

How to do a Bible Book study (AJ's notes and Recommendations)

Disclaimers: There is no ONE way to study the Bible. Same for doing a book study. My way is not "the" way to do a book study. So take these as ideas and tools to add to your toolkit.

Remember, any time you open this book, you are making progress. It is NOT about checking things off a list or even getting through a volume of content- Ex: the July study materials

It's about using the tools and resources at our disposal to get into the word and have a sense of accountability for doing that.

Remember: Book open = PROGRESS!

This workshop is about the framework that I personally developed to keep me on track as I work through a book of the Bible. I didn't want to "need" someone else's workbook to be able to thoroughly study a book of the Bible! So here's the framework I use.

First, the overview, and we will talk about each of these in-depth:

Overview:

Pre-work

Step 1: Familiarize

Step 2: Summarize

Step 3: Organize

Step 4: Scrutinize

Step 5: Contextualize

Step 6: Personalize

Pre-work: Bible Study Prep

Before I get started, I like to gather a few things together for my study.

1. A dedicated notebook: Date started, book, and WHY (show mine)
2. Study basket- everything I need in one place- notebook, different versions of the bible I'll be using, pens, highlighters, index cards, can also include commentaries, etc but I don't recommend using those until LATE in the study framework
3. Choose 3-5 translations to read from during my study- I choose a variety- **NASB and ESV, then include the NIV, HCSB, NLT, and NET.**
4. Can also print out a copy of the book with space to mark up and make notes (super helpful!)

A word about translation TYPES:

Three Bible translation TYPES

1. Formal Equivalence Model, or WORD FOR WORD- scholars literally went through the original texts word by word and translated it. As you can imagine, this is the thought to be the most accurate type of translation because of this. For this reason, I do a LOT of my Bible study with one of these. Some examples of this type are KJV, NASB, ESV, RSV
2. Dynamic Equivalence Model, or THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT- scholars translated the texts by phrases and thoughts to communicate the MEANING of the passage without necessarily being tied to each individual word. While these are still translated from the original texts, they seek to communicate meaning. For this reason, they are not the best source when you're getting ready to do deeper Bible study. Some examples are the NIV and HCSB
3. Paraphrase- SUMMARY- scholars translated the general idea of what the passage is saying in modern language to make it easy to understand. These are helpful for increasing understanding. They should not be the basis for serious study or theology as they miss the nuances of the original language. Examples are the NLT, CEV, and the Message.

When I study, I start with the NASB and ESV, then include the NIV, HCSB, NLT, and NET. Together, they all help me understand the passages and pick up on different things!

Step One: Familiarize

A large portion of Bible study is spent familiarizing yourself with what you are studying, meditating on it, looking at it again and again, and making observations of what is stated in the text.

During the familiarize step, I will read through the book (ideally, in one sitting) a number of times. I'll also listen to it on audio at least once.

First read through: I simply jot down what stands out to me (show notes) This takes the pressure off! I get too anxious about doing it "right" if I start off by looking for things first!

Second read through: WHO- who wrote it and who was it written to? Start my list of questions.

Third read through: BIG IDEA- WHAT was he trying to say, WHY he was writing (stated purposes or goals) and HOW did he communicate this message (in what manner, voice, etc)
Example: With Philemon Paul sorta asserted his authority; Timothy he positioned himself as Timothy's father in the faith.

Fourth read through: WHEN and WHERE + possible Scriptures to memorize

Fifth read through: Look for references to other Scriptures (quoted), repeated phrases; I also may note similies and metaphors, comparisons and contrasts, adjectives and adverbs

Step Two: Summarize

Chapter by chapter summary; sometimes I'll also do verse by verse or section by section; articulating passages in your own words is SUPER helpful! (show notes- can do this any number of ways- mind map; outline form; essay; etc)

Step Three: Organize

After I summarize, I'm ready to start digging deeper. I'm about ready for the exploration part of the study, but before I do that, I like to plan my study. I organize my study by deciding my approach. Here are some things I like to use to organize my study:

Charts (for compare and contrasts)- you'll see these in the Sojo Academy studies that I write a lot :)

Lists (for repeated phrases, imperatives, groups of like items, etc)

Themes to trace (identify themes, especially those that interest me or I see repeated)

Keywords and phrases (identify these too)

Questions I have

Based on what I've already discovered in my study, the summary I wrote, and the questions I've noted, I'll decide what I want to explore further. List out the things I know I want to dig deeper into

(Show notes)

Step Four: Scrutinize

This is where using a commentary, study notes, or background books come in!

Some things I always like to do are:

1. Reading the book background info (show ESV Study Bible notes)- this gives me an idea of where the book falls on the historical timeline, the places involved, and also basic cultural background.
2. Use a cross referencing Bible to do cross referencing on some of the keywords or phrases I noted. This often turns into word studies, thematic studies, or biographical studies. You can get lost here, so keeping to your organized plan is helpful; you can always study more later!
3. Use a concordance to do word studies on keywords and phrases

(Show some of my favorite tools for these- cross reference Bible, concordance, study Bible, IPV, background info book, commentaries)

Step Five: Contextualize:

Context, context, context! "You're taking that verse out of context!" We've all heard it, maybe even said it. But what does that mean? And how do we know if someone is taking a verse out of context or not?

