

Conquering the Quiet Time
A Proven Battle Plan for Spending Quality Time
in the Word of God.

Dr. David Crowe

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- Dr. David Crowe, 2015

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Introduction – The Battle We All Fight

Of all the battles you will face as a Christian, reading the Bible consistently is one of the toughest battles that you will ever have to fight. Winning this battle is vital; for it is the one that will help you to win every other battle in your life. God's Word tells us that it is living and active, and that it can pierce the toughest armor, and that it is the only offensive weapon we have in the armor of God. We would do well to commit ourselves to understanding the Bible, the book of all books.

I have written this short book to provide helpful advice for any Christian who honestly wants to grow in their love of the Word of God. While a book of this nature can easily veer into dozens of side paths and discussions, I have worked hard to keep its pages short, its concepts simple, and its advice helpful for both new and mature Christians.

Let's press onward together towards victory and may God bless the reading of His word!

- Dr. David Crowe

Part I – Conquering the Quiet Time

Chapter 1 - Tips for Picking a Translation

The English Bibles we read today have been translated from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, with certain portions written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. According to the American Bible Society, there are about 900 translations of the Bible in the English language.¹ A basic understanding of the theories behind the translations can be helpful in choosing one today.

Word-for-Word Translations

One of the main methods used in the translation of the Bible is the word-for-word approach. This approach attempts to take the original Greek or Hebrew word of the Biblical manuscript and translate that one word to its closest English equivalent. The word-for-word translations provide modern readers with precise translations that are useful for deep study and discussion. Popular modern translations that have used this method include the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the English Standard Version (ESV), and the New King James Version (NKJV).

Tip - In my personal research, I have found the New American Standard Bible (NASB) to be the strongest word-for-word translation from the original languages. The drawback of this translation is that its readability is wooden, making it a difficult translation to use for public reading or preaching. It is an excellent translation for a serious, detailed study of scripture.

Many word-for-word translations will have italicized words within their sentences. Italicized words are words that are slightly bent or slanted (*like this*). These italicized words indicate that they were not translated from the original languages, but have been added to the verse by the translation team to ease the reading of the passage in English. Translators use great care with these words so that the original meaning of the verse is not affected.

Tip - What about the King James Version?

Published in 1611, it is amazing how many people still read from the King James Version of the Bible. Having been raised on the King James Version until my college years, I still find myself often using this translation during my study of the Bible. While many modern readers may struggle with the vocabulary of this translation, The King James Version is still an excellent word-for-word translation of the Bible. If you love and have been raised on this translation, I encourage you to continue to use the KJV during your study of the Bible. For greater understanding of difficult passages, it would benefit you to select one good thought-for-thought translation to supplement your study of the KJV.

Thought-for-Thought Translations

Another primary method for the translation of the Bible is the thought-for-thought approach. This method attempts to take the original Greek or Hebrew sentence or thought, and translate that

¹ This fact was gathered from the information available on their website at <http://news.americanbible.org/article/number-of-english-translations-of-the-bible>

sentence or thought into its closest English equivalent. While they are not as precise as the word-for-word-translations, they do help convey the meaning of the original languages in a way that is often more understandable. Popular modern translations that have used this approach to great success include the New International Version (NIV) and the New Living Translation (NLT).

Dynamic Equivalent

There is one modern translation of the Bible that has made the attempt to employ both primary methods in their translation – the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). The Holman Christian Standard Bible employed a translation team and a group of editors who decided to use both a word-for-word approach and a thought-for-thought approach. Editors of this translation made decisions for each verse as to which approach would best convey the meaning of the original to the reader.

Paraphrases

Paraphrased versions of the Bible are attempts to convey the meaning of the passage in a highly contemporary way that bypasses translating from the original Greek and Hebrew. This means that the paraphrased version is not actually a translation from the original Greek or Hebrew, but is usually a rephrasing from another English translation.

The paraphrase process takes us two complete steps away from the original languages – one step from the Greek and Hebrew into English, and another step from an English translation into the paraphrase. For example, the King James Version is a translation from the original languages – taking us one step away from the original languages into the English language. The writer of The Living Bible, which is a popular paraphrased version of the Bible, wrote out his version by rewriting every verse of the King James Version. The author, who was not a scholar and had no knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, read the verse from the King James Version and then rewrote a modern paraphrased verse for the The Living Bible.

While Paraphrased Bibles can be fun and often insightful for seeing a passage in a new light, because of their distance from the Greek and Hebrew, they should not be trusted for serious study of the Bible. Popular paraphrase versions of the Bible include The Message (MSG) and The Living Bible (TLB).

Tip - Due to the popularity of The Living Bible, a full scholarly translation was completed in the 90's that was both accurate to the original languages and maintained the ease and readability of the paraphrase. This new translation is called the New Living Translation (NLT).

Conclusion

My advice would be to pick one solid translation from both sides of the translation theories. Purchase one Bible that has used a word-for-word approach, and another that has used a thought-for-thought approach. My personal favorites are the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New Living Translation (NLT). I have found the English Standard Version (ESV) to be highly readable and accurate in its translation, without watering down any of the difficulties of the original Greek and Hebrew. The New Living Translation (NLT) also provides me with an accurate and enjoyable thought-for-thought translation that, when used together with the ESV helps me to better understand the meaning of a passage.

If you had to pick only one translation, the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) would be an excellent translation choice. While some have been resistant to their joint approach to translation, my research has found the translation to be both accurate and readable.

My personal suggestions for translations include:

Word for word: ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, HCSB.

Thought for Thought: NLT, NIV(1984), HCSB.

Chapter 2 – Essential Tools for Studying the Bible

Essential Tool #1 – Choose a Good Study Bible

A study Bible is a Bible that includes notes from Biblical scholars on the same page as the Bible text. A study Bible is like having access to a Bible scholar as you read through the Bible. A quick glance at the notes in a good study Bible will provide background information, commentary, maps, cultural information, contextual information, and definitions of difficult words. I want to encourage you to invest in a good study Bible. While almost all study Bibles are helpful, I have found the following ones to provide the greatest level of help:

The ESV Study Bible

The ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010.

Clocking in at more than 20,000 notes, the ESV Study Bible is one of the best well-rounded study-bibles on the market. This Study Bible provides full-page illustrations, color maps throughout the text (more than 200), exhaustive book introductions, and enough information to fill 20 volumes.

The following are some strengths of each Study Bible:

Strengths:

1. There is a section in the back notes called “The History of Salvation in the OT” that shows how something from every chapter of the Old Testament points us to Jesus Christ. This section alone is worth the price of the book.
2. The full-page illustrations are jaw dropping!
3. Every Psalm has a detailed paragraph introduction in the notes that helps to provide context and background information on that psalm.
4. The book introductions are very thorough and helpful.
5. Wayne Grudem served as the editor for this Bible, and he is one of the top theologians in the world.

The MacArthur Study Bible

MacArthur, John. The MacArthur Study Bible, English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010.

