jesus questions his hearer's motivations. Are they coming to be entertained or coming to do business with God. Do I have ears to hear? God won't usually force his word on a person. He waits till He is given permission in prayer.

Meditate on and Study the Scriptures

Meditation on Scripture is not day-dreaming in front of a Bible or having a blank mind! It is prayerfully reflecting on a passage so that we can understand its meaning better, and apply its truths to our lives. It involves giving time, chewing over the word.

Study implies a pen and paper! It is more than just reading and finding a few thoughts. The process of writing forces us to engage at a deeper level. Having to formulate a set of words requires a deeper level of understanding.

3 Stages of Bible Study

Observe Facts

Understand Implications

Apply to Life.

Apply the Scriptures to life

Live the Life God has pointed to.

Mark 4: 24-25 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. ²⁵ Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." God will only give his insights to those who are going to use them. You will be tested with how serious you are with small thoughts. When you prove faithful then you will be given more. Don't defend yourself from God!

A PROCESS OF BIBLE STUDY

PRAYER

If you come to Bible study just "to get it done" or develop your knowledge of the Bible as an intellectual exercise then you may do a great study but miss God! It is good to bring your heart to God.

Ask Him to meet you in the words of the text; to show Himself to you so that you may praise him; give Him permission to point out areas of your life that need changing. Determine in your heart before God to act on what he shows you.

I have often found that when a Bible study is dry and boring, that if I pray like this, the whole study is turned around into a dynamic and living study with real challenge.

OUTLINE

The aim of outlining is to give a grasp of the whole chapter by breaking it down to manageable chunks. It will help you see the flow of the passage.

1. Read the passage a few times to try and get an idea of the flow.
2. As you read note down the sections (maybe 1-5 verses each) into which the chapter falls and give each section a title (maybe 5 words maximum.)
3. Group together the sections into blocks and give each block a title.
4. Alternately break down to blocks and then break down the blocks to sections. That is fine.

SECTION BY SECTION STUDY

Take the sections from your outline. For each one go through the following sequence. You may want to lump a great deal together or just a few verses at a time dependant on time.

Observation

Observation lays the groundwork for the study. You are the detective entering the scene looking for clues. The quality of the deductions follow the quality of the observations. Without observation your study will be based on opinions rather than the facts of what the passage says.

Observation is all about discovering the unexpected. You don't really know what you are looking for, rather there are some techniques which hopefully will help uncover the unexpected. A good start point is to think through what you might expect before engaging with the text.

Observation focuses on FACTS.

E.G. Luke 19:1 Jesus was passing through Jericho when he met Zacheus.

Luke 19:5 Jesus said to Zacheus: I must. stay at your house today.

Jesus had not intended on staying in Jericho. He delayed his plans in order to invite himself to Zacheus house for the day.

Context.

What is the context for the text? Read paragraphs before and after.

What significance is there to any words or phrases that link to outside the text.

(So, Because, Therefore, ...)

Text

Write down distinct facts that are in the passage, these range from the obvious to the obscure.

Is anything that you missed when first reading that now alters your understanding of the text?

Metaphor and Expressions - cross-reference these! Metaphors in the Bible can have wildly different meaning from what is assumed in a western context.

Ask Questions - A helpful trigger to observations

Throw questions at the text.

Who, Why, What., Where, When, ...

Is this really what I would expect?

If this was me what would I have done'?

Why would anyone be drawn to do the wrong that is mentioned?

Cross Reference

Look for cross references to the concepts you have found. Are the ideas contrasted or repeated elsewhere in scripture. What light does another passage throw on this one.
For this one needs centre references in your Bible, a concordance or on line www.biblegateway.com

Questions

Note words or passages that are not understood. These can be brought up for discussion in the group.

Understanding

Understanding makes deductions drawn out as implications of the various observations.

Without understanding the study is purely academic, a collection of facts.

E.G.: Luke 19:1 & 5 - Jesus considered a day with Zacheus, the person of the moment, more important than an extra day in Jerusalem with the religious leadership.

Implications.

Pick some of the more intriguing observations. What are the implications for the meaning of the text.

Meaning.

Given the effort to writing and copying, why did the writer go to the trouble of writing what he did?
What does it mean? - If you can write it in your own words then maybe you understand.
What is the heart of what is being written?

Application

Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds up. If I don't take the time to apply, I will become puffed up with knowledge that is ahead of my maturity in Christ.

Application moves to the implications for my life.

E.G. Luke 19:1-5 - I must be careful not to push people aside because I have urgent business that 'cannot wait'

Application

Pray that God would reveal to you how this should apply to your life.
What implications are there from the passage you have understood to your life?

Application can take two angles. The general application for all. How God has spoken through the passage directly into my life situation. It is good to be aware of both of these and keep them distinct.

General application for all -

What was the authors intended application?
how does this relate to me in today's world'?

How has God spoken to me? NB This may not be the central issue of the text.

Is this valid given the context of the text?