

# 11 STEPS TO STUDYING THE BIBLE

Whether you have been studying the Bible for years or have never read a word of it, the graphic on the last page is an 11 step guide to help you study it no matter where you start reading. I have some recommendations in the section, A Bit About The Bible, that might be especially helpful to anyone who is new.

## Before You Get Started

My hope is that you will use this guide to help you know who God is, understand the nature of mankind, and discover our need for a Savior, Jesus.

It will help hone your skills of observation, think critically about situations in your life, and explore how to respond to God's words in light of your study. My prayer is that it will be the stepping stones to Truth and will equip you to know God in a personal and intimate way.

Below is an explanation of each step along with examples from my personal study of Genesis 1-3. If you have any questions - whether about the guide, God's word, or just want to chat - I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at [nkwhitten@icloud.com](mailto:nkwhitten@icloud.com).

His Word Stands Forever,



## A Bit About The Bible...

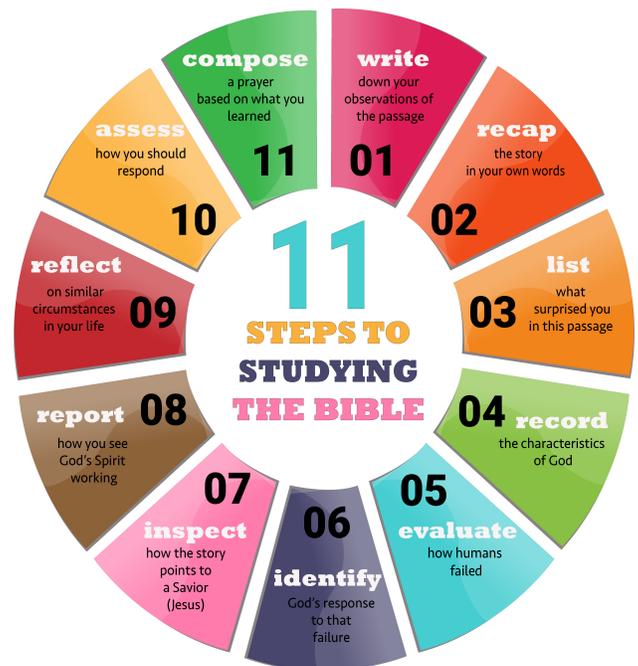
The best way to understand the Bible is to read it in chunks. The Bible is split into two parts: 1) The Old Testament and 2) The New Testament.

Each part is broken down into books of the Bible (Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, etc.; New Testament: Matthew, Mark, 1 Corinthians, etc.). Within each book are chapters. Within chapters, verses. These are the building blocks of scripture.

Each book has an author, and like any book of literature, it was written to a specific audience. Thankfully, all of these writings were encapsulated so we get to peak into their world and learn eternal truths that will be new each time we turn the page.

I recommend reading one book and working your way through it chapter by chapter. This will help you understand each passage within its context. Information about authors, audiences, and subjects are available in some Study Bibles but are also available online. My favorite resource these days is The Bible Project ([thebibleproject.com](http://thebibleproject.com)).

So, let's get started. Grab a pencil and a piece of paper (or your favorite journal), pick a book of the Bible, and start in chapter 1. You won't regret it.



# 11

## STEPS TO STUDYING THE BIBLE

### 1 WRITE down your observations of the passage

As I mentioned in A Bit About The Bible above, it is best to pick a book and go through it chapter by chapter. This helps with context and context is the key to understanding what each author wants you to know. It also just makes sense to orient yourself and read it the way the original audience would have read it.

How you write down your observations is completely up to you. I'm a "list girl" and bullets are my thing, so that's how I roll through observations. Basically, you're just taking notes here. It doesn't have to make sense to anyone but you.

#### EXAMPLE: GENESIS 1-3

- ALL LIVING THINGS (SEED-BEARING PLANTS, ANIMALS, HUMANS, ETC.) PRODUCED OFFSPRING OF ITS OWN KIND
- GOD NAMED EVERYTHING UNTIL HE MADE ADAM THEN ADAM NAMED EVERYTHING
- ADAM & EVE (MALE & FEMALE) WERE CREATED IN

### 2 RECAP the story in your own words

Remember having to write summaries of books in English class? That is basically what you are doing here except no one is grading your paper. (Who said they didn't teach you anything useful in high school?)