The MacArthur Study Bible contains more than 25,000 personal notes from Dr. John MacArthur. Dr. MacArthur is a clear Bible teacher who has faithfully preached the Word of God for more than 45 years. I have always found his notes to be informative, concise, and readable.

Strengths:

1. Each Bible book is supported by a healthy introduction that sheds light on that book’s Author, Context, and Theme.
2. The notes are thorough, addressing most of the questions you might ask during a reading of the Biblical text.

3. MacArthur's preaching gift is his ability to take tough doctrines and make them understandable for the masses. This Study Bible retains that ability.
4. The notes are more accessible to a wider audience than the ESV Study Bible, making this Bible a great pick for high school students and up.

The Life Application Study Bible

Life Application Study Bible: New International Version. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1997.

The Life Application Study Bible contains more than 10,000 notes to help you not only understand the text but to also apply it to your life. This study Bible has repeatedly sold more copies than any other Study Bible on the market, and for good reason: its notes are highly readable and it actually delivers on helping the reader to apply God's Word.

Strengths:

1. Available in many different translations of the Bible.
2. The application notes are truly helpful for Christian living.
3. There are more than 100 profiles of Bible figures that provide helpful information and overviews to their lives.
4. The readability of the notes of this Study Bible make it recommendable for middle school students and older.

Essential Tool # 2 – Purchase a Bible Dictionary

A good Bible dictionary will help to define any of the difficult words, people, and cities mentioned in the Bible. While I do not have experience with every Bible dictionary, I can recommend from experience the following Bible dictionaries:

The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (B&H Books)

Brand, Chad, Charles Draper, and Archie England. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2003.

Because of its thorough treatment of subjects and its many helpful tools, I have found the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary to be one of the most helpful Bible dictionaries on the market. It includes more than 700 color photos and maps, a helpful guide for pronouncing difficult words, and dozens of tools to help you better understand the Bible. Special note - if you teach Sunday School, this is the version for you.

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Thomas Nelson)

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995.

This excellent Bible dictionary contains more than 7,000 well-researched entries and more than 500 full-color photos and maps.

The New Bible Dictionary (InterVarsity Press)

Wood, D. R. W., and I. Howard. Marshall. New Bible Dictionary. Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1996.

This Bible dictionary contains more than 2000 helpful entries that provide a detailed explanation of each term.

For more helpful tools to use in your study of the Bible, be sure to check out Appendix 2 and 3 in the back of this book.

Essential Tool # 3 – Select a System to Keep Notes

A good study of the Bible will naturally result in a strong desire to write and keep notes. For many, this involves using electronic note systems like Evernote or Microsoft's OneNote system. For others, a simple pen and notepad or journal will suffice. In addition to these approaches, there are many Journaling Bibles on the market that provide ample space in the margins to write notes.

Tip – I used to use a pen and a spiral notebook to maintain my study notes. The problem I had with this system is that I would eventually misplace and lose the notebook. Today, I use the Logos Bible Software program on my computer to keep all the research notes that I write for my sermons. For my devotional notes, I have used the online resources available at www.esvbible.org. Whatever note system you choose, you must seek out a simple way to retain the notes you make for future reference.

Chapter 3 - Seeing the Big Picture of the Bible

One day, my sons brought a puzzle out of storage that did not have the box top. An old 1000 piece puzzle had been contained in a Ziploc bag, and the boys wanted to put it all together. We spilled them out on the table and tried our best to make sense of the whole mess. After a short time of frustration, I was able to locate the company information from a few pieces and look the puzzle up online. Within seconds, I located the image that contained the same colors and markings as the pieces before us and we were ready for the work ahead.

In a similar way, the Bible can be quite a puzzle for most Christians to understand. I have found it personally helpful to see the one big picture story of the Bible. For me, it has become the boxtop to unlocking the puzzle of the Bible.

While the Bible spans 66 books and contains hundreds of stories, there really is one major story that ties it all together: God's love in reaching down to sinners through Jesus Christ. The following two tools will attempt to provide you with both a written overview of the entire Bible, and also a one-page visual overview.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN 13 POINTS:

Old Testament:

Creation - The story begins with God's creation of the entire universe, our earth, and the human race (Genesis 1-2).

Curse - In rebellion, Adam and Eve choose to disobey God, resulting in the curse of sin. Sin results in separation from God and ultimately death. This curse of sin has come upon all people and all creation (Genesis 3).

Covenant - God begins a covenant promise with Abraham, telling him that he will father a nation that will bless all the nations on earth (Genesis 12:1-3). We see God beginning to unfold His plan to reach all of the nations on earth through a messiah who will be a direct descendant of Abraham (Matthew 1).

Calling Out – Abraham's grandson Jacob has a son named Joseph. Joseph is taken to Egypt where he eventually becomes the second in command and saves his 11 brothers and father from famine. Jacobs's 12 sons grow and prosper in Egypt and after 400 years, their descendants become slaves to the Egyptians. God calls his children out of Egypt through His servant Moses.

Conquest – After the death of Moses, God calls Joshua to help take the Israelites into the promised land. The Israelites drive out the inhabitants of the land, obeying God's direct command, and they struggle with the sins and idolatry of the pagan nations around them. After Joshua dies, God sends judges to help deliver the Israelites out of bondage to the different Canaanite tribes.

Kingdom – After the period of Judges, the people of Israel begin to demand a king. The prophet Samuel anoints Saul as the first king, and he ends up having no heart for God. David becomes the second king, and he has a full heart for God. During David's reign, God establishes a covenant with

David telling him that the Messiah will come from his family line. David's son Solomon becomes the third king, and through his devotion to foreign wives he becomes half-hearted for God.

Kingdom Divided – Solomon has a son named Rehoboam whose poor leadership causes the Kingdom to split. Ten tribes in the north split off and become known as Israel. Two tribes in the south, Benjamin and Judah, remain loyal to Rehoboam and become known as Judah. Of the 39 kings that will eventually rule in Israel and Judah during this period, only 8 of the kings in Judah have a heart for God.

Carried Away (or Captivity) – Assyria comes to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and scatters the Israelites among the nations. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom become lost to history and are never seen or heard from again. Babylon comes to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC and carries the people away into exile.

Come Home – After a period of 70 years in Babylon, the Persian king Cyrus conquers the Babylonians and decrees that the Jews can return home. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the Jews return to Jerusalem. They recommit to obey the laws of God and rebuild Jerusalem's wall and temple.

New Testament:

Christ - About four hundred years after the return from Babylonian exile, God sends his Son, Jesus, into the world to save his people from their sins. This fulfills the covenant promises that were given to Abraham and to King David.

