

Bible Study Tips

2 Tim. 2:15 **Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that **diligently** seek him.

1. Read from the Bible and not one of its “versions”

When it comes to choosing a Bible, there’s really only two choices: a modern version or the King James Bible (KJB). The reason for this is because all versions of the Bible originate from one of two sources. All modern versions are translated from a group of manuscripts collectively called the Alexandrian Texts¹ while the KJB is translated from a group of manuscripts collectively called the Byzantine Texts.²

The primary and only Alexandrian Text is the Septuagint. Specifically, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (OT) that also includes the books of the Apocrypha *as part of its canon*. But more popularly, the Septuagint of which we refer today not only includes this Old Testament and Apocrypha in Greek, but a New Testament (NT) in Greek as well – all originally organized and compiled by a religious apostate named Origen.

Conversely, and unlike the Septuagint, the OT portion of the KJB is translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Texts and the New from a set of Greek manuscripts called the Textus Receptus. These two textual lineages differ in many ways and in ways that cannot be reconciled, and so a choice must be made. The Alexandrian Texts were used to help create Roman Catholicism while the Byzantine were used by the true church of Jesus Christ. The Alexandrian were used to place the world under bondage to Rome while the Byzantine were used to set it free. So either we read from an adapted Roman Catholic “bible” as found in the modern versions or we read from the Word of God as found in the KJB.

2. View the Bible as one book

The Bible is ONE book that has two major sections; it’s NOT two books under one cover. At a casual glance, people read the Old and see nothing but sin, sacrifice, war, and judgment. Blood is everywhere. They then read the New and they see love and grace. So is it any wonder that most professing Christians don’t want to read the Old Testament?

¹ The Alexandrian Texts are also called the Minority or Critical Texts.

² The Byzantine Texts are also called the Majority or Traditional Texts.

We also live in NT times under a New Covenant; most sermons are taken from the NT, and when asked where to start reading the Bible, most suggest a New Testament book, such as John – and so it isn't difficult to understand why most only read from the New.

But God's Word **commands** us to live by *every* word of his Word and not just the New (Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4). The OT provides the doctrinal foundation for the New. But without this foundation, misconceptions, bad doctrines, and false gospels abound. How we apply some of the OT truths *has* changed, but not its fundamental principles (Mt. 5:17-19). The love and grace found in the New is in the Old and the judgment of Old is found in the New (just read Revelation). The overall purpose of God's Word is to explain the person and work of Jesus Christ, and so everything in it is relevant for the believer today.³ This is God's view and anything else is sin.

3. Read it

Now that we have a Bible and a proper view of it, we should then read it. Ps. 119:130 says, "The entrance [disclosure] of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Moses commonly told the words of the Lord to the people as did Joshua (Ex. 24:3-4; Josh. 8:30-35). Ezra read and caused the people to understand which led to repentance and great joy (Neh. 8:1-12, 13:1-3). And when the early church met, they weren't only told to read the Word, but to pay attention to doctrine (cp. 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:13).⁴ So not only should we read it, we should study it. Paul says in 2 Tim. 2:15,⁵

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The "approval" here wasn't for Timothy to prove himself as a son, but to prove himself as a faithful *workman*. In other words, this wasn't written for his salvation or as a condition of his salvation, but as an admonition to really get to know the truths of God's Word. He knew the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14-15), and you must in order to defeat the doctrines of the false prophets and teachers of whom Paul frequently warned (2 Tim. 3:1-9 etc.). But to know the Scriptures and the God who wrote them, you must be reading from God's Word and not one of its "versions," which is why the first point in this lesson is so very important.

And finally, people often ask where they should start reading the Bible. Most respond with a NT book such as Matthew or John. However, God began *writing* in Genesis, and so we should start *reading* there as well. Genesis provides the foundation for all that follows, and so this is the only answer that makes sense.

³ Mt. 5:17-19; Lu. 24:27, 44; Jn. 5:39; Acts 28:23-24

⁴ Thus dispelling the myth that we should just "lay aside our doctrinal differences and love one another;" or, that we should "not focus on our differences but focus on what we have in common." This is an extremely dangerous mindset as it's inherently ecumenical. God's doctrines reveal his love and teach us how to apply it, and so the two aren't divorced from one another; they're not in conflict, only our understanding of them is. Selah.

