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10 Bible Study Methods

A guide to going deeper in God's Word — one method at a time.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

— Psalm 119:105

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Includes free printable journal worksheets for all 10 methods

Download the full Bible Study Journal at [wovenandknown.com/free-resources](https://www.wovenandknown.com/free-resources)

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Why Use a Bible Study Method?

Reading the Bible is always valuable — but *studying* it is different. A study method gives you focus, structure, depth, and a pathway to real application. The goal isn't to turn Bible study into homework. It's to create intentional space for God to speak — and for you to truly listen.

Which Method Is Right for You?

If you want to...	Try this method
Build a simple daily habit	SOAP
Study a passage thoroughly	OIA or Chapter Analysis
Go deep on a single verse	Verse Mapping or Word Study
Study a theme across the Bible	Topical
Build theological understanding	Systematic Theology
See Jesus throughout Scripture	4-H Method
Combine prayer and community	TEXT Method
Sit quietly and listen to God	Devotional / Meditation

Essential Study Tools

Tool	Best For
Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org)	Original language, commentaries, cross-references
Bible Gateway (biblegateway.com)	Multiple translations, passage search
Strong's Concordance	Every Bible occurrence of any word
Bible Dictionary / Encyclopedia	Cultural & historical background
ESV / NIV Study Bible	Theological context and notes
Woven & Known Study Journal	Worksheets for all 10 methods — wovenandknown.com

"Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law." — Psalm 119:18

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The OIA Method is one of the most widely taught inductive Bible study approaches. It walks you through three essential questions that move from the text itself to personal transformation.

O **Observe — What does the text say?**

Read slowly and prayerfully. Ask who, what, when, where, why, how. List key words, phrases, and repeated ideas.

I **Interpret — What does the text mean?**

What is the author's main point? How does it fit the surrounding context? What other scriptures shed light on it?

A **Apply — What does the text mean for me?**

What is God teaching you through this passage? How should this change your thoughts, attitudes, or actions today?

◆ PRO TIP

The biggest mistake is jumping straight to application before doing the hard work of observation. Slow down in step one — the richest insights come from careful, prayerful attention to what the text actually says.

“Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.” — 1 Samuel 3:9

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SOAP is one of the most popular Bible study methods because of its simplicity. It works beautifully as a daily devotional rhythm and can be completed in 15–20 minutes.

S Scripture
Write out the specific verse(s) you are reading today. Writing slows you down and helps the words truly sink in.

O Observation
Note the key themes, main ideas, or anything that stands out to you. What is happening? What is being said?

A Application
Write a sentence or two on how you can live out this truth today. Be specific and practical.

P Prayer
Turn your reflections into a direct prayer to God. This is where study becomes conversation.

◆ PRO TIP

Don't rush the Prayer step. This is where you bring what you've learned directly back to God — transforming study into genuine relationship.

Lord, help me not only to hear Your Word, but to live it out each day.

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TEXT is a beautifully holistic method that bookends your study with prayer and community, keeping the focus on relationship with God and with others.

T**Talk to God in prayer before you read**

Invite the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind. Ask God to speak to you through His Word.

E**Encounter God and humanity in Scripture**

Ask two questions: What does this passage say about God? What does this passage say about humanity?

X**eXamine your heart**

Consider what needs to be confessed, added, taken away, or maintained as a follower of Jesus.

T**Talk to God and others**

Thank God for what He has shown you. Then share what He's shown you with someone else and live it out.

◆ PRO TIP

The final 'T' is often overlooked — but sharing what God is teaching you multiplies the impact and builds genuine community.

Let Your Word transform my heart and shape my life today.

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“Hide Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

— Psalm 119:11

Verse mapping is an intensive method perfect for when you want to go deep on a single verse or passage — studying the original languages and the broader biblical context.

1 Write Your Chosen Verse(s)

Write out the verse in your primary translation. Let the words settle.

2 Compare Translations

Write the verse in at least two other translations (e.g. NIV, ESV, NLT, KJV). Notice how the wording shifts.

3 Study Keywords in Original Languages

Circle key words. