

Some Guidelines for Bible Study

Principle	Illustrative Verse	Explanation
1. Understand the Nature of the Bible	"The secret <i>things belong</i> unto the LORD our God: but those <i>things which are revealed belong</i> unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deut 29:29	Recognize that God's revelation is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partial: God has "secret things." You can ask questions to which you can't get the answer. Sometimes the right answer is "I don't know, and you probably don't, either." ● Plain: Those things that are not "secret" are "revealed." We should expect to understand what God has told us, because he gives it, not just to adults, but to "our children." ● Practical: It is given so that we can "do" it, not just believe it.
2. Stick to the Bible	"Nevertheless what saith the scripture?" Gal 4:30	The most important truths can all be proven within the Bible itself. Ancient history, related languages, and archeology are interesting, but what really matters is all there in the canon, the 66 books of the Bible that we recognize as the Word of God.
3. Watch your Words	"Hold fast the form of sound words" 2 Tim 1:13	Express biblical truth in biblical words, used in their biblical meaning. Let the Bible be your dictionary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use your concordance or Bible search software to find how words and phrases are used elsewhere. ● If you don't read Hebrew and Greek, use Strong's numbers to find other examples of the same word in the original even when your Bible translates it with multiple English words. ● If you read Hebrew and Greek, look at how the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses words that occur in the New Testament.
4. Diagram Sentences and Paragraphs	"And he said unto the woman, 'Yea, hath God said, ...'" Gen 3:1	The meaning of a sentence depends not only on its words (the previous point), but also on its syntax (how those words are related). You need to understand the syntax in order to understand the verse correctly. Similarly, paragraphs have structure that can help you understand them (see Longacre's article, https://www.cyber-chapel.org/Longacre1980.pdf).
5. Pay Attention to Repetition	"For God speaketh once, yea twice," Job 33:14	Patterns of repetition are important markers of emphasis and divisions of thought. They did for the Bible writers what indented paragraphs, changes in type face, and headings do for us.
6. Find the Bible's Comments on itself	"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," Rom 15:4	Later scripture comments on earlier scripture much more often than most people realize. Notice the order in which the books were written, then find these comments and pay attention to them.
7. Meditate on what you read	"But his delight <i>is</i> in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night," Ps 1:2	Take time to think prayerfully about what you read. What was God saying to the original readers in the passage you are studying? What message does he have for us?

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