

P.R.O.S.P.E.R.

Bible Study Method

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Introduction:

Have you ever sat down with your Bible, ready to hear from the Lord, only to finish your reading, close the Bible, and be completely unable to remember a thing you just read?

Someone tell me I'm not the only one!

It's happened to the best of us and illustrates a very important key when it comes to interacting with God's word: **Not all Bible intake is created equal.** Simply listening to, reading, or studying the Bible does not guarantee life transformation. HOW we engage with Scripture is extremely important.

Scripture tells us this in Luke 8:18. Wrapping up the parable of the sower, Jesus said, "Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them." (NIV)

In James 1:22-25, we also see portraits of two different listeners. See how this passage describes each one:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do." (NIV)

Only one of these two listeners is "blessed" in all they do. Only one is successful, only one truly wrings all the benefits possible from the powerful word of God.

Realizing this turned me on to this concept of taking care how I hear and engage with God's word. I want my life to deeply and truly prosper. Additional Scriptures such as Psalm 1 and Joshua 1 provide further insight into HOW God's word helps us prosper, or rather, how we should ENGAGE with God's word in order to prosper. From these passages, I decided to develop a framework for my own time in God's word.

That, my friends, is how the PROSPER Bible Study Method came about. The goal of this method isn't just to impart head knowledge; it is to engage with God's word God's way, to interact with Scripture the way Scripture itself instructs us to. *Novel concept, eh?*

The emphasis of this study is three fold and can be used with ANY passage of Scripture:

Information- Until we are able to clearly articulate what a passage says for ourselves, we'll be crippled in our ability to understand or apply it. The first part of the PROSPER method (Days One and Two) are designed to help us learn what a passage says. We do this by asking questions and making observations.

Meditation- Scripture tells us that the one who meditates on the word is the one who prospers, yet many of us don't know how to meditate! The PROSPER method shows you how to meditate and builds it into the Bible study process (Days Three and Four). This is where we allow God's Spirit to speak to us personally as we marinate in the passage and look at it from all angles.

Application- We always want God's word to transform our lives and know that happens as our lives conform to the written word. This part of the PROSPER method (Days Four and Five) is where we become doers of the word we've sat with, identifying and acting on specific steps so we are not simply hearers only.

To give adequate space for each of these, the PROSPER method engages only one passage of scripture each week. Sticking with one passage for five days means you will dive much deeper than you may be accustomed to... which also means surprise treasures await!

Below you'll find instructions for each of the steps in the PROSPER method. You can use this process for any passage you choose, or let us help guide you through the process with one of our ready-made PROSPER Topical Bible Studies! Those can be found in our shop at www.arabahjoystore.com.

Let's dive in!

P – Pray

Each day begins with this step. It doesn't have to be a lengthy prayer or include everything on your prayer list. This is a simple time of inviting the Lord to speak to your heart and connect with your spirit.

Two of my favorite Scriptures to pray are Psalm 119:18 and I Samuel 3:10.

R - Read

Each day, you'll read your passage for the week. Since you'll be doing this all five days, I recommend reading it in a different translation each day. Doing this has a way of making the word really come to life!

0 - Observe

This is your activity for the first day, after you've prayed and read the passage. It's important to note what observation is NOT. It is NOT... making conclusions. It is not making applications. It is not making inferences. It is not making assumptions.

Observation is simply making note of what the text clearly SAYS. Not what it means, not what you think of it, not how you interpret it. Just what it says. This is very important because too many of us **think** we know what the Bible says but in reality, we are actually giving our opinion. We need to first know what the Bible says before we can try to understand what it means.

The best way to do this is by having a robust set of questions to ask about the passage. Simply asking the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions will unearth great finds. Below are ten questions I love to ask. You may not be able to find answers to all of them in every text, but they are nonetheless a great place to start.

AUTHOR: Who is the author? List everything you know about him. Where was he when he wrote this?

AUDIENCE: Who is the audience? What characteristics defined this particular audience?

THEME: What is the overall theme, topic, concept, or event of this passage?

KEYWORDS: What are the keywords in this passage? Be sure to clearly define any key terms.