The 5 Different Contexts to look for:

Literary (Most basic):

3 contexts: Verses and chapters immediately before and after (chapter)- Ex: irony

Book as a whole- the type of writing (poetic, law, letter, etc) (which explains the purpose of the book, who it was for, and what it meant to the original recipients);

The Bible as a whole (Scripture doesn't contradict Scripture- if something appears contradictory, we need to ask why this seems to be the case and understand the context)

Other Book Study Contexts (from [Howard Hendricks book- highly recommended~](#)):

Historical: When was this taking place? What else was taking place in the world during this time? What were some of the social, political and technological influences on the writer and the audience?

Cultural: Customs, practices, and issues of the day and how those may relate with what was written. Re-create the cultural environment in your mind when studying the passage.

Geographical: What was the terrain like? Relationships between places mentioned? Topographic features? Weather? Transportation routes and modes? Size of the cities or towns? Layout of the town or place? What was this location known for?

Theological: What did this author know about God? What about the reader? How did people worship God at that time? How much Scripture did the author and recipients have access to? Other religions and worldviews competing for influence? Where does the passage fit into the unfolding of Scripture?

Share resources that help with context:

Concordance (index to the Bible)

Bible Dictionary

Bible handbook

Atlas

Step Six: Personalize

This is where I take all I studied and learned and make personal application to my life. I start with prayer, then summarize what I learned.

Then I write out what I sense the Lord wants me to do with what I learned- commands to obey, principles to follow, truths to hide in my heart. If possible, I note specific situations or instances in my own life that this truth can be applied to. This is what I know the Lord wants me to take away from/ do with what I studied.

Conclusion:

What ONE idea stood out to you in this workshop today? Leave it in the chat!

Recommended Resources:

Concordance:

[Strong's Exhaustive Concordance](#): Well known and used- a MUST!

Commentaries:

Note about the two types of commentaries mentioned below:

1. One-volume commentaries include a section on every book of the Bible to give background info and hit the high points of each book. These are a great tool to have for any kind of Bible study, not just book study. They are concise and you get notes on the entire Bible in one volume.
2. Single book commentaries obviously cover just one (or possibly 2-3 if the books are short) book of the Bible. The pros are that they are more in-depth and expansive. If you are doing a book study, I strongly suggest you consider getting a couple different single book commentaries as each author contributes different info and perspectives.

Recommended One-volume commentaries on the whole Bible (They are usually expensive but you can find them used which cuts cost):

1. [Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible](#)- Mathew Henry was an English Puritan Preacher who lived between 1662 to 1714. Many versions are available you just need to be careful to get one with type large enough to read! Famous English Preacher Charles Spurgeon commended this commentary.

2. [Believer's Bible Commentary 2 nd edition \(2016\)](#)- Conservative Bible commentary that mentions alternative views.

3. [The Tony Evans Bible Commentary \(2019\)](#)- Commentary from a gifted African American pastor who has been preaching and teaching the Bible for over 50 years.

4. [The Moody Bible Commentary \(2014\)](#)- Bible commentary written by a team of scholars which allows the reader to get more than one person's perspective on a passage.

Single book Commentaries on particular books of the Bible:

(It is prudent to purchase more than one so that you have an alternative perspective. There are endless commentaries on books of the Bible). These are great ones if you'd like a recommendation:

1. "[The New American Commentary](#)" (OT & NT books available)
2. "[IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#)" (NT books Only)

You can also go to www.bestbiblecommentaries.com to look up individual recommendations on commentaries. There are a ton out there!

Also, Jen uses the preceptaustin.com site for a free online commentary.

Background Resources (for context research and general study. It's great to have at least one of each of these):

Handbooks:

[Backgrounds of Early Christianity](#) by Everett Ferguson- explains the cultural, political, social, philosophical and religious aspects in the New Testament.

[Unger's Bible Handbook](#) by Merrill Unger- this classic book has been updated and includes background information on each of the books of the Bible.

[Where to Find it In the Bible A-Z](#)- This handbook type lists information alphabetically as opposed to by book of the Bible, making it an easy way to search. There are a couple different options for this. Above I've linked to one that has been popular for a number of years and here is the one I showed in the workshop: [Know Your Bible A-Z](#) by Jim George

Bible Dictionary:

[Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary \(2015\)](#) - A good one volume Bible dictionary with over 6500 articles on various topics, places and people in the Bible.

[Nelson Illustrated Bible Dictionary New & Enhanced Version \(2014\)](#)- Another good one volume Bible dictionary with much the same as Holman but with some variation.

Atlas/Charts:

[Holman Bible Atlas \(2014\)](#) – A good one volume Bible Atlas that is affordable. Full of maps and explanations of NT & OT geography.

[ESV Bible Atlas](#)- Another good one volume Bible Atlas that is more expansive than Holman but also more expensive. It is also a pretty large book so it takes up a good bit of space on the shelf.

[Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps & Timelines](#)- A very helpful resource that packages everything in an easy to understand format. Rose puts out top notch resources that are affordable.

In short, I would recommend having in your toolkit:

- 1. A Concordance**
- 2. A good one-volume commentary at the least; single book commentaries as you study individual books**
- 3. A Bible dictionary**
- 4. A Bible background or handbook**
- 5. An atlas**

Happy Studying!