#### EXAMPLE:

GOD CREATES THE HEAVENS, EARTH, DAY, NIGHT, SKY, LAND, SUN, MOON, AND STARS. HE CREATES SEED-BEARING PLANTS, SEA AND LAND ANIMALS,

### 3 LIST what surprised you in this passage

What piqued your attention? What made you say, "Hmmm?" What did you notice for the first time today? These are things you want to encapsulate in this section.

#### EXAMPLE:

GOD NAMED EVERYTHING UNTIL HE CREATED ADAM. THEN, ADAM TOOK THE ROLE OF NAMING THINGS. HE NAMES THE ANIMALS AND AT THE END OF CHAPTER 3, HE NAMES EVE. IT WAS PART OF HIS JOB AS HE REIGNED AND RULED OVER GOD'S CREATION MADE IN HIS IMAGE. IN THE BEGINNING, ADAM MODELED GOD LIKE A CHILD MODELS HIS FATHER.

### 4 RECORD the characteristics of God

This is literally my favorite part. I find it helpful as I'm reading to mark every time I see a proper noun of God, LORD, etc. Then, I can go easily go back through the section and write down all the things I see God doing. If you can, create one big list for whatever book of the Bible you're going through and you will start to see patterns emerge. Keep this handy, so when you forget who He is, you can go back and remember.

#### EXAMPLE:

- CREATOR - USES HIS HANDS, HIS BREATHE, HIS WORDS
- RULER - WHEN GOD SPEAKS, BIG THINGS HAPPEN
- COMMANDER OF ALL THINGS
- MERCIFUL IN HIS ACTIONS WHEN WE FAIL
- GRACIOUS TO PROVIDE A RESCUER

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### 5 EVALUATE how humans failed

The Bible is full of people. It's important to remember they are people just like you and me. They had to eat and get dressed every day. They had work to do. They had families to raise. They had cultures to live in.

Sometimes, God's uses these people to show us how to live - or how not to live - but don't get caught up here. The whole point is to show you that time and time again God's people fail Him. The beauty of the story is that God uses them despite of the failures and even uses their failures for good. Also, they don't have to necessarily believe in God to be used by Him. He uses anyone. Whether they want to be used by Him or not.

#### **EXAMPLE:**

EVE FAILS TO TRUST SHE IS ALREADY LIKE GOD. SHE IS MADE IN HIS VERY OWN IMAGE. A SERPENT CONVINCES HER SHE CAN BE MORE, KNOW MORE, AND DO MORE, AND THAT GOD IS REALLY HOLDING OUT ON HER. SO, SHE USES HER JUDGMENT TO DETERMINE WHAT IS GOOD AND WHAT IS EVIL AND CHOOSES INCORRECTLY. ADAM SINNED BY TAKING HER WORD FOR IT AND ATE FROM THE TREE GOD HAD FORBIDDEN.

### 6 IDENTIFY God's response to that failure

Look for how you see God responding to his people. Does He extend consequences? Does He create good from a bad situation?

#### **EXAMPLE:**

GOD CURSES THE SERPENT, AND GIVES CONSEQUENCES TO EVE FIRST, THEN TO ADAM. THE SERPENT IS CURSED MORE THAN ANY OTHER ANIMAL AND WILL LIVE IN HOSTILITY WITH EVE'S OFFSPRING. HUMAN WORK NOW BECOMES LABORIOUS: EVE IN HER CHILDBEARING AND IN HER RELATIONSHIP WITH HER HUSBAND AND ADAM IN HIS WORK TO SUBDUCE THE EARTH AND TO EARN HIS KEEP.

### 7 INSPECT how the story points to a Savior (Jesus)

"There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one big story: the story of how God loves His children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this story, and at the center of the story is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers His name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle. The piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture." - Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd Jones

#### **EXAMPLE:**

THE CONSEQUENCE OF EATING THE FRUIT FROM THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL WAS DEATH. GOD DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY EXECUTE THIS CONSEQUENCE FOR ADAM OR EVE. INSTEAD, HE PLANTS THE SEED OF HOPE IN HIS REVENGE ON THE SERPENT. HE PREDICTS THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN EVE'S OFFSPRING WILL KILL HIM.