⁵ Do note that, at the time, Paul was referencing the Old Testament; the New hadn't been established yet.

4. The Law of First Mention, Reference, or Occurrence

Many years ago, astute Bible scholars observed that the first mention of something in Scripture was always the most important as it provided the doctrinal foundation for how all else was to be interpreted. Its application may change, but its fundamental principles and patterns do not – and this is where many err. They see differences in a doctrine’s application and then assume that the doctrine itself is no longer valid. This of course leads to great error.⁶

To qualify as a topic’s First Mention, it doesn’t have to be referred to by its common or proper name. For example, the word *sacrifice* is first used in Gen. 31:54, but *in practice* it occurred much earlier when God slew an animal to provide coverings for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). Water baptism isn’t called this until Mark 1:4 (Lu. 3:3), but it too occurs in practice much earlier in history (Ex. 29:4-9, 40:11-15). Tithing, on the other hand, is first mentioned by name and practice in Gen. 14:17-20, but it’s not mentioned by name even though it’s clearly evident in the NT in 1 Cor. 9:3-18 (this passage is based on Num. 18, a tithing passage).

There are many examples of this principle with many of them emanating from the first few chapters in Genesis. Again, the Law of First Mention sets forth patterns and principles that never change although its application may (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). For example, from Adam’s experience in the Garden, we learn several things concerning sin, sacrifice, and salvation (Gen. 3:8-21). Briefly,...

1. **God pointed out the need; he took the initiative.** After sinning, Adam and Eve hid. They weren't looking for God; God came looking for them. In other terms, the Shepherd was looking for the sheep, and not the other way around (Eph. 2:8-10). Jesus died for our sins while we were *yet* sinners (Rom. 5:8-9). So when you met God, you weren't looking for him, he was searching for you. But when he comes, just like Adam and Eve, he comes not to find fault, but to extend grace unto salvation (Rom. 5:20; Eph. 2:8-10).
2. **God provides the sacrifice.** Man cannot cover the nakedness caused by his own sin; i.e. he cannot save himself. Adam sewed fig leaves together, but God rejected these as he does all attempts by man to save himself (Gen. 3:7). God provided the sacrifice (a lamb?) to cover Adam’s physical nakedness and he provided his Son Jesus as *the* Lamb of God to pay for our spiritual nakedness (i.e. salvation; Jn. 1:26). Thus, salvation is by God’s grace alone with no thought or input from man, except a decision (Eph. 2:8-10, Jn. 6:29).
3. **The sacrifice was an innocent substitute.** An animal died to cover Adam’s nakedness, but the animal itself had committed no wrong. It was innocent, but *forced* to cover Adam’s sin. Adam should have been put to death for his own sin (Rom. 6:23), but Jesus died *willingly* to cover our spiritual nakedness even though he too had done no wrong (Heb. 9:14, 12:2).
4. **Man’s sin killed the sacrifice.** Adam’s sin led to the death of an innocent substitute that was needed to *atone* (cover) his physical nakedness just as man’s sin (Jew and Gentile) led to the death of Jesus Christ to *pay* for our spiritual nakedness.

⁶ A classic example of this would be the application of the Mosaic Law.

5. **Salvation is a free gift (Rom. 5:14-17).** It was offered freely to Adam but it wasn't cheap – it cost a life. Salvation is freely offered by way of Jesus, but it cost God his life. God had to become a man and die for our sin. And since salvation is a *gift*, then it can't be earned (thus teaching against salvation earned or maintained by works). Man only gets to make a decision, Like Adam (Jn. 6:29).
6. **Adam is the first priest in the Bible.** The sacrifice that God offered up on behalf of Adam wasn't just any sacrifice, it was a *voluntary* sacrifice known as a Burnt Offering which, under Mosaic Law, can only be made **after** the *mandatory* Sin and Trespass Offering (Lev. 1, 6:8-13). But there's no record of a Sin and Trespass Offering having been made. Or is there?⁷

Before God provided coverings for Adam and Eve (through the sacrifice of an animal; Gen. 3:21), the gospel message was presented to them in Gen. 3:15, which was a veiled reference to Jesus' death on the cross. A bruise to the head of a snake will kill it while the only form of capital punishment known to involve the bruising of a man's heel is crucifixion – the bruise to the heel occurring as a man tries to lift himself to breath while hanging, and so this was a veiled reference to Jesus' death on the cross. Thus God revealed to Adam that one day Jesus would come and die on the cross for his sins. God showed Adam Jesus!

