

## Bible Study Methods

Even after you recognize the importance of Bible study in the life of every believer and especially for church leaders from 2 Timothy 2:15, it still may not be evident exactly how to get started doing it. There are many different methods for studying the Bible, and probably an infinite number of possible variations on them. But when you reduce all of them down to their essence, there are two primary Bible study types: expository and topical. Expository Bible study means to take a single passage of the Bible and study it word-by-word or verse-by-verse. Topical Bible study means to focus on a subject that may be found in many different places in the Bible. Both have their advantages and both are valid, enriching ways to look at the Bible. Within the two types are different methods that will help you draw out valuable truth, insights, and application.

As you consider and implement one or more of these Bible study methods, it is important to remember the core purpose of Bible study: application of the Bible to life. It can be very gratifying to establish a doctrine based on your study of the Bible, but if it ends with that, then you have not completed all of the steps of real, meaningful Bible study. It can be exhilarating to uncover a truth you have never seen before from a passage you have read many times, but if that is where it stops, then you have not accomplished the ultimate purpose of the Bible or Bible study. You can even recognize very practical ways to apply the Bible to life, but if you do not actually apply it, then you have missed the mind- and life-changing power of the Bible. Remember James 1:22-25:

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” James 1:22-25*

This word of caution is especially important for those who God has spiritually gifted as teachers, as they can easily focus so much on extracting truth and insights from the Bible that they forget the vital importance of application both to their own life and to the lives of those they teach.

Additionally, please remember how futile Bible study is without the aid of the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of its truths. No matter the method you choose, begin each session with prayer. Ask God to clear your mind of distracting thoughts and competing priorities. Ask Him to protect you from your own emotional baggage and biases that can skew your understanding and interpretation. And ask Him to give you the grace to hear the truth you uncover from the Bible and apply it to your life, even if it requires repentance, resisting temptation, or breaking a habit. Without the spiritual life-giving ministry of the Author of the Bible we are studying, our efforts will fall short.

As each of the methods are presented, you will find the following:

- The level of difficulty
- A clear description of the method
- What specific parts of the Bible or topics are best suited to the method

- Specific results and benefit you can expect from using that method
- Additional resources that are helpful or required (from the list in the previous module)
- Step-by-step instructions to lead you through the process
- Questions for you to answer and notes to take as you go through the process
- Passage or topic recommendations to help you get started

Each method has been formatted such that you can duplicate the pages and use them over and over for your Bible studies.

Of course, every method requires a Bible, but I have intentionally included some methods that can be done without any other books, as there are many millions of followers of Christ in the world who have nothing besides their Bibles. You will also need paper and pen or pencil, since a significant amount of the benefit to deeper Bible study comes from taking notes, answering questions, and recording your personal response to what you discover.

If you do not have other resources than your Bible, I encourage you to begin immediately doing something I have done for years. Keep a piece of paper or notebook with you every time you read your Bible, both during your daily devotional reading and during in-depth study. Any time you read a passage that has to do with a particular person, word, or topic you might be interested to study further, make an entry on your paper with the reference and any brief thought you had about the subject. If you are diligent as you read through the Bible a few times, you will build your own valuable resource that can be used as a source for cross-references and topical studies. (How do you think the great reference works were created?)

The Bible study methods presented in this module are only some of the many possible ways to study the Bible. They are offered as sound, proven ways for you to begin uncovering its deep, life-changing truths. Within the two different categories of study, the different methods are presented roughly from the simpler to the more advanced. There is always more to the Bible for us to discover, and being exposed to new or advanced study methods should challenge even experienced Bible students to try new ideas and continue to improve their skills.

