

Spiritual Formation Workbook: Series 1

Learning to Read the Bible

Welcome

This material is designed to help you grow in your new faith in Christ. It's intended for **one-on-one mentoring** or **small group study**. The goal is simple: to help new disciples learn early what it means to follow Jesus and how to live that out practically.

Through thoughtful questions and guided study, you'll explore Scripture, building a solid foundation of biblical truth and understanding.

Guidelines for Studying

- **Get a Bible**—Borrow or purchase a Bible and become familiar with the books of the Old and New Testaments. (Most Bibles have a table of contents at the front.) By the end of this study, you'll be navigating it like a pro!
- **Pace yourself**—Work through one session per week, one day at a time. Give yourself space to reflect.
- **Ask questions**—Write them down and bring them to your mentor or group discussion.
- **Pray**—Before each study session, ask God to help you understand His Word and give you wisdom.
- **Be diligent**—This material will only be effective if you make the effort to spend time in it.

Why Should I Study the Bible?

Let's be honest—reading the Bible can feel intimidating. You might even find it as challenging as reading the newspaper or a magazine without getting sleepy or distracted! But the Bible is not just any book. It's **God's voice to us**, filled with timeless truth and life-giving wisdom.

As you learn to understand God's Word, reading the Bible will become a **joy** and a **privilege**.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:15–17

It's Worth It!

The Bible gives us wisdom for salvation and equips us for godly living.

Read: Romans 12:2; Hebrews 4:12

It Changes Us!

God's Word is alive and powerful—it transforms our thoughts and shapes our actions.

Read: Psalm 1:1–3

It Gives Us Stability

God's Word anchors us through life's difficult seasons and teaches us to live with confidence.

Read: Luke 4:16–27; 24:27, 45

Jesus Modeled It

Jesus Himself studied the Scriptures and helped others understand them. So should we.

Questions for Thought

1. Why is it important to study and understand God's written Word?
(Use Scripture to support your thoughts.)
2. What challenges do you face when it comes to Bible study? How can you begin to overcome them?
(Think about time, priorities, distractions, etc.)
3. Take a moment to thank God for preserving His Word. Ask Him to help you understand and apply it.

The Basics

Before diving in, here are some helpful things to know:

General Information

- The Bible has **66 books**: 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament.
- It was written by about **40 human authors**, inspired by **one divine Author** (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21).
- The **Old Testament** was written mostly in **Hebrew**, with some **Aramaic**.

- The **New Testament** was written in **Koine Greek**, the common language of the time.

Bible Study Tools in Most Bibles

- **Contents page** – Lists all books of the Bible with page numbers.
- **Introductions** – Explains the translation and usage of that Bible version.
- **Center-column or footnote references** – Help cross-reference words and themes.
- **Concordance or subject index** – Useful for finding verses by keywords.
- **Study notes** – Provide insight and background on passages (in study Bibles).

Three Steps for Studying God’s Word:

Step 1: Observation — “What does it say?”

Start by reading a passage slowly and carefully.

Ask:

- What is being said?
- What are the facts?
- What surprises me?
- What stands out?

Read: Matthew 5:43–48

Questions:

1. What questions do you have about the passage?
2. What surprises or insights did you notice?
3. What does this passage tell you about God?
4. What does it tell you about people?

As you observe more, you’ll find the Bible becoming even more engaging and alive.

Helpful Study Hints

- Use a notebook to record your observations.
- Create a color-coding system:
 - **Red** = repeated words
 - **Blue** = comparisons
 - **Yellow** = contrasts
 - **Green** = unclear or important terms
- Always note the verses your questions and insights come from.

In-Depth Study Example

Read: Galatians 5:16–26

Ask:

- Are there repeated or emphasized words?
- Are comparisons or contrasts made?
- What verbs are used—and in what tense?
- What does the passage say about God? About people?

Sample Observations:

- **Contrast:** life in the Spirit vs. sinful nature (v.16–17)
- **Repeated:** “Spirit” or “Holy Spirit” (7x); “sinful nature” (4x)

Step 2: Interpretation — “What does it mean?”

Now you ask, “Why did the author write this?”

Look at your observations and begin piecing together the message or main idea.

Back to Matthew 5:43–48:

Write a one-sentence summary of the passage’s meaning:

The main idea:

Interpretation Tips

- Define unfamiliar terms.
- Consider the author's audience and purpose.
- Use a **Bible dictionary or commentary** (see Appendix A) for background information.
- Try to summarize the overall message.

Example from Galatians 5:16–26:

“Paul urges believers to live by the Holy Spirit rather than being ruled by their sinful nature.”

Step 3: Application — “How should I live this out?”

Now, the big question: **What will you do with what you've learned?**

Ask:

- Is God calling me to stop or start doing something?
- Where does this truth challenge my daily life?
- How will I respond in my relationships, work, school, or thoughts?

Pray and ask God to empower you to obey His Word.

Reflection & Response

How does this Scripture apply to me?

Goals and changes I'll make with God's help:

This may feel difficult at first—that's okay. The Word of God is worth the work. Keep going!

Bonus: Checking Your Work (Optional but Encouraged)

Before finalizing your interpretation:

- **Compare** it with other Scriptures (Scripture interprets Scripture).

- **Read** what trusted scholars say (see Appendix A).
- **Be humble**—we're lifelong learners, and no one gets it all right alone.

Just remember: if no one has ever seen your interpretation in 2,000 years of church history, it may need a second look!