This veiled reference to Jesus dying on the cross in Gen. 3:15 is then followed by the Burnt Offering in Gen. 3:21. And since the Burnt Offering is *voluntary* and can only be offered up **after** the *mandatory* Sin and Trespass Offering, it can only mean that Adam repented of his sins. In other words, Jesus is our Sin and Trespass Offering as revealed in Gen. 3:15. But due to his resurrection, he's also our Burnt Offering as demonstrated in Gen. 3:21. The skins served the practical need of hiding Adam's nakedness, but it was also spiritually symbolic in that Adam was now identified with the sacrifice. He is, after all, wearing the animal's skin. And since the sacrifice was innocent, then so too is Adam. So when we repent, we too are identified with the sacrifice. And since Jesus was innocent and righteous, we too are declared righteous!⁸ We've given up our filthy rags of self-righteousness and exchanged them with Jesus' robes of righteousness (Is. 64:6)! And how did this occur? Because of a decision to repent and not by any of our own works! But note that there's no mention of a Sin and Trespass Offering because, again, the blood of bulls and goats cannot pay for sin. So in type, the Sin and Trespass Offering are fulfilled in Christ!

But to explain the statement. Under the Mosaic Law, the Burnt Offering was unique in that the priest was allowed to keep the skins of the slain animal – so long as he wasn't offering up a sacrifice for his own sin thus teaching that there's no reward for sin. But if true, then why did Adam get to keep the skins?

This is the difference between salvation by grace and the "salvation" offered by the Mosaic Law. *The Mosaic Law was written for a people who wanted to save themselves*

⁷ The Sin Offering covered for our *sin nature* and the Trespass Offering covered our *sins*.

⁸ Ps. 132:9; Is. 61:10; Rom. 13:14

apart from the grace of God. Salvation by grace through faith – as Adam did – allows us to be identified with Christ and his righteousness even though we’re sinners, or were sinners, and so this is why Adam was able to keep the skins. Adam was saved in the exact same manner as we are. He was declared righteous and so that’s why he was able to receive the skins! He was no longer a sinner. When we repent, we too take on the nature of our innocent substitute: Jesus. We’re then called, among many things, priests unto the Lord (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6). And since it was true for us, it was also true of Adam, and so he’s the first priest in the Bible – and he was a Gentile. Selah.

7. **There’s only one plan of salvation whereby a sinful man can be saved.** Note that man’s first reaction to his sin was to try and save himself. But from what he soon learned, salvation was by God’s grace alone. God provided everything and Adam wasn’t allowed to play any part in his salvation except to make a decision thus revealing that salvation is earned by God’s grace alone (Jn. 6:29; Eh. 2:8-10). In other words, Adam was saved exactly as we are today! Salvation is not earned and/or retained by works or grace *and* works; it is by grace alone *and anything else is heresy*. Abram later learned this same lesson (Gen. 15). And so the only difference in the gospel message that Adam heard from what we hear today is one of timing. Adam looked *forward* to the time of the cross while we look *back* that it happened. It’s simply a matter of when you were born in history.
8. **God is more interested in having a personal relationship with man than he is in dwelling on our sin.** Sin has been dealt with through Jesus, especially once we repent, and so the bulk of our time should be spent nurturing our relationship with him. And since the emphasis was less on Gen. 3:21 than it was on the prophecy of Gen. 3:15, then animal sacrifice is a *memorial* of our salvation *rather than a means* of salvation, as the book of Hebrews indicated. Sacrifice has never led to man’s salvation because salvation has always been based on repentance – it’s a matter of the heart (1 Sam. 15:22).