### **Expository Bible Study Methods**

Studying passages in the Bible is a critical skill, especially for those who will be teaching or preaching to others. The ability to take a verse, passage, chapter, or book of the Bible and accurately extract from it clear, practical truths, insights, and application is key to a church leader increasing their impact and effectiveness as a minister of Jesus Christ. The following four Bible study methods will help you improve your skills studying the Bible and will help you better “*rightly handling the word of truth*” as we are instructed in 2 Tim. 2:15. The last three of the four methods build upon one another and can be used together to develop incredibly thorough and valuable studies on an entire book of the Bible. Following that path will give you very manageable steps to major accomplishment.

### **The Meditation Bible Study Method – Simple**

This simple Bible study method is especially suited to individuals whose library does not yet contain other resources than their Bible. Though it is simple, the impact can be profound. Meditation Bible study involves taking a passage of the Bible and spending focused time looking at the passage from many different angles, repeatedly reading through the passage, emphasizing different words and phrases. After meditating on the passage thoroughly, then you write out the passage in your own words, personalize it, and then ask God to help you apply it. This Bible study method is applicable to most of the Bible, especially texts that contain instructions, encouragement, psalms, prayers, and praise.

Meditation Bible study will help you make the Bible personal and practical. It will help you turn from sin and be renewed in your soul. James 1:21 says, “*Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*” You “*implant the word*” by meditating on Bible passages over and over.

#### **Hint:**

- Pick passages that are either very meaningful to you or that you are having a difficult time understanding or applying.

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- None!

#### **Possible starting places:**

- 2 Timothy 2:15
- Philippians 4:19
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Psalm 119:105
- Philippians 4:8
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Matthew 5:14-16
- Hebrews 4:15-16
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Psalm 1:1-6

**Meditation Bible study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Choose your verse or passage on which to meditate. Answer the first two items on the worksheet.
2. Read the passage five times.
3. Repeat the passage out loud over and over, emphasizing the first word the first time, then the second word the next time, and so on until you have spoken the passage aloud emphasizing each word in the passage. After each time, think about the different meanings each different emphasis brings out of the verse.
4. Write the passage out in your own words in the worksheet below.
5. Write the passage out again, this time inserting your name or the personal pronouns “I”, “me”, “my”, “mine”, and “myself” into the verse to personalize the text.
6. Ask God to help you apply the passage to your life. Finish completing the rest of the worksheet.

**Meditation Bible study worksheet:**

What passage are you studying?
What drove you to select this passage?
Write out the passage in your own words.
Personalize the passage.
How has God spoken to your heart during this exercise?
What will you start or stop doing that will help you build these practical lessons into your own life?

### **The Micro Bible Study Method – Moderate**

This word-by-word Bible study method is a great starting point in expository Bible study for those who have access to a few additional Bible reference resources. The micro bible study method is done by taking a single sentence (often a single verse) from a passage in the Bible and looking carefully at each word, as if you were putting the passage under a microscope, to see every possible detail. You will use your other Bible translations, concordance, Bible dictionary, and expository dictionary to gain a complete understanding of every single word and then put your newly increased understanding of those words together to gain a better apprehension of the entire sentence. The final step in this method is to discern how to apply the full meaning of the passage to your life. This Bible study method is most useful for texts that contain discourse, instructions, encouragement, psalms, and prayers.

The micro Bible study method will help you gain a much clearer understanding of a small section of the Bible. You will walk away from a study session with insight and application from the verse or verses that will stick with you for the rest of your life and will equip you to share it with others. If you choose, you can apply the micro Bible study method to adjacent sentences in a passage and develop a deep understanding of larger sections of the Bible.

#### **Hints:**

- Pick verses that are either very meaningful to you or that you are having a difficult time understanding or applying. If you plan to use this method in concert with the next two methods to build a study on an entire book, keep that in mind when you choose your verse.
- There are a number of steps in this method that refer to nouns and verbs. Nouns and verbs are the two most important parts of speech that make up a sentence. Nouns are words that point to a person, place, or a thing. Nouns include names (e.g., Jesus, Paul, I, you), locations (e.g., heaven, Jerusalem, a mountain), objects (e.g., a Bible, a dog, a rock), and concepts (e.g., joy, faith, sin). Nouns can be a subject or object in a sentence.