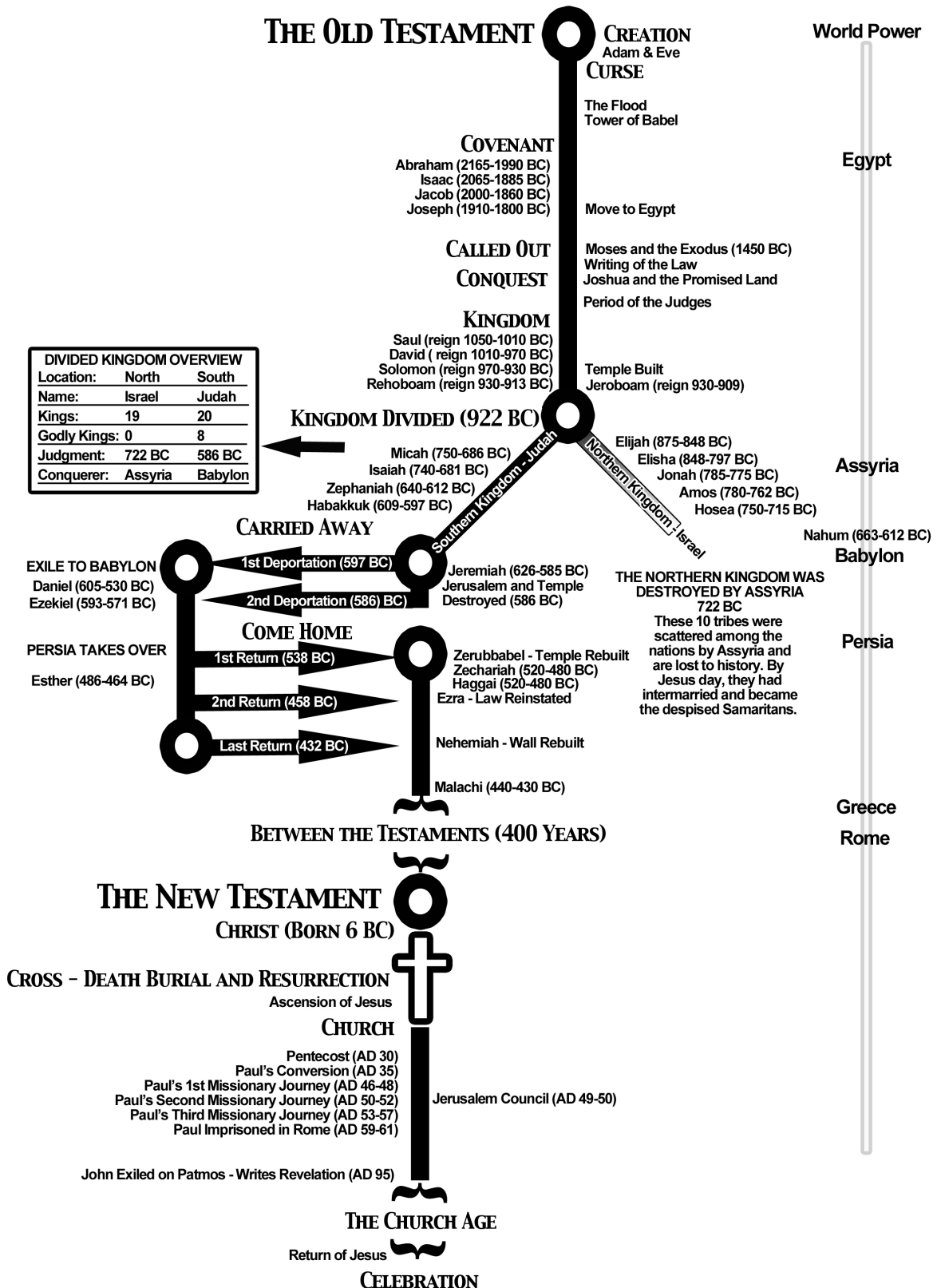
Cross - Jesus is crucified on a Roman cross for the sins of the world, buried, and rises from the dead after three days. After 40 days with the disciples He ascends into heaven and promises to return again later.

Church – Those who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord become part of His church. The church is to actively make disciples throughout the world by proclaiming the Gospel to everyone on earth. The people of God will be made up of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation on the earth.

Celebration – When Christ returns, He will accomplish the final victory over evil and He will judge everyone. People who have received Jesus will live forever with him in a new heaven and a new earth. Those who have rejected Jesus will suffer eternal torment in hell.²

² Many of the titles of this overview (10 out of 13) came from the excellent book, *Telling God's Story* by author's Preben Vang and Terry G. Carter. B&H Publishing, 2006. Their overview was adapted from an outline developed by J. Scott Duvall. The visual outline printed in this chapter was adapted from two other visual outlines: Graeme Goldsworthy's "Outline of Biblical History," from his excellent book, *According to Plan* (Intervarsity Press 2002), and Mark Berry's "Bible Timeline" (available from www.visualunit.me, 2009).

THE VISUAL OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE



Chapter 4 - Getting into the Text

We now come to the most difficult part of our journey together – actually diving into the Word of God. Before you begin to read the Bible, always start with a brief prayer and ask God to help you to understand His Word. Pray that your desire to read the Bible will grow. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read from the scriptures.

Seeking to provide an easy path into the Bible, I have designed a simple acronym to help you into the text. The acronym is simply called, “R.E.A.D.” It stands for Read, Examine, Apply, and Digest.

R – Read the Text

Choose a passage to study, hopefully no more than a few verses of scripture, and read the text repeatedly. Read it slowly and try to pause and study each individual word. In the words of the great Puritan writers, read the text until you have read it. You might need to read it three times, ten times, or fifty times, but the rule is to read it until you have a fairly good grasp on what the text is trying to say. You might find that reading the passage out loud will help you to take in what your eyes are seeing. Try your best to visualize the passage in your mind as you read it over and over. If you were to produce a film on this passage, what would the scene from this passage look like? What actors would you choose to play the roles and what would they do in the scene? Mark out any words or phrases that you know will require further study, and save them for the “Examine” level.

E – Examine the Text

Ask the major questions that must be asked to better understand the passage. Study the background of the book in which the passage appears. Questions such as: Who wrote the book? When was it written? Why was this book written? Who was the original audience of this book? Who was the author writing to? What situation was the author addressing? What personalities are in the passage? In what geographical location was the passage written? Questions such as these will better help you to understand the passage. Read the headings over the paragraphs and passages that precede the passage as well as the chapter headings that follow the passage. Gain a feeling for the context of the passage by reading the passages before and after the selected passage. Take any words, names, or places that you do not understand and consult your Bible Dictionary, maps, and even online search engines like Google to better learn the details of your passage.

A – Apply the Text

Answer the question of how to apply this passage to your life. What command is there to obey? Whose example is there to follow or avoid? How can this passage apply to our context today? What attitude does God want you to have as a result of this passage? What promise is in this passage that God wants you to claim? What sin is being addressed in this passage?

D – Digest the Text

Digesting the text will require you to know a few terms that will better help you to take the Word of God deeper into your life. The following terms are provided with brief definitions and examples to assist your study:

Meditation

When most people hear the word meditation they imagine someone “clearing their mind” and sitting in some strange position chanting “ommmmm.” Christian Meditation has nothing to do with clearing your mind. Instead, Christian Meditation involves filling your mind with scripture. As you read your passage, is there anything in the passage that you need to meditate on? If so, think about the words of the passage and chew on them in your mind.