This it’s revealed that Adam’s experience in the Garden provides us with a number of Firsts, including the First Mention of sin, sacrifice, salvation, and the priesthood of the believers. And as it’s briefly been shown, these patterns and principles never cease although we do see them manifested in different ways. This is the Law of First Mention and it isn’t without precedent: Jesus used it in Mk. 10:6 (Mt. 19:4). Selah.

5. Context

A failure to observe a verse or passage’s contextual setting often ends up with people pitting one verse of Scripture against another and then choosing which one they want to believe, which is actually a good way of discerning that their interpretation is wrong. Scripture never contradicts itself although there are paradoxes, to be sure, but no contradictions.

Understanding context is understanding the situation or circumstances surrounding an event, or the environment in which it occurs. It’s essentially asking: who, what, how, where, when, and why? Who’s talking, who’s listening, and who or what is being spoken about? Are we talking about things in heaven or things on earth? Are we talking about our spiritual standing

before God or our gender roles and responsibilities as men and women on earth? Are we talking about our roles and responsibilities as Christian men and women *inside* the church or *outside* the church?

Are we talking to saved people about other saved people or the unsaved? Are we talking about the Jews as a nation or as individuals? Are we talking about ethnic Jews or spiritual Jews? Are we talking about fishing, farming, vineyards, shepherding, or how to run a government or church? Is what we're reading meant to be literal or symbolic? Are we discussing a topic's doctrinal or symbolic meaning? Is God using a parable, hyperbole, metaphors, sarcasm, etc.? And if he's using symbols, what do they mean?

Are we in the wilderness, the Temple, in the sea, on the lake, or out in the desert? In the land of Israel or out? When or what time of day is it? Old Testament or New? What day, week, month, or year? Or what season? Eternity? Morning, afternoon, night? Is it a feast day? And why are we being told what we're reading? Is it to teach, instruct, warn, correct, discipline, encourage, bless, or cause introspection?

All these questions (and many more) can seem a bit overwhelming, but they must be asked in order to arrive at the proper interpretation; we must exercise these skills until they become a natural part of our thinking and thought process (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 4:7-8). And when we do, we'll be more attune to not only seeing God's hand at work in Scripture, but in our daily lives as well, and we'll be able to do so in ways we never thought possible.

6. Chronological Harmonies

Often times the same story is told on more than one occasion. These stories are never told exactly the same. If they were, collusion would be suspected. The common elements are often close, as are some of the details, but each writer will add or omit certain aspects when telling their version of the story. This isn't error nor is it an attempt to deceive, it's an attempt to drive home a particular point to a particular listening audience. But in comparing all the accounts, all the details necessary to arrive at a proper interpretation are then present.

If four people located at different corners of an intersection witness an accident, if you asked them what they saw, you'd get four different answers. There'd be some common elements, but the details would differ as they must because each viewed what happened from a different angle. Neither account is wrong, it's just four different perspectives. But when they're all compared, it's only then that the full story can be told. Relying on a few at the expense of all is where errors begin.

But it's not only the angle, it's also the training and experience of an individual witness. A police officer who witnessed the accident is going to focus on the details of how the accident occurred instead of the medical condition of the injured. He's aware that people are hurt, and it doesn't mean that he doesn't care. But at the same time, he doesn't have the training and insight of a doctor. Likewise, a doctor is going to focus less on the details of the accident and

more on the details of the injuries. He knows that an accident occurred, but is less interested in how or why it occurred because that's the job of the police officer, etc.

All of this is true as it applies to the stories, events, and parables of the Bible. The Bible is full of stories that are told in more than one place and so they must be chronologically harmonized if you want to get the full story. And since we're talking about God's written Word, then the "witnesses" – the writers of the books – will never disagree (1 Jn. 5:7). (All the more reason why we need to be reading from a Bible and not one of its *per*-"versions"!) There are paradoxes, to be sure (seeming or apparent contradictions), but never contradictions (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). So if one account says that the horse was black and another says that it was white, then either there were two horses – one black and one white – or it's a zebra! So again, the witnesses in the Bible will never disagree.