Verbs are words that have action, either doing something (e.g., run, believe, live, love) or being something (e.g., am, are, is, was, were).

Note that some words can function as either a noun or a verb (e.g., love, hope, sin). In those cases, you have to use the context to tell if they are acting as a noun or a verb in the sentence.

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Additional translations of the Bible – Will give you more complete or sometimes alternate perspectives on what the original text said.
- Exhaustive concordance – Helpful so you can look up other instances in the Bible where a particular word in your passage is used so you can gain a better understanding of its possible connotations.
- Bible dictionary – Helpful to define words in your passage from a biblical perspective. You may also use a regular dictionary.
- Expository dictionary – Very helpful to uncover the word or words in the original language that are translated into the word you are studying, and their definitions, common usage, and other instances where they are used in the Bible.
- Topical Bible – Will help you find other passages that relate to the same topic your passage is about.

**Possible starting places:**

- 2 Timothy 2:15
- Hebrews 11:1
- Deuteronomy 31:6
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- 2 Chronicles 7:13-14
- Romans 5:20-21
- Romans 12:1-2

**Micro Bible study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Choose the sentence you are going to study. It may be one verse or up to a few verses, but make sure you study a complete sentence. Answer the first two items on the worksheet.
2. Read the sentence ten times. If you have additional translations, include those.
3. Write down each word of the sentence in a column in the worksheet below.
4. Draw one line under each noun and two lines under each verb.
5. Write down a brief definition of every noun next to it.
6. Using your concordance, find, record, and read two to four other passages with each of the nouns and verbs in them and note any similar or different usages in those passages.
7. On the next worksheet item, write out the sentence again and mark the nouns and verbs again.
8. Find the main verb in the sentence. (Note: A complex sentence can have more than one main verb in parallel.) Draw a box around the main verb. That is the most important word in the sentence and determines the primary meaning.
9. Find the subject in the sentence. (It will be a noun.) Circle it. Identifying the main verb and subject tells you the core statement being made. The rest of the words modify that statement.
10. Incorporate what you discovered in your word-by-word study in steps 4-6 with your brief syntactical analysis in steps 7-9 to write the sentence out in your own words. Then summarize the sentence in as few words as possible.
11. Ask God to help you apply the passage. Finish completing the rest of the worksheet.

**Micro Bible study worksheet:**

What passage are you studying?	
What drove you to select this passage?	
Write down the each word of the passage in the left. Mark the nouns and verbs as instructed and add your study notes to the right of each word.	
Words:	Study notes:

Write out the passage here, marking the words as instructed.
Rewrite the sentence in your own words.
Summarize the sentence.
How could this passage apply to someone's life?
What will you start or stop doing that will help you build these practical lessons into your own life?



### **The Sectional Bible Study Method – Moderate**

This verse-by-verse Bible study method builds on the previous method of expository Bible study to treat larger sections of the Bible. The sectional Bible study method is done by selecting a section of the Bible, ranging from a paragraph up to a chapter in the Bible and looking carefully at how the sentences work together to express a complete thought or point. You will use your alternate translations and topical Bible to gain a better understanding of what the author was saying. The final step in this method is to discern how to apply the full meaning of the passage to your life. This Bible study method is specifically applicable to discourses found in the Bible, including those by Moses, David, Solomon, the prophets, Jesus, and the writers of the Epistles.

The sectional Bible study method will help you piece together the individual sentences in the Bible into complete statements of truth. Those who teach and preach will find incredible value using this Bible study method for lesson and sermon preparation. This method can be combined with the previous and next methods to gain understanding and insight into entire books of the Bible.

#### **Hints:**

- Pick passages that are either very meaningful to you or that you are having a difficult time understanding or applying. If you plan to use this method in concert with the previous and next methods to build a study on an entire book, keep that in mind when you choose your section.
- In addition to references to nouns and verbs explained in the hints section of the previous method, the instructions below mention the term “direct object.” A direct object is a noun that receives the action of a verb. (E.g., in the sentence, “The boy kicked the football,” the word “football” is the direct object because it receives the action. It is what was kicked.)