Memorization

To memorize a passage is simply to commit the words of the passage to memory. You will want to try your best to remember the verse’s reference and to be able to quote it word-for-word from memory.

Illumination

When you read a passage, certain phrases and parts of the passage will jump off the page and will almost appear to be highlighted, yet without any highlighter markings in your Bible. These verses can surprise you with how relevant they are to a situation you are currently going through, and it is a healthy process by which the Holy Spirit speaks to you from the Word of God. As the Holy Spirit illumines parts of the passage to you, you will need to underline or highlight words or verses. You might also want to make small notes near the passage so that you can find and use the passage later.

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase a passage is to rewrite it in a way that helps you to better take in the passage. I want to take care here that I am not encouraging rewriting the Bible to remove from a passage something you may not like, or to rewrite it in a way that would change its original intended meaning – that is both dangerous and heretical. I mean by this that you might personalize the passage or rephrase it in a way that you can better absorb it. For example – John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son...” could be paraphrased to say, “For God so loved Dave that He gave his only son Jesus...”

Praying

Praying through scripture involves taking what you have read in the Bible as a springboard into prayer. Praying through scripture takes great effort at first, and becomes much easier over time. Did the passage present a sin that you need to confess in prayer? Did the passage reveal a promise you can thank God for? Was there a command that you need to pray for the grace to obey? Try your best to take what you are reading and turn it into a prayer.

Drawing

Drawing involves making a small sketch in the margins of your Bible that will help you to find the verse later. Different than highlighting, drawing stands out in great contrast as you flip through the pages of your Bible and helps you to quickly locate passages. You do not have to be a good artist to sketch something that will assist you in knowing what the passage is about. For example, I draw a money symbol (\$) in my Bible next to passages that talk about money. I have invented a system of sketches that help me to quickly locate passages about fear, laziness, power, love, discipline, pride, and the tongue.

Chapter 5 - How to Interpret the Bible: General Guidelines

There is much confusion today about the correct way to interpret the Bible. With many different denominations, popular preachers, cult groups, and publications claiming superiority in their interpretation of the Bible, how are we to discern between truth and error? Thankfully, there are many helpful guidelines that have assisted millions of Christians in the honest pursuit of understanding the Bible. In this chapter, I would like to provide a concise overview of the main rules used in the interpretation of scripture.

Start with a Proper Understanding of the Word of God

It is wise to approach the Bible by seeing it exactly as it claims to be, the very word of God. Someone who sees the Bible as being written by God through human authors is going to reach a very different interpretation than the one who sees the Bible as a creation of greedy, power-hungry religious leaders. Peter addresses this in 2 Peter 1:20-21, where he writes, “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (ESV).”

Since the Bible came from God, it is fully inspired, inerrant (without error), infallible (incapable of erring), and without any contradiction. It is fully trustworthy and sufficient to guide us in the obedience of God’s will.

Seek to Understand the Words

Much understanding can come from a simple study of the words in a passage. Looking the words up in a Bible Dictionary or Concordance can help answer many of the questions that can come from reading a passage of scripture. Taking into account what has been written elsewhere in this book, seek to use every tool available to better understand the words of scripture.

Seek to Use Scripture to Interpret Scripture

Understanding the New Testament comes from reading through the Old Testament. Making sense of the Old Testament will come through reading the New Testament. For example, the event of the cross would make little sense apart from what has been written about sacrifice in the book of Leviticus. Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles makes more sense when you see him fulfilling the promise that Abraham’s descendants, through Jesus, would be a blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:3). I would encourage you to look at passages in a reference Bible, and spend time looking up all of the references listed to allow the Bible to interpret the Bible.

Seek to Understand the Historical Context

Do your research to study what was happening at the time the book was written. Seek out who wrote it, when it was written, whom he was writing to, and the historical situations that surround the writing of the book. Consult a Study Bible or a Bible Handbook for quick access to this information.

As you study any passage, be sure to read the passages before and after the passage. Look at the chapters leading up to the passage and the chapters that follow it. Do not be a butcher of the Bible – cutting out passages of scripture to suit your own needs. Seek to keep a passage well within the

context of the passages that surround it and let it say what it is intending to say.

Seek to Understand the Literary Style

I can remember, as a child, my excitement learning all of the different types of sports celebrated in America. Every sport had its own set of rules. I learned the rules of soccer, where I was never able to touch the ball with my hands unless I was a goalie. In basketball, I could not kick the ball with my feet. In football, I could not allow the ball to touch the ground or it would end the play.

The Bible presents us with many different types of literature. And, like sports, there are some different rules used in the interpretation of the different types of literature found in the Bible. Just as we would interpret a news magazine, like Newsweek, differently than we would a tabloid magazine, like The National Enquirer, the following tips can help you to better interpret the various literary types we find in the Bible.

Narrative Literature

The most common form of literature found in the Bible is narrative literature. A narrative is a written account of an event or story that took place in history. The Bible is a historical book that records the happenings of God with His people.

Narrative Literature is found in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Haggai, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts.

1. Try to see the narrative story within the larger story of the Bible – of how God unfolded His plan to redeem fallen sinners through Jesus. Does the story you are reading play a small role in the history of salvation? Is there a character in the story that is in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1)?
2. While narratives can sometimes offer us excellent examples of moral conduct, the primary role of Biblical narrative is to highlight the power and glory of God in history. It is more often the case that the people in the narrative stories sin in horrible ways, and yet, God always remains faithful to His plan.
3. Be sure to keep Christ as the ultimate focus and hero of Biblical narrative.

The Law

The Law, found in the first five books of the Bible (Genesis-Deuteronomy), contains more than 600 commandments of God.

1. Scholars have traditionally classified the law into three categories. While it may be difficult to classify certain laws easily into one of these three categories, the following classifications are helpful:
 - a. **Moral Law** – These laws address moral behavior and ethics and include the 10 Commandments. Christians are expected to obey the moral law.
 - b. **Ceremonial Law** – These laws address the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the dietary laws. The New Testament gives us information that helps us to interpret

these laws today. For example, with the dietary laws, Jesus declared all foods clean in Mark 7:19. (See also Acts 10:9-16.) Hebrews 7-8, and 10:1-10 make clear that the sacrificial system and the laws concerning the priesthood have been fulfilled through the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Since Jesus fulfilled these laws through His life, death, and resurrection, Christians are not expected to follow these laws today.