Note: Just finding the keywords can be tough if you didn't learn this in school. To help, look for repetition, comparison/contrast, cause-effect, transition words, emphasis, main idea terms, etc. Here is a list of common transition terms. It is very common for these to appear in Scripture! http://education.wichita.edu/caduceus/examples/essay_student/transitions.htm

VERBS: What verbs are used in this passage? What tenses are used?

PEOPLE: Who are the main characters or people groups in this passage?

PLACES: Where is this taking place? List everything you know about this location.

TIME: When is this taking place? What time of day? Year? Where does this take place on the historical timeline? What was the culture like when the author wrote this? How might culture have influenced this author and audience?

CHALLENGES: What questions do you have about this passage? Is there something you don't understand?

APPLICATION: How does this passage apply to your life?

Another thing that helps with this step (Observe) is to color code your Bible as you make observations. Having a simple color-coding system is a beautiful way to engage with the word and make your study more memorable. To see my system and for a free color coding bookmark, visit the blog at <https://arabahjoy.com/color-coding-bible-study-method/>

Finally, be sure to check out the training video for more instruction on this step of the PROSPER method here as it contains more tips: <https://youtu.be/UacjyllanZA>

Observe

Passage: _____

Date: _____

Author & Audience

Overall Concept/Theme/Event

Keywords & Definitions

People & Places

When

Discoveries/Challenges/Notes

Application

S - Study

For your second day of the PROSPER method, you'll begin with prayer and reading before diving much deeper into your passage. There are many ways to study a passage and each passage naturally lends to certain types of study. By this point in the week, you should be able to identify a study type that seems to fit your passage. Some of my favorite study methods are:

Word study- This includes choosing a keyword from the passage, defining it, cross referencing it, and noting where and how it is used. I finish out my word study by writing out a summary of what I've found and any fresh discoveries I've made.

Biographical study- This involves studying the life of one of the characters in the passage. To do this study, look up every reference to this person in the Bible and map a timeline of their life. Be sure to make note of significant events as well as all background information you can find. Wrap up by writing a summary of their life, growth, and character.

Thematic study- Some passages lend themselves to certain themes (such as a doctrine, like baptism or a concept, like the Kingdom of God) or even a phrase (such as "in Christ"). If you discover a theme in your passage, this study is a great one to choose, tracing it first throughout the book you are in, then throughout the entire Bible if you have the time.

Some additional study methods you may want to try are chapter analysis, verse mapping, and book studies. I cover most of these methods in my Bible Study Methods: 7 Ways in 7 Days Toolkit (available here: <https://arabahjoy.com/bible-study-methods/>).

Be sure to check out the training video for this step of the PROSPER method here: <https://youtu.be/KdW6rUt53M>

STUDY

How to Choose a Study Type

Passage: _____

NO YES

If so, what/who?

STUDY TYPE:

Is there a keyword that jumps out to me?

☐ ☐

Word

Is there a person who interests me?

☐ ☐

Biographical

Is there a theme I want to explore?

☐ ☐

Topical or Thematic

Is there a character trait I want to develop?

☐ ☐

Character Trait

Does it make sense to summarize this chapter?

☐ ☐

Chapter Summary

Do I want to outline this entire book?

☐ ☐

Book Overview

Do I want to deep dive into a particular verse?

☐ ☐

Verse Analysis

P – Ponder

Oh, the lost art of thinking! We are such a tech-driven society of instant gratification, constant notifications and non-stop distractions that we are losing the ability to simply THINK. Yet God's word tells us to meditate on His law and store them up in our hearts. We must be intentional about creating mental space for His word to reside and take root. Even using in-between moments to meditate on Scripture (instead of scrolling) is an investment in both our own spiritual health and in the legacy we leave to others.

So HOW do we meditate on God's word? Even if we know we should, we often don't know how. Here are five ways I personally like to meditate on Scripture. For your third day in the PROSPER method, choose one or more of these and start feasting!

1. **Emphasis**

If your passage is short, this is a great way to meditate! Read slowly through the passage multiple times, emphasizing a different word each time. Have a journal handy to make note of what jumps out to you!

2. **Verb Search!**

Find all the verbs in the passage and define each one. Look for causes, effects, benefits, synonyms, and antonyms. This is one of my favorite ways to ponder!

3. **The II Timothy 3:16-17 filter**

This verse tells us specific ways Scripture helps us. As you think on a passage, ask, "What is this passage teaching me? How might this passage be reproving me? What correction is given in this passage? What training in righteousness does this passage provide?"