Gathering the witnesses and comparing their stories is where the **harmony aspect** of a chronological harmony comes into play. The easiest way to accomplish this is to go into Microsoft Word (or similar) and create a table with as many columns as are necessary. For example, the story of the Rich Young Ruler is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and so you would have three columns: Matthew in one, Mark in another, and then Luke. All the pertinent verses would then need to be cut and pasted into each column or typed and proofread. Common elements would be placed on the same lines. The differences would need to be placed on separate lines. So in harmonizing what we're doing is seeing where the stories are the same and where they differ, and it's in where they differ that most fail to notice thus leading to a bad interpretation. But they must also be placed chronologically.

The **chronological aspect** of a chronological harmony is simply rearranging the verses where they read in the order that they happened. Again, this isn't error. It's just that the story is being tailored to a particular listening audience for a particular reason, which in and of itself deserves its own study. Identifying time markers or indicators like "then," "after," or "the next day" help to discern the exact timeline.

In doing this type of work, sometimes it becomes necessary divide a single verse into two or more sections. When this is done, Verse 5, for example, becomes 5a, 5b,... etc. Also note that not only can individual stories and events be harmonized, sometimes it's necessary to harmonize entire books, such as the four gospels if you want to capture the entirety of Jesus' earthly walk. First & 2 Kings need to be harmonized with 1 & 2 Chronicles, etc. And even then, many of the prophetic books and their prophecies can be infused within this harmony because they lived and prophesied during the same time period, thus adding valuable insight as to what occurred. And so a chronological harmony is taking an individual story and comparing it to any and all other accounts of it and then arranging the verses in the order they occurred. Sometimes the order is as it reads in the text, while at other times it's not. It's only after doing this type of work that anyone could ever hope to arrive at the proper interpretation. Indeed, the church is full of error because of the failure to perform this one simple task. (Note the example of the chronological harmony of the Rich Young Ruler at the back of this study.)

7. Parables

Parables are earthly examples of spiritual truths. They take that which is familiar to explain that which is unfamiliar. This is why many parables taught in the Bible have to do with fishing or farming; it was commonplace in Israel and you were familiar with it even if you weren't a farmer or a fisherman. How could you not be? You were surrounded by it!

Parables don't establish doctrine, they only bear witness to doctrine that's already been established. Parables are doctrine in action. They show us how to apply the truths of God's Word in an everyday setting. They reveal who God is and how he deals with man. Parables usually teach one main lesson, and so not every detail has to mean something. They're there to support the main lesson or just help tell the story – to make it more understandable.

Parables are symbolic and the meaning of the symbolism can change from one parable to another. Sheep aren't always representative of saved people, for example. But you'll be able to tell by the context of the story. Sometimes we were told what the symbols mean, but more often than not, we're not. Parables are there to enlighten those who desire more, and block out the truth from those who could care less (cp. Mt. 13:10-17; Mk. 4:10-12; Lu. 8:9-10).

8. Symbolism

Life in general is full of symbolism and the Bible is no different. Similar to parables, symbols are taken from things found in this world to which meaning has been attached. They take that which is common to explain that which is uncommon. Symbols can be used with other symbols to express a combined or larger meaning. The use of symbolism often transcends language barriers thereby making it easier to communicate. Everyone knows that seeds contain life. You bury them, provide them with warmth and moisture, and they grow. Everyone knows that weeds (tares) are bad because they inhibit the growth of good seed. And since seeds are good for food, they naturally represent something that's good although exactly what that is can change. For example, in the Parable of the Sower, the (good) seed represents the Word of God (Lu. 8:11). But in the Parable of the Tares that shortly follows, the good seed represents the children of the Kingdom (Mt. 13:38).

9. Maps

Distance, topography, bearing, elevation, etc. can be used to help set the context of a story or parable. For example, Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee which is north of Jerusalem. So on a map, Nazareth would be near the top and Jerusalem toward the bottom. But yet Scripture often refers to him going "up" to Jerusalem. Now, how can you go "up" to Jerusalem when on a map it's located south of where you are?