- c. **Cultural Law** – These laws address the unique nature of the nation of Israel. The Cultural Laws address circumcision, Jewish festivals, uniqueness among the nations, inheritance and land regulations. Again, the New Testament gives light to many of these laws. Galatians 5:2-6 describes how circumcision is no longer required because of salvation by faith in Christ. Also, because the Biblical Israel, with its temple and theocracy, (government under God) no longer exists, these cultural laws are not binding on Christians.
2. Remember that Jesus summarized all 600-plus commands of the Law into two commands: first, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and, second, to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 12:28-34). As you read through the Law, try to figure out how each law relates to these two commands.
 3. Every single Law reveals to us something of the nature of God. Try to look behind each Law into what it teaches us about God's attributes. Some examples: You shall not murder = God is life. You shall not bear false witness = God is truth.
 4. Galatians 3:24-25 tells us how the Law is our tutor that leads us to Christ. Since the Law shows us our need for Jesus because we have all broken the law, it is helpful to share our common violations of the law in evangelism.
 5. As you read through the Law, thank Jesus that he fulfilled every command of the Law on our behalf. Also remember, Jesus did not abolish the Law, he fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17).
 6. Seek the underlying principle of a law as you seek its application for today. For example, when Deuteronomy 22:8 says to build a fence around your roof when you build a house, the underlying principal of this passage is to preserve the livelihood of yourself, your family, and your neighbors. A modern application of this passage would be to build a fence around your pool for the safety of all.
 7. Some of the strangest laws addressed how the nation of Israel was to be completely different from the other nations. One of the most confusing commands is found in Deuteronomy 14:21b, "You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." This command has baffled Christians for centuries and has often been used by non-believers as the punch line of many jokes. In the 1950's, an archeologist unearthed a tablet that described a pagan ritual of a baby goat being boiled in its mother's milk. Some scholars today believe that God was commanding the Israelites not to do what the pagan cultures that surrounded them were doing.

Poetry/Wisdom Literature

The Bible's Poetry is found in many books throughout the Old Testament, but especially in the

Wisdom Literature of Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and the Psalms.

1. Seek to read through the poetry of the Bible using a translation that clearly distinguishes the poetic language with broken paragraphs and lines of text, as opposed to solid paragraphs. Translations such as the HCSB, ESB, NLT, and NIV all present the poetic sections in this manner.
2. Remember that the Biblical writer of poetry was more concerned with evoking emotions and supporting large ideas than he was in using precise scientific language. Just like poetry today, sometimes poets will use figures of speech (like the sun rising) to describe certain attributes of God.
3. Seek to make the poetry of the Bible a consistent part of your study. Many Christians act as if the Christian life is always going to be happy and without pain. Yet, as we all will experience diverse emotions as we go through life, Biblical Poetry handles them with a hopeful outlook and a candid honesty.

Prophecy

Prophecy is the recorded declaration of a word from the Lord given through a prophet. A prophet was someone who would speak a message from God to the people.

Biblical Prophecy is most obviously found in the Major Prophet and Minor Prophet books of the Old Testament – the books of Isaiah through Malachi. Sections of prophecy are also found throughout the entire Bible from Genesis (3:15; 12:2-3; 27:39-40; 49:1-28) to Revelation. Jesus displayed prophetic preaching within the Gospels (See Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 13:28-35; 21).

1. You must seek to understand each prophet within his own historical context. Spend time researching the historical background and situation of each prophet – and pray for God to help you to hear the prophetic message and how it applies today.
2. The prophets are far more concerned about “forthtelling” a divine message from God than they are foretelling future events. They primarily preached to the people about where they had sinned and called them to repentance.
3. Study closely the information about Apocalyptic literature found below as you seek to better understand prophecy.

Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic literature is a metaphorical type of prophetic writing that focuses on the end times. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. For example, in the following sentence, “I had fallen through a trapdoor of fear,” - the trapdoor is not a literal trapdoor but serves as a metaphor for the sudden rush of fear.

Apocalyptic literature is found in the Biblical books of Daniel (7-12), Isaiah (24-27; 56-66), Ezekiel (38-39), Joel (2:28-3:21), Zechariah (1-6; 12-14), Malachi, and Revelation.

1. Study the large brushstrokes of the apocalyptic literature. Many Christians get into

trouble when they focus on trying to interpret the smallest details of apocalyptic literature. This type of literature is similar to impressionistic paintings, forcing us to step back and see the big picture.

2. Seek to interpret apocalyptic scripture as its original audience would have heard it and as the original author would have intended it to be heard. To interpret the passages in a way that the original audience would not have understood is dangerous.
3. The authors of apocalyptic scripture are concerned more about providing hope for the future than they are details about future events.
4. Seek to enjoy the metaphorical language of apocalyptic scripture just as a young child would enjoy hearing a fantasy tale of epic adventure. Yet always remember that the Bible is no fantasy, but provides exciting glimpses of what will truly come to pass.

Parables

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Found throughout the first three Gospels, the parables are short stories of Jesus that help us to better understand the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Seek to read and understand a parable as the crowd in Jesus' day would have heard and understood it. If you have any interpretation that they would not have understood, you are on dangerous ground.
2. Seek the main point that Jesus was trying to make. Try to look at the larger idea instead of attempting to interpret all of the small details. For example, in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, many people have struggled with what the oil in the lamps could mean (the Holy Spirit, salvation, good works, etc.). Jesus makes it clear in the final verse that the main idea is to stay alert for His return.

The Letters (or Epistles) of the New Testament

The Apostles wrote the letters of the New Testament to individuals or to churches for the sake of encouragement, instruction, or correction. The letters of the New Testament include all of the books except for the four Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

1. Study closely who wrote the letter, to whom it was written, and what major issues the letter addresses.
2. Try to determine what circumstances happened within the recipient group that would have led the Apostle to pen the letter. Usually there was a sin that needed correcting, doctrinal issues, or personality issues within the recipient church.
3. Read through the letter in its entirety in one sitting to grasp the big ideas of the book.
4. Seek the attitude of the author. Is he happy, concerned, or upset?
5. Trace out the major arguments and themes that are addressed in the letter.

Part II – Helpful Tools for the Battle

Chapter 6 – Getting Children and Students into the Bible.

Recommendations for Children -

The following children’s Bibles have not only been healthy for my children, they have also helped me to better understand the big story of the Bible. I believe if every Christian parent would buy these Bible’s and read them, we would all grow healthy in Biblical literacy. If you could only buy one book on from the following, I would recommend the Jesus Storybook Bible.

The Big Picture Story Bible

Helm, David R., and Gail Schoonmaker. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014. Print.

Written by David Helm, this story Bible provides an amazing overview of the Bible for kids as young as two years old. With full-page illustrations and an incredible overview of the whole Bible, this has been a favorite in the Crowe house. I can remember the kids requesting this book over the Seuss books we had on the shelf!

The Jesus Storybook Bible

Lloyd-Jones, Sally. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zonderkidz, 2007.

Written by Sally Lloyd-Jones, the Jesus Storybook Bible is a great next step after the Big Picture Story Bible. Kids will love how this Bible explains that Jesus is in every story of the Bible. The Jesus Storybook Bible does an excellent job highlighting where Jesus is in the Old Testament. The Jesus Storybook Bible impacted me in such a way that it changed how I preach from the Old Testament!

The Child’s Story Bible

Vos, Catherine F., and Marianne C. Radius. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

Written by Catherine F. Vos, the wife of Biblical Theology professor Geerhardus Vos (Princeton Theological Seminary) wrote this children’s Bible in the 1920’s. Vos took her husband’s notes and wrote them out for children. Take care with this one – it is not illustrated. Regardless, its literary style is engaging for kids and full of rich theological truths. The Child’s Story Bible also covers far more biblical ground than the other children’s Bibles mentioned here.