4. **The Law and Christ**

Ask, "Does this text reveal God's law, the gospel, or Christ? If so, how?" You can also ask, "What does this text reveal about the nature of God? Man?" and "What universal truths are given in this text?"

5. **Application Oriented Questions**

This is a wonderful way to meditate on Scripture. This set of questions comes from the book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, by Donald Whitney.

- Does this text say there is something I should believe about God?
- Does this text reveal something I should praise or thank God for?
- Does this text reveal something I should pray for myself or others?
- Does this text reveal something I should have a new attitude about?
- Does this text reveal something I should make a decision about?
- Does this text reveal something I should do for the sake of Christ, others, or myself?

Be sure to check out the video training on meditation I did here as it contains lots of juicy tidbits that you'll find useful: <https://youtu.be/CkxQDEuhbPk>

PONDER

5 Ways to Meditate on Scripture

1. What jumped out by Emphasizing words: _____

2. What I learned during the Verb Search:

3. Discoveries with the II Timothy 3:16-17 filter: _____

4. How I identified the Law and Christ in this passage:

5. Personal Application Discoveries: _____

E – Engage

We have already spent time understanding what our passage is saying and meditating on how it instructs us for living. Here is where we shift towards personal application. The best way I like to do this is through an exercise called visualization.

As I share in the video training here <https://youtu.be/1uJhUYEbn2s>, I first learned about visualization years ago as it is used by the Navy Seals. I then discovered this is a very well documented tool for changing the way one thinks and acts. Research tells us that we can visualize ourselves doing something (in our case, being obedient to God's word in a specific way) and our actions will follow!

So for this step in the PROSPER method, you'll take time to visualize yourself making right, godly choices in your life. To work through this process, you'll need to:

1. Understand the main idea of your passage.
2. Get clear on how this passage relates to your life. Get clear on a specific area of your life this passage applies to. When is the application most relevant (in what situation does it most apply?)
3. Once you have this situation in mind, you are ready to use visualization!

Be sure to check out the video training on this section of the PROSPER Bible study method I did here <https://youtu.be/1uJhUYEbn2s>.

ENGAGE

How I envision this passage impacting my life _____

What's my overall takeaway from this passage?

What specific area of my life does this passage apply to?

When is the application most relevant (in what situation does it most apply)?

What would it look like to respond to this situation in a godly, or biblical manner?

Now, visualize yourself being in the situation you identified above.
Envision yourself making a godly choice,
intentionally choosing to do the right thing. (Repeat this often!)

R – Repetitive Action

Scripture teaches us we must “persevere” in order to grow in our Christian walk. It isn’t so much the BIG things we do that impact our growth as it is the small things done consistently. A harvest is reaped when many small seeds are sown.

With this in mind, you are ready to spend one final day with your passage. You will identify the “seed action” that you can implement in your life again and again.

To help identify your seed, think through these questions:

- What verb or action in my passage is commended?
- Who is a biblical example with an action, choice, attitude, or response I can follow?
- What is a characteristic, attribute, or action of God that I can mimic?
- What practical action will challenge me to apply a truth I’ve discovered in this passage?
- Do I need accountability or insight from someone else?

Be sure to watch the video training on this section of the PROSPER Bible study method I did here:
<https://youtu.be/dMOnrIE4Cyc>

REPETITIVE ACTION

Identifying my seed for sowing _____

What verb or action in my passage is commended?

Who is a biblical example with an action, choose, attitude, or response I can follow?

What is a characteristic, attribute, or action of God that I can mimic?

What practical action will challenge me to apply a truth I've discovered in this passage?

Do I need accountability or insight from someone else? If so, who can I seek out for help?

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Bible Study Method

P - Pray
R - Read
O - Observe
S - Study
P - Ponder
E - Engage
R - Repetitive
Action

"...in whatever she does, she
prosper." Psalm 1:3

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Bible Study Method

PRAY:

READ:

STUDY a word or concept:

OBSERVATIONS about the passage:

-
-
-
-
-

PONDER (what has God shown me about this passage):

ENGAGE (how does God want me to obey this passage?)

REPETITIVE ACTION (one small "seed" I can
sow to reap a harvest of righteousness)



A dotted rectangular box for writing the repetitive action.