The answer is simple. On a map, Nazareth is directionally north of Jerusalem. So to get to it, you must *directionally* go "down," or south. But in terms of *elevation*, Nazareth is lower than Jerusalem. Nazareth is about 1200 ft. ASL while Jerusalem is about 2600 ft. ASL. So in terms of

elevation, you must go “up” to Jerusalem from Nazareth even though directionally you’re headed south.

10. Bible Chronology

Bible chronology is using the dates and times in the Bible. Through its study, we can discern many interesting facts including, but not limited to: Adam lived long enough to personally tell eight generations of his descendants exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden, that The Flood took place 1656 years after Creation, that the Jews spent no more than 144 years in slavery to Egypt, and that the Earth is only about 6,000 years old. These and many other questions can be answered by using simple addition and subtraction. Bible chronology provides us with the proper historical perspective and time frame of a story, which in turn serves to eliminate many of the inaccuracies reported today.

11. Outlining

Outlining is using Roman numerals (I., II., III...) and our alphanumeric system (A, B, C,... 1, 2, 3...) to organize the books, chapters, and verses. It’s finding the main points and organizing them logically for easier study. There’s no right or wrong way to outline, per se. The form needs to be consistent, but the manner in which we organize our thoughts is up to us. Note the samples listed near the end this study.

12. Meditate on God’s Word

This is a case where Scripture is its own best commentary.

Josh. 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. ⁹Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Ps. 1:1 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ²But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Ps. 63:5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips: ⁶When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches. ⁷Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Ps. 77:11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. ¹²I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

Ps. 119:148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

Php. 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. ⁹Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Additional Tips

1. Avoid Study Bibles

Study Bibles are existing versions of the Bible where someone has added their personal study notes. At times these can be helpful, but more often than not, they're superficial or just plain wrong – often requiring real discernment and knowledge of the Bible to know the difference. It would be better to just read the KJB without them. This will give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to guide you without the distraction of you pausing every few verses to read a footnote. Reference editions are fine as they simply point to other Scriptures as are maps and other study helps that are often located in the back. The key here is to be able to read without distraction – just you and God alone.

2. Don't become burdened with knowing Hebrew and Greek

If not directly stated, it's often implied that you need to know Hebrew and Greek to understand the Bible. No you don't. This is a lie. Hebrew and Greek scholars are often so focused on word definition and syntax that they can't read plain English. What is really needed is an understanding of the OT so that the NT can be understood within its proper doctrinal framework. Remember, the church is in an awful state of affairs – partly because of the Hebrew and Greek scholars, and not in spite of them. Of course if you're planning on doing any translation work this is a necessity. But for the bulk of God's people, this isn't an issue. And in most cases, a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* and/or a *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* will suffice.

3. Don't overwhelm yourself with church history

Most Bible colleges are going to teach at least one class on the history of the church. And in many cases, it's the history of their denomination that God never said start! Or, it's likely to be the history of the organized or institutional church and not the true church of Jesus Christ. Church history cannot be held as authoritative in scriptural matters. The only real church history we need to know is what's found in God's Word.

4. Pray before you read

It's the proper order of things to ask the Lord to give you insight as you read. Referring back to the third point of reading God's Word, sometimes we need to *read for familiarization* while other times we need to *read to study*. Reading for familiarization is more "recreational." It's more casual reading. It's to make us familiar with what's in God's Word – to make us aware of what's there. It's to fill our hearts and minds with God's Word. In this type of reading, at the moment we read something seldom will it make a resounding impression. But it's often what the Holy Spirit does with it later – often when we least expect it – where the real benefit of this type of reading comes into play.

With this type of reading, such as attempting to read through the Bible in a year, it's often helpful to journal what stood out in your mind. Often times this is God's way of trying to show you something – often it will be a common theme that transcends the Testaments thus reinforcing the fact that "we are to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4) and that "God never changes" (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).

Reading to study is more concise and focused. With this type of reading you're going after something more specific. Organizing chronological harmonies, working on bible chronology, and studying to arrive at an interpretation are examples of this type of reading. But in either case, pausing to say a prayer before, and even between and after reading, is a good practice. In doing so, you're acknowledging your trust in the Lord to reveal the truths of his Word to you as you need them.