The Action Bible

Cariello, Sergio, and Doug Mauss. Colorado Springs, Colo: David C. Cook, 2010.

Marvel Comic and DC Comic veterans drew this comic book style Bible. Kids will love the illustrations and adults will learn more about the Bible as they read through this beautiful version of scripture.

Long Story Short

Machowski, Martin. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010.

Marty Machowski wrote Long Story Short. From the publisher: “Long Story Short is a family devotional program designed to explain God’s plan of salvation through the Old Testament and is suitable for children from preschool through high school. The gospel is deep enough to keep the oldest and wisest parents learning and growing all their lives, yet simple enough to transform the

heart of the first grader who has just begun to read. Ten minutes a day, five days a week is enough time to pass on the most valuable treasure the world has ever known.”

If your family enjoys Long Story Short, you will want to pick up the follow-up version of this book for the New Testament called, “Old Story New.”

Old Story New

Machowski, Martin. New Testament. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012. Print.

Recommendations for Students –

The following resources have always received positive feedback from families with teenagers:

6th Grade-9th Grade –

ESV Student Study Bible
Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2011.

The Apologetics Study Bible for Students
McDowell, Sean. Nashville, Tenn: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009

10th Grade-College

ESV Study Bible
English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010.

MacArthur Study Bible
MacArthur, John. English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010.

The Life Application Study Bible
New International Version. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1997.

The Apologetics Study Bible
Cabal, Ted. Nashville, Tenn: Holman Bible Pub, 2007

Chapter 7 - Other Helpful Tools for Studying the Bible

While a Study Bible and Bible Dictionary are essential tools for understanding the Bible, the following tools are helpful for digging deeper:

Bible Concordance

A Bible concordance is a tool that contains all of the words and phrases found in the Bible and arranges them in alphabetical order. It then shows where the terms occur throughout all of the books of Scripture. For example, if you looked up the word “propitiation” in the Bible concordance, it would show you every passage in the Bible that contains that word.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

Strong, James. *New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

I have always relied on Strong's Concordance in my study. Strong's Concordance has been the all-time champion of Bible concordances, but as it only works with the King James Version, you may need to find a good concordance that works with your favorite version of the Bible.

Bible Handbooks

Bible handbooks provide healthy information for getting the most out of each individual book of the Bible. A good Bible handbook will provide you with knowledge of a book's authorship, date, key themes, background and setting, key people, and the doctrines covered in a book.

The MacArthur Bible Handbook

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Handbook.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

By Dr. John MacArthur, this Bible handbook provides some of the best overall information for every book of the Bible. Some of my favorite features of the MacArthur Bible handbook include:

- Explanations of how to see Jesus in each Old Testament book.
- A feature called, “Meanwhile, in other parts of the world...” which provides key historical information for what was happening in other parts of the world during the time of the events of the Biblical book you are studying.

Talk Thru the Bible

Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. *Talk Thru the Bible.* Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983.

Talk Thru the Bible is the most accessible and readable Bible handbook on the market. Great for middle school ages and up, you will enjoy the helpful book overviews this handbook provides. Some of my favorite features of this handbook include:

- Sections for each book that explain that book's unique contribution to the Bible.
- A section for each book that explains that book's key words, key passages, and key chapters to quickly give you the meat of the book.

Topical Bibles

Topical Bibles are helpful tools when you are looking for the key information in the Bible that surrounds a certain theme. Say, for example, that you wanted to study what the Bible has to say

about “marriage”. A topical Bible will link you to all of the key passages in the Bible that discuss marriage. Topical Bibles are very good tools for learning the major themes of the Bible. The following topical Bibles have been in constant use throughout my ministry:

The New Topical Textbook by R.A. Torrey

Torrey, R.A. *The New Topical Textbook*. Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications.

This classic work provides an excellent treatment of all of the major topics in the Bible. Torrey’s arrangement of information under each topic heading is helpful in finding the key information about a topic quickly.

Nave’s Topical Bible

Nave, Orville J. *Nave's Topical Bible: A Complete Analysis of the Bible by Subject*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Nave’s Topical Bible is another classic topical index that I consistently find helpful in studying the Bible. Nave’s provides more concise and direct information that should suffice for most of your topical study needs.

Bible Commentaries

A Bible commentary is a tool that provides background scholarly and devotional information on the passage in study. Most Christians are familiar with Matthew Henry’s Commentary, first written in 1706. Matthew Henry’s excellent commentary spans more than six volumes in its unabridged form. While a commentary of this size will intimidate most, for beginners, it is sufficient to purchase a one-volume commentary that covers the entire Bible. As you go deeper into a certain Biblical book, you may want to purchase a commentary that addresses the specific book of the Bible in study. I would recommend the following one-volume commentaries:

The MacArthur Bible Commentary

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

The Teacher’s Bible Commentary

Paschall, Henry Franklin., and Herschel H. Hobbs. *The Teacher's Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman, 1972.

Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary

Radmacher, Earl D., Ronald Barclay. Allen, and H. Wayne. House. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1999.

Tip – If you are studying one book in the Bible and desire to go deeper, I would encourage you to invest in a single commentary that focuses on that one book of the Bible. The best website to check for suggestions for what commentaries to buy are found on www.bestcommentaries.com. You will want to purchase the ones that have a “D,” which stands for “devotional” next to their name. These commentaries are written at a lay level and do not require a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew.

Systematic Theology

A Systematic Theology assists in understanding all of the major doctrines of the Bible. If you wanted to know what the Bible has to say about the Trinity, a Systematic Theology is the tool you are looking for. The following three systematic Theologies have been used almost weekly throughout my ministry:

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine by Wayne Grudem.

Grudem, Wayne A. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1994.

Written at a High School level, Grudem's Systematic Theology is one of my favorite books of all time. Wayne Grudem's award winning Theology book has been used by churches throughout the world to gain a better grasp on the doctrines in the Bible.

Some of my favorite features of Grudem's Systematic Theology include:

- Questions for personal application at the end of every chapter.
- A scripture memory verse for each chapter.
- A popular and familiar hymn that highlights the doctrine studied in each chapter.

Christian Theology by Millard J. Erickson

Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

Erickson's Christian Theology is a great companion theology book to Grudem's Systematic Theology or as a stand alone book on Christian doctrine. Where Grudem focuses more on the Biblical text to discuss doctrine, Erickson's book looks more into the history of how the Christian church came to understand these doctrines. Erickson's book certainly addresses the Biblical text in each chapter, but his inclusion of the historical journey of the doctrines sets his work apart from the others.

Basic Theology by Charles C. Ryrie

Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. Basic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986.

Ryrie's Basic Theology was my very first Systematic Theology, and it still holds up as a helpful overview of Christian Theology. Ryrie's writing is easy for a middle school grade level and his handling of the difficult doctrines are helpful for all Christians.