In this section jot down ways God comes to the rescue. God often uses people who exhibit His characteristics to get His people out of a jam. All of these people fail, sometimes epically, except Jesus. He comes to save us forever.

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### 8 REPORT how you see God's Spirit work-

The Holy Spirit, or God's Spirit, is recorded throughout Scripture, but sometimes we fail to notice. Whenever you read about God breathing, God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, etc., this is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it's important to note it when you see it.

#### EXAMPLE:

"AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS HOVERING OVER THE SURFACE OF THE WATERS" (GEN. 1:2B)  
"HE BREATHED THE BREATH OF LIFE INTO THE MAN'S NOSTRILS, AND THE MAN BECAME A LIVING PERSON" (GEN. 2:7B)

### 9 REFLECT on similar circumstance in your own life

Reflect on how you see yourself and your life circumstances among God's people. How does what you learned about God's character, the hope of Jesus, and the workings of the Holy Spirit impact how you see it? Record your thoughts here.

#### EXAMPLE:

LIKE ADAM AND EVE I OFTEN GET INTO THE FINGER-POINTING BUSINESS. I DID THIS BECAUSE SO-AND-SO ACTED LIKE THIS. AND I HIDE IN MY SIN BOTH FROM GOD AND MAN. I LIVE WITH FEAR AND SHAME UNTIL GOD SEEKS ME OUT. HE KNOWS MY SIN AND ANY CATALYST BEHIND IT, YET HE STILL PURSUES. HE SEEKS TO HEAR ME CONFESS IT WITH MY MOUTH SO MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM CAN BE MADE WHOLE, AND HE PROVIDES A COVERING FOR MY SHAME.

### 10 ASSESS how you should respond

This is where the rubber meets the road. It's where we put what we're learning into action. Record your response in this section.

#### EXAMPLE:

GOD DESIRES A RELATIONSHIP WITH ME. HE WANTS ME TO TRUST HIM WITH THE THINGS THAT GIVE ME THE GREATEST SHAME, AND HE WANTS ME TO CONFESS IT ALOUD TO HIM. I WILL TAKE A FEW MINUTES EACH DAY TO CONFESS HOW I'VE FAILED HIM.

### 11 COMPOSE a prayer based on what you learned

Prayer is hard. It is hard to know what to say to such a huge God, and at the same time, hard to concentrate long enough to get thoughts out. It helps to remember that prayer is simply a conversation.

I love to write a letter to God. Sometimes, my letters are angry and frustrated. Sometimes they are full of my awe of Him. Most of the time, they are full of requests, and sometimes, they are simply tears. But my favorite kind of letters are the ones where I just chat and listen for His response. What would you say to God in light of what you learned? Write it out in this section. Take as many pages as you need or use as few words as you can mutter.

#### EXAMPLE:

GOOD MORNING, LORD. HOW ARE YOU? TODAY, I AM THANKFUL THAT YOUR VOICE SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY. IT COMMANDED OCEANS INTO EXISTENCE. IT CREATED TIME. WHAT I WOULD GIVE TO SEE YOUR GARDEN WHEN IT WAS FIRST CREATED! HELP ME TO TEND MY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU. HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND THAT INTIMACY IS ONLY ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH CONFESION. HELP ME TO RESPOND WHEN YOU SEEK ME OUT AND CONFESS MY FAILURES KNOWING THERE I WILL FIND YOUR GRACE AND MERCY.

**11**  
**STEPS TO**  
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**write**

down your observations of the passage

**01**

**recap**

the story in your own words

**02**

**list**

what surprised you in this passage

**03**

**04 record**

the characteristics of God

**05**

**evaluate**

how humans failed

**06**

**identify**

God's response to that failure

**07**

**inspect**

how the story points to a Savior (Jesus)

**08**

**report**

how you see God's Spirit working

**09**

**reflect**

on similar circumstances in your life

**10**

**assess**

how you should respond

**11**

**compose**

a prayer based on what you learned