

Getting Started



Our Daily Bread University

This course was developed by

Our Daily Bread University.

Introduction



Introduction

Bible students, like carpenters, dentists, auto mechanics, and a host of other practitioners, share two needs: tools and skills. When we properly combine these two items, good things happen. If either is missing or poorly applied, dangerous things happen. In this lesson, we will discuss the tools required for effective Bible study and introduce three skills we must develop to use those tools well.

Tools of the Trade

Bible Study Tools



Dentist Tools



Tools of the Trade

Most pastors and Bible professors have expansive libraries. Hebrew and Greek texts and grammars, commentaries, concordances, Bible atlases, and other “tools” fill their bookcases. But just as most of us keep our teeth healthy without buying a dentist’s chair, so most of us can do effective Bible study without all the tools and skills our pastors and Bible professors use. With one essential tool, and a few skills, we can gain a workable knowledge of Scripture. That essential tool is a good study Bible. If we want to do more serious Bible study we can add more tools and further develop our skills, but we can begin building a healthy knowledge of the Bible with our Bible and some well-applied skills.

Our only “essential” tool is a good Bible translation. There are many helpful paraphrases we can use for devotional purposes, but it’s essential to use a good *translation* when we study a Bible book or passage.

Here are some suggestions for selecting a study Bible:

- Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, provide a thorough discussion of various English translations. They recommend the New International Version

Tools of the Trade

1. A Bible translation (essential)

Translation:

"An attempt to translate the actual words written by the original author."

Essential for Bible Study

Paraphrase:

"An attempt to communicate the intended meaning of what the original author wrote."

Sometimes helpful for devotional purposes

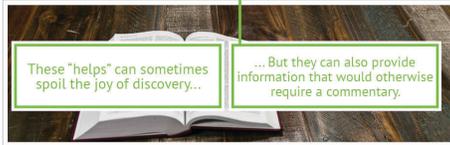


Tools of the Trade

1. A Bible translation (essential)

Choose a good translation (or two) that has

1. EITHER no notes or headings
2. OR many notes and background info



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1. A Bible translation (essential)

Choose a good translation (or two) that has

1. EITHER no notes or headings
2. OR many notes and background info
3. cross references
4. a concordance
5. both Old and New Testaments
6. a good binding
7. wide margins



Tools of the Trade

1. A Bible translation (essential)**2. A loose-leaf notebook or journal****3. A red pencil or highlighter**

(2011) first of all. They also said that the Good News Bible (1992), the Holman Christian Standard Bible (2003), and the New American Bible (1970) are especially good.

- It is wise to have at least two different translations so you can compare how different translators present the passage you are studying.
- Books on Bible study methods often suggest a Bible with no notes or chapter headings because these “helps” will prematurely focus us into an outline and spoil our own joy of discovery. That’s good advice for many students. Others find, however, that a study Bible (*NIV Study Bible* or *NASB Study Bible*) that has notes on the background of each Bible book provides information that otherwise would require a commentary on each book of the Bible. These study Bibles also provide an outline of each Bible book. We suggest you devise your own outline first (Lesson 3), but a good study Bible will provide a way to check your own outline.
- A Bible with cross references in the margin will help you easily find other places a word or idea is discussed or find where an Old Testament passage that’s quoted in the New Testament is located.
- A Bible with a concordance is a very helpful tool that will help you trace other places important words are used.
- A complete Bible—when doing good Bible study you will be cross-referencing between the Old and New Testaments.
- A Bible with a good binding—when you get into your Bible study you will be moving frequently from passage to passage. Some Bibles are not well-bound and may start coming apart sooner than you want.
- A Bible with wider margins will provide room for you to write your own insights next to the passage where you found them.

Don’t be discouraged if you have no access to some of these tools. They are helpful additions to your Bible, but many people over the centuries have studied their Bibles without these helps.

Second, get a loose-leaf notebook to use as a journal. Begin taking notes on what you discover as you study. It’s important to preserve your discoveries.

Third, get a red lead pencil or wax highlighters to underline and/

or highlight key words and passages. An ink pen bleeds through the thin paper used in most Bibles.

Fourth, set some goals. You may want to study a Bible book each month and organize your plan on a calendar. If you plan a six- or twelve-month schedule that will keep you focused and help you develop into a consistent Bible student. A book-a-month plan will take you through the Bible's sixty-six books in five and a half years.