Chapter 8 – Electronic Tools for Studying the Bible

Our world is quickly changing through the introduction of smart-phones and tablets. These technologies have provided excellent tools for Christians to study the Bible. While this list will be outdated soon with the introduction of newer apps, I have found the following tools especially helpful:

The Most Helpful Free Apps

The Bible App

Developed by Lifechurch.TV, an American mega church pastored by Craig Groeschel, this app has been used by more than 160 million people to read through the Bible. The Bible App provides all of the best translations, dozens of reading plans, tools to highlight and make notes, and even audio versions of many translations. One of my favorite features is that it will e-mail me gentle reminders when I fall behind in a Bible reading plan.

Bible.is

A ministry of Faith Comes by Hearing, this app provides the most robust collection of translations and languages (1599 languages) with audio narration of the Bible. Helpful to use when you want to listen and see the word of God.

The ESV Bible App

This beautiful app provides access to the excellent English Standard Version of the Bible. Easy to use and includes tools to make notes, highlights, and a helpful search feature for concordance searches.

The Faithlife Study Bible

Provided for free by Logos Bible Software, this amazing study Bible boasts more notes than any study Bible on the market. Immersive links draw users deeper into the study of the Bible. The commentary is concise, readable, and helpful.

Helpful Paid Apps

Olive Tree Bible Software

The Olive Tree Bible Software provides an excellent user interface for reading the Bible and other helpful resources. This software is very polished on the Apple devices, and makes for an enjoyable reading experience. While some of the books and translations are free, many of the commentaries and translations will cost you.

Logos Bible App

The Logos Bible App provides the most robust tool set of any Bible software on mobile devices. While registering with Logos will get you many free tools, the Logos and Vyrso.com websites give you access to more than 30,000 books that you can purchase and add to your account. The tools allow you to do Bible word studies, topical searches, concordance searches, and commentary searches throughout every book in your Logos library.

Fighter Verses (Also see www.fighterverses.com)

The Fighter Verses app is helpful for memorizing scripture. While this app comes with 520 categorized verses for scripture memory, it also allows you to add your own verses. Fighter Verses comes with access to the following translations: ESV, NIV 1984, NASB, HCSB, and KJV.

Helpful Websites for the Study of the Bible

The following 5 Websites will help you in your study of the Bible:

www.esvbible.org

EsvBible.org provides an excellent online base to center your study of the Bible. One of the great benefits of this website is that you can purchase modules for the ESV Study Bible and the MacArthur Study Bible at an affordable rate. One of my favorite features of this website is the ability to make notes that tag to a chapter, you can later export these notes to Evernote for backup and use in other applications.

www.mystudybible.com

Mystudybible.com is operated by Lifeway and provides free access to the Holman Christian Standard Bible as well links to many useful tools. This site allows you to purchase other Bible translations and study Bibles that include the helpful Apologetics Study Bible, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible Study Bible.

www.evernote.com

Evernote is the best online notebook to make and keep the notes that you write during your study of the Bible. While you might have to work a bit at the file system to get it working the way you want, Evernote is a great tool that will give you access to your notes on almost any electronic device that has access to the internet.

www.biblegateway.com

Biblegateway.com provides quick access to all of the major translations as well as the means to search through them. Bible gateway is improving its toolset to better help you study the Word of God.

www.blueletterbible.com

Blueletterbible.com provides the quickest access to the Greek and Hebrew words behind the text of the Bible, with quick links to the English definitions of the words. Also provided is a pronunciation tool to help you learn how to say the Hebrew or Greek word in study.

Chapter 9 – A Concise Overview of the Popular Methods of Studying the Bible

There are many diverse and fruitful methods for studying the Bible. I want to outline a few of the most popular methods in this short chapter.

The Study of Individual Books

The study of individual books involves choosing one book of the Bible and spending a great amount of time reading and researching the book. R.A. Torrey says that this method “is the most thorough, the most difficult, and the one that yields the largest and most permanent results.”

You begin by prayerfully choosing a book, perhaps a very short book if you have never done this method before (for example, 1 Thessalonians), and following the R.E.A.D. approach from chapter 5 on a larger scale:

R. Read - You will want to read through the book multiple times, possibly listening to the book in audio format. You will want to read it again and again until you feel you have a good handle on the book. As you read, make notes and markings for sections and passages that will require further study.

E. Explore - Now you need to go back and research all of the marks you made as you were reading through the text. What is the background history of this book? Who wrote it? Who was it written to? Why? Are there any doctrines that the book mentioned that need further study? What big words do you need to define? What people and places are mentioned in the book?

A. Apply - Read through the book yet again and seek out any commands from the book that apply today. What sins does the book address? What promises of God does the book claim?

D. Digest - Here you will need to mark out and memorize passages from the book that the Holy Spirit illumined to you. Write out prayers that come straight out of the verses you have studied. Outline the book in your own words to better help you remember the book later. Highlight passages and make notes in your margins to better remember your study. Paraphrase certain passages in a personal way.

Tip - In college, I learned to apply this method to one book every month. It was called, “The Book of the Month Club.” I would spend the first week trying to read through the entire book daily (longer books will require a lot more commitment), the second week exploring the text, the third week studying the book’s application, and the final week outlining the book. During the final week, I would also memorize key passages and writing out paraphrased passages from the book. To this day, this is one of my favorite ways to study the Bible.

A Topical Study of the Bible

A Topical Study of the Bible involves a study through the Bible to find out its teaching on a certain topic. For example, you might want to research what the Bible has to say about Hell. You would do well to look up the term in a Bible Concordance and in a topical Bible.

This method of Bible study provides quick results and fruit, but beware of clinging to it as your only method of Bible study as it does come with certain disadvantages. One disadvantage is that you will tend to study repeatedly the topics that personally interest you (like the end times) and neglect other topics that are equally important. A second disadvantage is that you will miss being introduced to other vital topics through a straightforward reading of the Bible.

Here are some tips for applying the Topical Study of the Bible:

- R. Read - Read every verse on the topic that you can, seeking out key verses that articulate the Bible's stance on your topic. You want to be thorough here, making sure that you get to every passage you can to better understand the topic.
- E. Explore - You will want to take your key passages and spend time reading around them in your Bible to better understand the context in which they were written. A lot of good Christians have ruined topical studies by ripping a passage out of its context. Thorough exploration will keep this error from occurring.
- A. Apply - What do you need to apply from your study of this topic? How should you view this topic in light of your study? What should you inform others about this topic? What did this topic teach you about the nature of God?
- D. Digest - Write out your own detailed notes from your study and file them away for later use. Memorize key passages on the topic that the Holy Spirit illumined to you during your study. Highlight and mark your Bible in case you may need to access these passages later.

Chapter 10 - Picking a Bible Reading Plan

A Bible reading plan is a very popular method for studying and reading through the Bible. A Bible Reading Plan provides you with daily readings in the Bible and takes you on a certain path through the scriptures. There are literally hundreds of different Bible reading plans on the market, and many can be found for free online. You can print them out, place them in your Bible, and check off your readings each day as you work through the plan. Some of the most popular reading plans include:

Overview of the Bible Plan

There are many overviews of the Bible plans available for free online that range from 30 day to 180 day plans. These plans work through the major storyline of the entire Bible and will help you to quickly grasp the history, main events, main characters and main themes of the Bible. You can search for them online by going to www.google.com and typing in “Bible Overview Reading Plans.”