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Additional translations of the Bible – Will give you more complete or sometimes alternate perspectives on what the original text said.
- Topical Bible – Will help you find other passages that relate to the same topic your passage is about.

#### **Possible starting places:**

- Matthew 5:10-16
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Matthew 7:1-5
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Isaiah 58:1-12
- Malachi 3:7-12
- Luke 6:27-38
- Romans 3:21-30
- Romans 5:1-11
- Romans 8:26-30
- Romans 14
- 1 Corinthians 13
- Ephesians 5:21-33

**Sectional Bible study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Choose the section you are going to study. It should be at least one paragraph and no more than an entire chapter. Answer the first two items on the worksheet.
2. Read the passage five times. If you have additional translations, include those. Answer the next three questions on the worksheet.
3. Using your topical Bible, look up other passages on the same topic. Answer the next two questions on the worksheet.
4. On the worksheet, make a table with the verse references that make up each sentence listed in the left column. In the center column, write just the subject, main verb, and direct object (if there is one). Write a summary of each sentence in the right column. (This can come directly from your micro study of the sentences if you are doing them.)
5. Read the summaries and then combine all of them into a passage summary.
6. Ask God to help you apply the passage. Finish completing the rest of the worksheet.

**Sectional Bible study worksheet:**

What passage are you studying?
What drove you to select this passage?
Is there anything that is hard for you to understand?
Are there any words that are repeated often?
What is the main topic of the passage?
How does this passage compare with other passages on the same topic?
How is it different from the other passages?

Create a table of each sentence that makes up the passage and a summary of each sentence. (To make the study more advanced and thoughtful, add a third column and record why each sentence is important or what role it plays in the overall scope of the passage.)

Verse references for each sentence:	Subject, main verb, and direct object:	Summary:	Purpose: (optional)

Summarize the passage as concisely as possible.

What does this passage mean to me?

What will you start or stop doing that will help you build these practical lessons into your own life?

### **The Macro Bible Study Method – Moderate**

This book-focused Bible study method builds on the previous methods of expository Bible study to treat an entire book of the Bible. The macro Bible study method results in an overall understanding of a book's message. Reading the book at one setting will help you see the main purpose and theme of the book, and a background study will help you determine the author, audience, setting, all of which will help you discern how to apply the message of the book to your life. This Bible study method is applicable to every book in the Bible, but is especially practical for shorter books.

The macro Bible study method will help you better understand the book's contribution to the Bible as a whole, and will give you additional information to help you properly interpret verses within the book. This method can be combined with the previous and next methods to gain understanding and insight into entire books of the Bible, or it can be done as a standalone study.

#### **Hints:**

- Start with shorter books before attempting this method on longer ones.

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Additional translations of the Bible – Will give you more complete or sometimes alternate perspectives on what the original text said.
- Bible dictionary – To gather background information about the author, audience, and setting of the book.

#### **Suggested books to study:**

- Ephesians
- 1 John
- 2 Timothy
- James
- Hebrews
- Romans

**Macro Bible study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Choose the book you are going to study. Answer the first two items on the worksheet.
2. Read the book start to finish three times without stopping. If you have additional translations, include those. Answer the next ten questions on the worksheet.
3. Using your Bible dictionary, read about the book, author, and recipients.
4. Read through the book two more times, looking for additional insights you may have missed.
5. Fill out the book summary in the worksheet.
6. Ask God to help you apply the message of the book. Finish completing the rest of the worksheet.