4. Write or type the words of the Bible

This is greatly beneficial, especially when constructing the previously mentioned chronological harmonies. If you type or write the words, then you must proofread your work for the sake of accuracy, and you must do it several times. In doing so, you'll become far more intimate with the words of God's Word – down to the individual letters and punctuation marks!

5. Avoid using extra-biblical information

A common error occurs when people try and reconcile information in the Bible with secular dates and history. But the rule of thumb is, or should be, if the secular contradicts the biblical, then the secular is wrong. It's just that simple.

6. Avoid personality arguments

The Bible warns of this (1 Cor. 1:10-13). A prime example is Calvinism vs. Arminianism, or Calvinism by itself. Another would be tithing vs. non-tithing. But of course, the problem here is that people get so wrapped-up in the argument that the moment you utter a single thought they immediately pigeonhole you into one camp or the other. But this is all done based on the assumption that these are the only two options available, completely forgetting that there's always the biblical.

7. Remember that what is inspirational or logical isn't always biblical

Christians today are quick to embrace the oxymoron of "Christian fiction." This would include stories about trips to Heaven and Hell and spirit beings have sexual relationships with mortal women thus producing giants (Roman and Greek mythology). People are willing to believe these absurd tales (and others) because they were emotionally stirred or because they fell victim to what appeared to be a logical but unbiblical argument.⁹ Eve was presented with a logical argument and it led to sin and death (Gen. 3:1-7). Often the details of these stories directly contradict the clear Word of the Lord. But given a choice, most ignore the Bible. Why? Because they prefer to be entertained and to have their senses titillated.

Similarly, people are willing to allow their experiences to drive their doctrinal interpretation instead of evaluating their experiences in light of God's Word. The book of Acts, for example, is a book of experiences and not doctrine. But yet, people have established doctrines based on the experiences found in this book thus leading to great error.

8. Forget that you have an opinion

Western culture thrives on the "right" of personal opinion and free expression. God doesn't. God could less what we think. Just because we have the *ability* to form an opinion doesn't mean that we have the *right*. In today's world, we're taught that our opinion matters and that it must be respected. No it doesn't – not when it comes to God's Word, anyway. God sets the standard and either we agree or choose to sin against him. This of course doesn't mean that he doesn't care about our thoughts. God is a Father and he'll nurture us as children. But if our opinion of him contradicts his Word, it's sin. One day we'll all be judged both saint and sinner according to the standard that God set with no respect given to our opinion.¹⁰ Selah.

9. Never choose one verse of Scripture over or at the expense of another

Anytime you're forced to choose between one verse over or at the expense of another then you know you're in error. You must provide an interpretation that satisfies them all without taking any of them out of context else your interpretation (or their interpretation) is wrong.

In many cases, the mistake they've made is in not having read far enough ahead or after the verse or passage in question to get the proper context. In other cases, they're not taking into account the full counsel of God's Word, which is another reason why the second point of this study is so important. Or similarly, and as I often happens in the New Testament, they don't have the proper Old Testament foundation (water baptism is a perfect example).

⁹ A good example of the latter would be Rome's (unofficial) stance that the image on the Shroud of Turin is actually that of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ These are two different judgments. Sinners will be judged for rejecting Jesus and sent to the Lake of Fire. The saints will be judged concerning rewards lost or gained. Salvation is not the issue but rewards for obedience after salvation are. In theological circles, this is known as the Bema Judgment of the believer. We will be judged separate from sinners. It is not punitive.