The John First Plan

The John First Plan begins with reading through the book of John. When you finish with the book of John, then go to the book of Matthew in the beginning of the New Testament and read through the end of the New Testament. When you finish with the New Testament, go to the book of Genesis and read through the entire Old Testament. If you average 3-4 chapters a day, you should be able to read through the entire Bible in one year.

Simple Plans for Daily Benefit

The Proverbs Plan for Daily Wisdom

The Proverbs plan is one of the easiest plans to use because you only need to know what day of the month it is. Since Proverbs has 31 chapters, there is always a chapter to be read for any given day of the month. For example, if today was May the 12th, you would read Proverbs chapter 12.

Tip - The book of Proverbs is full of wisdom and is a great book to mark up with small drawings that can help you to find that wisdom later. For example, if a verse talks about money, make a small money sign (\$) to help you find it later. If a verse talks about laziness, write out three z's (zzz) to make the common sign for sleeping.

The Psalms Plan for Daily Encouragement

The Psalms Plan for Daily Encouragement is similar to the Proverbs Plan for Daily Wisdom in the way that it is dependent on the daily calendar. This plan requires you to add the number 30 to the calendar day 5 times until you reach the end of Psalms. For example, if today was May 12th, you would read Psalm 12 and then add 30 to that number 5 times, which would take you through Psalms 12, 42, 72, 102, and 132. Save the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119, to be read on the 31st day of any month.

One tip that has helped me to return to the Psalms again and again is to write out my own titles for the Psalms. For example, when I read through Psalm 34, I wrote out, “Read this Psalm on the worst day.” I have been able to give that Psalm to others who are going through a difficult time and see them encouraged and strengthened by the Word.

The Gospels Plan for Time with Jesus

Dr. Bill Cook, a professor of New Testament at Southern Seminary, encouraged his students to spend time daily in the Gospels. He encouraged a straight read through the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) by reading at least a paragraph or a chapter from them each day.

Plans for Going through the Entire Bible

The One Year Bible Reading Plan.

The One Year Bible Reading Plan has helped thousands of people to read through the entire Bible. There are One Year Reading Bibles in various translations that you can purchase for under \$20 that contain daily readings. Each reading includes a section from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs.

The Chronological Reading Plan

This plan will help you to read through the entire Bible in historical chronological order.

The M'Cheyne Reading Plan

This popular and historic plan takes the reader through the Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice per year.

Part III - The 40-Day Devotional

The 40-Day Devotional

For the next 40 days, we are going to journey through the Book of Ephesians using the R.E.A.D. method. Every day, we will read only a few verses from the Book of Ephesians, and we will attempt to develop the needed skills for further study elsewhere. For the first three days, I have provided some simple notes and hints to assist you on your journey. (Kindle and tablet readers may want to write out the following devotional notes on a notepad or on a computer. A word document of the devotional is available on the website.)

Here is a quick reference of the R.E.A.D. method that you can check as you work through the 40-day study of the book of Ephesians:

R. Read the passage over and over and over. Slowly. Read it out loud. Read it and emphasize a different word every time.

E. Examine – Write down all words that you do not know. Look up words in a Bible dictionary. Study any cities or customs that you can, or look up the names of people in a Bible dictionary to learn more about them.

A. Apply – How can you apply this passage to your life? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there an example to follow (or not follow)? Does it reveal anything about the nature of God?

D. Digest - Digesting the text means to take the passage into yourself in a meaningful way in which you can make use of the passage later. Is there a portion of this text that you need to memorize? Did the Holy Spirit illuminate a part of this passage that you need to spend more time meditating on? Do you need to highlight a portion of this passage or underline any part of it for later reference? Do you need to rewrite the passage in your own words and paraphrase it in a personal way? Should you mark your Bible with some notes or a small drawing so that you can find the passage again later? Is there any way you can springboard from this passage into prayer with God?

Day 1

Read – Ephesians 1:1-2

Explore –

Look up the following words in a Bible dictionary – Apostle, Ephesus

Apply –

God's will for Paul was that he become an apostle. What do you believe is His will for you?

Digest –

Pray that God will help you to remain faithful to Jesus.

Pray that you will grow to understand the grace and peace of God.

Day 2

Read – Ephesians 1:3-6

Explore –

Lookup the following words in a Bible dictionary – Blessing, predestined, adoption.

Apply –

How does the fact that God has chosen you to be holy and blameless in Christ affect your daily life?

Digest –

Pray that God will help you to better understand His salvation.

Day 3

Read – Ephesians 1:7-10

Explore –

Lookup the following words in a Bible dictionary – redemption and wisdom.

Apply –

According to verse 9, how can you know God's will?

Digest –

Praise God for the redemption you have in Jesus, and how He has forgiven all of your sins.

Day 4

Read – Ephesians 1:11-12

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 5

Read – Ephesians 1:13-14

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 6

Read – Ephesians 1:15-19

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 7

Read – Ephesians 1:20-23

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 8

Read – Ephesians 2:1-3

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 9

Read – Ephesians 2:4-7

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 10

Read – Ephesians 2:8-10

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 11

Read – Ephesians 2:11-16

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 12

Read – Ephesians 2:17-22

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 13

Read – Ephesians 3:1-7

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 14

Read – Ephesians 3:8-13

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 15

Read – Ephesians 3:14-19

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 16

Read – Ephesians 3:20-21

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 17

Read – Ephesians 4:1-6

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 18

Read – Ephesians 4:7-14

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 19

Read – Ephesians 4:15-16

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 20

Read – Ephesians 4:17-19

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 21

Read – Ephesians 4:20-24

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 22

Read – Ephesians 4:25-29

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 23

Read – Ephesians 4:30-32

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 24

Read – Ephesians 5:1-5

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 25

Read – Ephesians 5:6-8

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 26

Read – Ephesians 5:9-14

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 27

Read – Ephesians 5:15-18

Explore –

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Digest –

Day 28

Read – Ephesians 5:19-21

Explore –

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Digest –

Day 29

Read – Ephesians 5:22-24

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 30

Read – Ephesians 5:25-31

Explore –

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Digest –

Day 31

Read – Ephesians 5:32-33

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 32

Read – Ephesians 6:1-4

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 33

Read – Ephesians 6:5-9

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 34

Read – Ephesians 6:10-13

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 35

Read – Ephesians 6:14-15

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 36

Read – Ephesians 6:16-17

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 37

Read – Ephesians 6:18-19

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 38

Read – Ephesians 6:20

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 39

Read – Ephesians 6:21-22

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

Day 40

Read – Ephesians 6:23-24

Explore –

Apply –

Digest –

About the Author

David Crowe (D.Min. Southern Seminary) is the pastor of South Orlando Baptist Church where he has a heart for enhancing Biblical literacy through preaching. David is married to Ginny Crowe, and together they have four boys, Elijah, Jonah, Gabriel, and Malachi.