**Macro Bible study worksheet:**

What book are you studying?
What drove you to select this book?
Is there anything that is hard for you to understand?
What is the main topic of the book?
Are there any other themes?
Is the author explicitly revealed within the book? If so, who was it?
Does the author explicitly state who the audience is? If so, who was it?
Does the author explicitly state the purpose of writing? If so, where, and what was it?
What issues does the author appear to be trying to address?
Are there similarities between this book and any others?
Are there differences?
Summarize the book as concisely as possible.

After consulting your Bible dictionary, reading through the book again, and updating your initial responses, fill in the following book overview:
Name of the book:
Author:
Date of writing:
Audience:
Purpose:
Theme:
Summary:
Now that you have discovered the background, purpose, and central theme of the book, can you identify verses in this book that have been incorrectly interpreted, taken out of context, or misunderstood?
What did you learn in this study that you can build into your own life?

## **Topical Bible Study Methods**

In addition to the expository methods described above, there are three other Bible study methods that you should consider: biographical study, word study, and theological concept study. Where the expository studies focus on single passages or books of the Bible, topical studies extend across the entire Bible to study a specific person, word, or concept everywhere it appears. Where expository studies are able to expose the message of a specific passage or book, topical studies reveal the complete message of the Bible on a matter. Topical studies are valuable methods to show the character or impact of a particular Bible character, the full meaning of an individual biblical word, and the complete revelation on a specific theological issue.

### **The Biographical Bible Study Method – Simple**

The first topical Bible study method we will discuss focuses on people in the Bible. There are over 3,000 individuals mentioned in the Bible, some at great length, many just in passing. Certainly a few hundred are mentioned in sufficient detail to gain insight into their lives and learn from their successes and failures. Doing a biographical study on a Bible character involves first finding all of the places where the individual's life is narrated, as well as other references later in history. After spending time reading and re-reading the relevant passages, you will be able to look closely at the person's life to extract positive and negative character qualities, determine what contributed to and held them back from success or failure, and to see where they fit in to God's redemptive plan. This Bible study method is especially useful for parts of the Bible that contain narrative, like much of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Acts, though specific individuals are mentioned everywhere in the Bible.

Biographical studies will help you appreciate each person found in the Bible more, and will help you see how positive and negative character can come out in a person's life and real, tangible ways it can determine a person's destiny.

#### **Hints:**

- At least for your first few biographical studies, pick someone in the Bible who is neither a major figure nor mentioned just once or twice. Major figures, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Paul, would take years or even a lifetime for a thorough study.
- Be careful not to mix up different individuals who have the same name.
- Be aware that some key individuals in the Bible are called by more than one name, such as Jacob (later called Israel), Peter (also called Simon, Simeon, and Cephas), and Daniel (called also by his Babylonian name Belteshazzar).

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Exhaustive concordance – So you can find all of the places in the Bible where the individual's name appears. If you do not have one, you can get started with the concordance in the back of your Bible, your personal study notes, or your familiarity with the Bible.
- Bible dictionary – Helpful to distinguish among multiple people having the same name, find other names the person was known by, and get additional background information about the person's culture.

#### **Possible starting places:**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruth</li> <li>• Stephen</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martha</li> <li>• Barnabas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Esther</li> <li>• Saul</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

**Biographical Bible study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Using your exhaustive concordance, concordance in the back of your Bible, personal study notes, or your recollection of where they appear in the Bible, write down all of the passages that narrate or refer to this person's life. Fill in the first three worksheet items below.
2. Read the passages.
3. Use your Bible dictionary to gain additional information about the individual, focusing especially on the culture and setting where they live.
4. Read the passages three or four more times, taking time to picture in your mind the story of this person's life.
5. Complete the rest of the worksheet below, noting the Bible reference for each answer.

**Biographical worksheet:**

Who are you studying?
What passages of the Bible are you using for your study?
Why did you select this person to study?
Draw a timeline of this person's life, including their birth, marriage, death, and key events. Also note where the events took place.
Who were this individual's ancestors?
Who were this individual's descendants?
What outstanding character qualities did this individual have?
What were the results of this individual having these character qualities?
What character qualities did this individual lack?
What were the results of this individual lacking these character qualities?



