FREE DISCIPLESHIP WORKBOOK



How to Read and Study the Bible

A fillable guide for personal study and small groups

Guided lessons, a seven-day reading plan, and study worksheets

LivingWord International Outreach Ministry

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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How to Read and Study the Bible

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Published by LivingWord International Outreach Ministry

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This workbook draws on teaching and insights from Dr. Annette M. West's *How to Ready and Study the Bible* (2000).

Personal study and small groups

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Scripture references

Read the cited passages in your preferred Bible translation. The Scripture-based declarations are devotional reflections based on the passages listed.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome

An invitation to study Scripture faithfully

The Bible is not merely a collection of inspiring sayings. It is a unified collection of writings that reveals God, His redemptive work, and the call to respond in faith and obedience. You do not need to be a scholar to begin studying it; you need a willing heart and a sound approach. Use this workbook at your own pace. Read the passage in a Bible, answer the prompts directly in the PDF, and return to the reusable worksheets whenever you begin a new study.

Read carefully before drawing conclusions. Seek the meaning of each passage in context. Respond prayerfully and practice what you learn.

Filling in this workbook

Download a copy and open it in Adobe Acrobat Reader. Type in the response boxes and save your completed copy. For a fresh worksheet, reopen the original download or print a blank page.

Find your place

Study lessons	4–15
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My reason for beginning this Bible study journey

My prayer as I begin

The Bible at a Glance

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

The Christian Bible contains 66 books in the Protestant canon: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Other Christian traditions have different canons. The books include law, narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, Gospel, history, letters, and apocalyptic literature.

Try it in Scripture

The Old Testament introduces creation, covenant, Israel, worship, wisdom, and prophetic hope. The New Testament centers on Jesus Christ, the growth of the church, and the hope of new creation.

Your reflection

Read Luke 24:27 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What do these passages suggest about the purpose of Scripture?

A question I want to explore further

Prepare Your Heart

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Begin with prayer, humility, and a willingness to be corrected. Prayer does not replace careful reading; it prepares us to receive and respond to what we read.

Try it in Scripture

Read Psalm 119:18 and James 1:5. Ask God for understanding. Keep a notebook, reduce distractions, and choose a realistic time and place.

Your reflection

What habits or distractions might keep me from giving Scripture careful attention?

A question I want to explore further

Choose a Translation

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Bible translations differ in approach. More formal translations preserve wording and structure where possible; more meaning-focused translations prioritize clarity in contemporary language. Comparing reliable translations can illuminate a difficult sentence.

Try it in Scripture

Examples include ESV, NASB, NRSVue, NIV, CSB, and NLT. Read a translation introduction and consult study notes carefully; notes are helpful interpretations, not Scripture itself.

Your reflection

Which Bible translation will I use as my primary reading Bible, and why?

A question I want to explore further

Read in Context

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

A verse belongs to a paragraph; a paragraph belongs to a book; and a book belongs to the wider biblical story. Ask who wrote it, to whom, for what purpose, and what comes before and after.

Try it in Scripture

Consider Philippians 4:13 alongside Philippians 4:10-14. Paul speaks about contentment and endurance in differing circumstances, not a promise of success in every personal ambition.

Your reflection

How does reading surrounding verses change or deepen my understanding?

A question I want to explore further

Observe Before Interpreting

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Observation asks: What does the passage actually say? Identify repeated words, people, places, commands, contrasts, promises, and connecting terms such as therefore or because.

Try it in Scripture

Read Mark 4:35-41. Notice the setting, the disciples' words, Jesus' response, and the final question. Record observations before deciding what the account means.

Your reflection

List three observations from Mark 4:35-41 without yet applying them to yourself.

A question I want to explore further

Interpret Responsibly

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Interpretation asks: What did the author communicate to the original audience? Attend to literary genre, historical setting, key terms, and the argument of the book. Avoid making an isolated verse say what you already want it to say.

Try it in Scripture

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14 with Jeremiah 29:1-9. First identify the original audience and exile setting, then consider enduring truths about God without erasing the historical promise.

Your reflection

What is one question I need to research before interpreting a passage?

A question I want to explore further

Apply the Word

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Application asks: In light of the passage's intended meaning, what faithful response is appropriate today? Applications may involve belief, repentance, encouragement, relationships, service, or worship.

Try it in Scripture

Read James 1:22-25. Write one specific response that is measurable and consistent with the passage, rather than a vague resolution to "do better."

Your reflection

What is one action I can take this week in response to Scripture?

A question I want to explore further

LESSON 08 / 12

The SOAP Method

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

SOAP offers a simple journal structure: Scripture (record the reference and a short excerpt or summary); Observation (what is present); Application (what faithful response follows); Prayer (respond to God).

Try it in Scripture

Practice with Colossians 3:12-17. Observe the commands and community setting before writing a personal application. Use the fillable SOAP pages later in this workbook.

Your reflection

Which part of SOAP is most natural to me, and which needs more attention?

A question I want to explore further

Understand Biblical Genres

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Different genres communicate in different ways. Poetry uses imagery; narratives recount events; proverbs express general wisdom; letters develop arguments; apocalyptic writing employs symbols. Genre helps determine how language functions.