Sample Outlines

Genesis	Matthew
<p>I. Creation and Adam (1:1-5:32)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Creation (1:1-2:3) B. Adam and Eve (2:4-25) C. The Fall (3:1-24) D. Cain and Abel (4:1-26) E. Adam to Noah (5:1-32) <p>II. Noah and The Flood (6:1-11:32)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Noah and the Ark (6:1-8:19) B. Covenant with Noah (8:20-9:19) C. Noah and His Sons (9:20-10:32) D. Tower of Babel (11:1-9) E. Shem (11:10-32) <p>III. Abraham (12:1-25:18)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Abram Goes to Egypt (12:1-20) B. Abram and Lot ((13:1-14:24) C. Covenant with Abram (15:1-20) D. Hagar and Ishmael (16:1-15) E. Circumcision (17:1-27) F. The Promised Child (18:1-15) G. Sodom\Gomorrah (18:16-19:38) H. Abraham\Abimelech (20:1-18) I. Family Trouble (21:1-34) J. Abraham's Test (22:1-24) K. Death of Sarah (23:1-20) L. Isaac and Rebekah (24:1-67) M. Abraham and Ishmael (25:1-18) <p>IV. Jacob (25:19-36:43)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Esau and Jacob (25:19-34) B. Isaac and Abimelech (26:1-35) C. Jacob's Deceit (27:1-46) D. Flight to Haran (27:47-29:14) E. Leah and Rachel (29:15-30:24) F. Jacob and Laban (30:25-31:55) G. Jacob and Esau (32:1-33:20) H. Dinah's Rape (34:1-31) I. Return to Bethel (35:1-29) J. Esau's Descendants (36:1-43) <p>VI. Joseph (37:1-50:26)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. His Brothers (37:1-36) B. Judah and Tamar (38:1-30) C. Potiphar's Wife (39:1-23) D. Interpretation of Dreams (40:1-41:57) E. 1st Trip to Egypt (42:1-38) F. 2nd Trip to Egypt (43:1-44:34) G. Brothers in Egypt (45:1-28) H. Jacob in Egypt (46:1-50:14) I. Reassurance and Death (50:15-26) 	<p>I. Birth and Preparation (1:1-4:16)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Birth and Childhood (1:1-2:23) B. Preparation for Ministry (3:1-4:16) <p>II. Public Galilean Ministry (4:17-16:20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Beginning (4:17-25) B. Teaching on Discipleship (5:1-7:29) C. Authority Manifested (8:1-9:34) D. The Disciples' Ministry (9:35-11:1) E. Response to Christ's Ministry (11:2-12:50) F. Kingdom Parables (13:1-53) G. Response to Kingdom Parables (13:54-16:20) <p>III. Private Galilean Ministry (16:21-18:35)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Teaching on Jesus' Mission (16:21-17:27) B. Teaching about Relationships Among Believers (18:1-35) <p>IV. Ministry in Judea (19:1-25:46)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. On the Way to Jerusalem (19:1-25:46) B. Arrival (21:1-22) C. Confrontations (21:23-23:39) D. Future Events (24:1-25:46) <p>V. Passion and Resurrection (26:1-28:20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Preparation (26:1-46) B. Arrest and Trials (26:47-27:26) C. Crucifixion (27:27-56) D. Burial and Resurrection (27:57-28:20)

THE RICH YOUNG RULER
Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

Matthew 19:16-30	Mark 10:17-31	Luke 18:18-30
<p>¹⁶And, behold,</p> <p>one came</p> <p>and said unto him, Good Master [teacher], what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?</p> <p>¹⁷And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? <i>there is none good but one, that is, God:</i> but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.</p> <p>^{18a} He saith unto him, Which?</p> <p>Jesus said,</p> <p>^cThou shalt not commit adultery, ^bThou shalt do no murder, ^dThou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,</p> <p>¹⁹Honour thy father and <i>thy</i> mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.</p> <p>²⁰The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?</p> <p>²¹Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go <i>and</i> sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come <i>and</i> follow me.</p> <p>²²But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.</p>	<p>¹⁷And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what</p> <p>shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?</p> <p>¹⁸And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? <i>there is none good but one, that is, God.</i></p> <p>¹⁹Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.</p> <p>²⁰And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.</p> <p>²¹Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.</p> <p>²²And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.</p>	<p>¹⁸And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?</p> <p>¹⁹And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? <i>none is good, save one, that is, God.</i></p> <p>²⁰Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.</p> <p>²¹And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.</p> <p>²²Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.</p> <p>²³And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.</p>