Is there one or more biblical truth illustrated in their life?
Before you studied this person, what would you have said they are most remembered for?
After studying them, did you discover there is something else they should be known for?
What was this person's biggest success?
What prepared them for that success?
What was this person's biggest failure?
What was the root cause of their failure?
Why was it important that they lived?
In one sentence or less, sum up this person's life.
Do you see any similarities between yourself and this person?
In what ways would you like to be more or less like this person?
What will you start or stop doing that will help you build these practical lessons into your own life?

### **The Word Study Bible Study Method – Moderate**

The next topical Bible study method we will discuss focuses on specific words in the Bible. There are over 6,000 different words used in the average Bible translation, and over 11,000 in the original text. A biblical word study involves a number of steps: locating all of the places a word is used in the Bible; defining the word, including finding what word or words in the original language from which the word is translated; and then using study resources and context gained by a thorough reading of the texts to better understand the accurate and complete meaning of the word in order to can gain a clearer interpretation of the passages in which the word is found. This Bible study method is especially useful for parts of the Bible that contain theological discussions, that describe relationships and interactions among people and between them and God, and that define and illustrate character qualities.

A Bible word study can help you recover meaning that may have been lost when the original text was translated into the often less precise or expressive modern languages. Every word in the Bible is important and specifically chosen by God (2 Tim. 3:16) to convey His message to us. Every word in the Bible has meaning and connotation that, if we study it thoughtfully, can more fully inform us about God, His ways, and His will.

#### **Hints:**

- Additional reference resources are more important for this Bible study method, as they can help you get to the original language behind the word. A thorough word study must include an in-depth look at the words used in the original language.

#### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Exhaustive concordance – So you can find all of the places in the Bible where the word appears. If you do not have one, you can get started with the concordance in the back of your Bible, your personal study notes, or your familiarity with the Bible.
- Bible dictionary – Helpful to define the word in the context of the Bible, and get additional background information about the word's usage in Bible times. You may also use a regular dictionary.
- Expository dictionary – Very helpful to uncover the word or words in the original language that are translated into the word you are studying, and their definitions, common usage, and other instances where they are used in the Bible.

#### **Possible starting places:**

- Meekness
- Love
- Mercy
- Grace
- Joy
- Trial / temptation
- Sin
- Faith

**Word study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Using your exhaustive concordance, concordance in the back of your Bible, personal study notes, or your recollection of where they appear in the Bible, find all of the passages where the word appears. Fill in the first four worksheet items below.
2. Read the passages.
3. Use your Bible dictionary to help you define the word. Fill in the definition below.
4. Use your expository dictionary (and Hebrew or Greek lexicon if you have one) to find and define the original word or words that are translated into the word you are studying. Note also other words that are similar or related. Fill in the next six worksheet items.
5. Read the primary passages three or four more times, paying special attention to consistencies and differences among how the word is used.
6. Complete the next item on the worksheet below, noting the Bible reference for each answer.
7. Finish the study by answering the final two practical application questions in the worksheet.

**Word study worksheet:**

What word are you studying?
What primary verses of the Bible are you using for your study?
How many times does this word appear in the Bible?
Does it appear more often in some parts of the Bible than others?
Define the word.
From what word or words in the original language is this word translated?
Define the original word or words.
Are there related words that also appear in the Bible?
What is the primary use or meaning of the word?
Are there other secondary meanings?
List other ways the word was used during the time when the Bible was written.
Is there more information in the context of your primary study verses that will help you better clarify the meaning of the word, such as: contrast with other words, illustrations or analogies, or other clues?
What have you discovered in this study?
What will you start or stop doing as a result of what you have learned?