Try it in Scripture

Compare Psalm 23, Proverbs 26:4-5, Luke 15:11-32, and Revelation 1. Ask whether the text is describing, commanding, praising, warning, or using symbolic language.

Your reflection

How might I misunderstand a poem or proverb if I read it as a literal universal guarantee?

A question I want to explore further

Let Scripture Inform Scripture

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Cross-references can clarify a theme, but shared words do not always mean identical ideas. Compare passages thoughtfully and preserve each passage's original context.

Try it in Scripture

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 alongside James 2:14-18. Consider how grace, faith, and works are discussed in each argument instead of assuming an immediate contradiction.

Your reflection

What related passages can help me understand the topic I am studying?

A question I want to explore further

Use Study Tools Wisely

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

A study Bible, concordance, Bible dictionary, atlas, and trustworthy commentary can deepen understanding. Read the passage yourself first, then use tools to test questions and explore background.

Try it in Scripture

Ask whether a source explains its reasoning, distinguishes evidence from opinion, and attends to context. A scholarly source is a conversation partner, not a replacement for Scripture.

Your reflection

Which study resource would be most useful for my next Bible reading?

A question I want to explore further

LESSON 12 / 12

Develop a Lasting Habit

Read, observe, understand, and respond

Core teaching

Consistency matters more than an ambitious schedule that cannot be sustained. Begin with 10-20 minutes: pray, read a manageable passage, observe, reflect, and respond.

Try it in Scripture

Choose a regular time, a book of the Bible, and a place to record questions. Revisit earlier entries and discuss difficult texts with mature teachers and your faith community.

Your reflection

What time, place, and reading rhythm will I commit to for the next month?

A question I want to explore further

READING PLAN

Your Seven-Day Starter Plan

A manageable first week of guided reading

Each day, pray, read the assigned passage, write two observations, identify the central point, and choose a faithful response. Record one insight from each reading below.

DAY 1 **Psalm 119:9-16** — Delighting in and remembering the Word

One insight from the reading

DAY 2 **Luke 24:13-35** — Seeing Scripture in its larger story

One insight from the reading

DAY 3 **Mark 4:35-41** — Observing a Gospel narrative

One insight from the reading

DAY 4 **Philippians 4:10-14** — Reading in context

One insight from the reading

DAY 5 **James 1:19-27** — Responding in obedience

One insight from the reading

DAY 6 **Colossians 3:12-17** — Using SOAP

One insight from the reading

DAY 7 **2 Timothy 3:14-17** — Continuing in Scripture

One insight from the reading

SOAP Study Worksheet 1

Scripture, observation, application, and prayer

Date and passage reference

S | Scripture: key verse, phrase, or passage summary

O | Observation: repeated words, context, main idea

A | Application: specific faithful response

P | Prayer: respond to God in your own words

SOAP Study Worksheet 2

Scripture, observation, application, and prayer

Date and passage reference

S | Scripture: key verse, phrase, or passage summary

O | Observation: repeated words, context, main idea

A | Application: specific faithful response

P | Prayer: respond to God in your own words

SOAP Study Worksheet 3

Scripture, observation, application, and prayer

Date and passage reference

S | Scripture: key verse, phrase, or passage summary

O | Observation: repeated words, context, main idea

A | Application: specific faithful response

P | Prayer: respond to God in your own words

SOAP Study Worksheet 4

Scripture, observation, application, and prayer

Date and passage reference

S | Scripture: key verse, phrase, or passage summary

O | Observation: repeated words, context, main idea

A | Application: specific faithful response

P | Prayer: respond to God in your own words

In-Depth Passage Study 1

Observation, interpretation, and application

Passage, translation, and date

Who is speaking or writing? To whom? In what setting?

What happens before and after this passage?

What are the key observations and repeated ideas?

What is the passage communicating in its original context?

How should this truth shape my response today?

In-Depth Passage Study 2

Observation, interpretation, and application

Passage, translation, and date

Who is speaking or writing? To whom? In what setting?

What happens before and after this passage?

What are the key observations and repeated ideas?

What is the passage communicating in its original context?

How should this truth shape my response today?

REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

Scripture-Based Declarations

Grounded in the passages cited

Psalm 119:105

God's Word guides my steps.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Scripture equips me for faithful living.

James 1:22

I seek to practice the Word, not only hear it.

Psalm 119:18

I ask God to open my eyes to His Word.

Colossians 3:16

I make room for the message of Christ to dwell richly in me.

Write your own Scripture-grounded declaration and its reference

How will I put this declaration into practice?

FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

Going Deeper

Recommended resources and final reflection

For continued learning

- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth.
- Grant R. Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation.
- Craig S. Keener, The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament.
- A reliable study Bible, Bible atlas, and concordance appropriate to your translation.

A closing encouragement

The goal of Bible study is not simply to accumulate information. Read to know God more faithfully, discern the message of Scripture more clearly, and respond with wisdom and obedience. Return to the text often, remain teachable, and keep growing.

One truth I want to carry forward

My next Bible study goal

Closing prayer

Lord, give me humility to listen, wisdom to understand, and courage to obey Your Word. Shape my thoughts, my relationships, and my decisions through the truth of Scripture. In Jesus' name, amen.