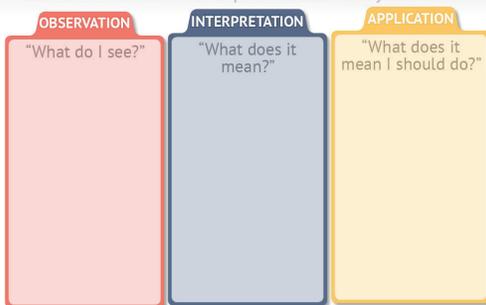
Fifth, it's helpful to have a study partner. If a friend or family member or a small group started this course in *Bible Study Basics* at the same time you are starting it, you could learn how to study the Bible together through the course and then plan your long-range Bible study schedule so you are studying the same Bible books through the year. That helps with motivation and it gives you someone to interact with as you discover new insights from Scripture.

Tools of the Trade

1. A Bible translation (essential)
2. A loose-leaf notebook or journal
3. A red pencil or highlighter
4. Set goals to keep yourself focused
5. **Have a study partner**



Three Foundational Steps of Bible Study Basics



Three Foundational Steps of Bible Study Basics

The inductive Bible study method we use in this course includes three essential steps:

OBSERVATION asks the question: What do I see?

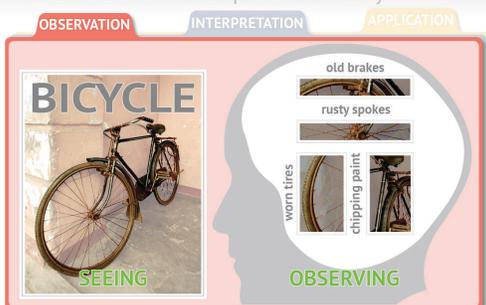
INTERPRETATION asks: What does it mean?

APPLICATION asks: What does it mean I should do?

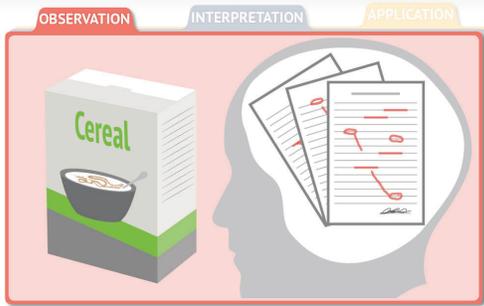
Each of these steps is a learned skill and the *Bible Study Basics* course is devoted to helping us develop all three. When we learn to ski or golf or cook we discover that if we miss a step or execute it badly we fail to achieve our goal.

We must apply the Observation step first because we can't interpret what we haven't observed. Observing something is, in an important way, different from seeing it. To observe something we have to engage our mind. For instance, we have all "seen" bicycles. But assume you want to buy a used bicycle. As you look at a prospective bike, you inspect the paint. You notice how much the tires are worn and check the spokes. You have "seen" many bikes, but you have "observed" the bike that you consider buying. You inspected it with greater interest and intensity than you did

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the bikes that you see in a bike rack.

We see with our eyes but we observe with our brain. Seeing is physiological; observing is psychological. Most of us have read something with our minds unengaged, but when we read observationally our minds are asking, “What’s here? What are the details?” We may casually see what’s written on a cereal box, but we carefully observe the details of a contract before we sign it. To read observationally is a skill we develop with time and use and we will study the specific process of observation in Lessons 3 and 4 of our *Bible Study Basics* course.

We use the skill of Interpretation to ask, “What does it mean?” After we have identified what a biblical writer included in a text, we have to draw some conclusions about what the writer intended us to understand by what he wrote. We will study the Interpretation step in Lesson 5.

It’s essential to see what the writer actually wrote. And it’s essential that we understand what he meant by what he wrote. But we can’t stop there. We use the Application skill to ask, “What should I do with what I know?” James warned us in James 1:22 that if anyone is a hearer and not a doer of God’s Word he is deceiving himself. But here’s the rub. If we don’t Observe well we can’t Interpret accurately and we may Do something that is the opposite of what God intends. That’s why we include all three skills when we do inductive Bible study.

Three Foundational Steps of Bible Study Basics