## **The Theological Study Bible Study Method – Advanced**

The next topical Bible study method we will discuss focuses on specific theological concepts in the Bible. This method is similar to the word study method above, but deals with themes, topics, and ideas that may not be tied to a specific biblical word. A common example is the idea of the Trinity, which is a Biblical concept but is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible. A theological study involves first listing biblical words often used when discussing the concept, finding all of the places a concept is mentioned or implied in the Bible, comparing and categorizing the passages where the concept is found, summarizing the groups of related passages, and then producing a complete, coherent synopsis of the Bible's revelation of the topic. This Bible study method is relevant for all biblical texts, since the themes, topics, and ideas can be found at least implicitly everywhere in the Bible.

A Bible concept study can help you look at theological concepts and doctrines holistically, taking the entire Bible's revelation into account to develop a biblical theology.

### **Hints:**

- When you collect your passages for study under this method, make sure you consider their context so you can ensure that you properly understand how they fit within the idea you are studying.
- Be careful not to allow the list of passages to grow too broad in scope. Keep focused specifically on the topic you are studying.
- Realize that some topics you choose to study may have what appear to be opposing truths in the Bible. One of the more difficult but rewarding outcomes of this type of Bible study is the ability to reconcile apparently contradictory passages of the Bible.

### **Resources in addition to your Bible:**

- Topical Bible – Will give you a great starting list of passages to consider for your topical study.
- Exhaustive concordance – Helpful so that as you compile a list of words that are synonymous and related with your topic you can find all of the verses in the Bible that contain them.
- Bible dictionary – Helpful to define the topic in the context of the Bible, and get additional background information about understanding of the concept in Bible times. You may also use a regular dictionary.

### **Possible starting places:**

- The Trinity
- Redemption
- Salvation by grace
- Assurance of salvation
- Sovereignty of God
- Free will of man

**Theological Bible Study step-by-step instructions:**

1. Write down the topic you are studying in the worksheet below.
2. Think of words that are found in the Bible that relate to your topic in some way. Write those words down in the next item in the worksheet.
3. Using your topical Bible and exhaustive concordance, list passages where the concept and related words appear. Fill in the next three worksheet items below.
4. Read the passages.
5. Use your Bible dictionary to help you define the concept. Fill in the definition below.
6. Read the primary passages three or four more times, comparing and contrasting how the passages support or challenge the concept.
7. Sort the passages according to their position on the concept.
8. Complete the next four items on the worksheet.
9. Finish the study by answering the final three practical application questions in the worksheet.

**Theological study worksheet:**

What topic are you studying?
List related words that might be found in the Bible.
What primary passages of the Bible are you using for your study?
How often does this concept appear in the Bible?
Does it appear more often in some parts of the Bible than others?
Define the topic.
What are the different categories the passages you found fall into?
Digest each group of passages into a summary statement.
Are there apparent conflicts between the groups of passages?
Can you reconcile the different groups of passages further into a single summary that combines the relevant truth in all of the passages?
What doctrinal or theological statement can you make based on the study of this topic?
List some practical ways that this doctrine or theology should be applied to a Christian's life and to a church's function.
What will you start or stop doing as a result of what you have learned?

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:**

1. In what area of your Christian life are you struggling most right now?

Find a verse that deals with that issue directly and use the meditation Bible study method to discover God's perspective on the matter and the resources He offers to help you overcome.

Write down what you discover and how you are going to apply it to your life.

2. What is your favorite verse of the Bible?

Use the micro Bible study method to uncover new truths, insight, and application from this verse you are already very familiar with.

Write down what you discovered and how you are going to apply it to your life.

3. What is your favorite book of the Bible?

Study the book using the macro Bible study method to get a better overall understanding of it.

Write down what you discovered and how you are going to apply it to your life.

4. Besides Jesus, who is your favorite Bible character?

Use the biographical Bible study method to get a more complete picture of this person's life.

Write down what you discovered and how you are going to apply it to your life.

5. What topics do the people to whom you minister need to learn about the most?

Choose the most important one and use the theological study method to discover what the entire Bible has to say about the topic.

Write down what you discovered and how you can teach them what you learned.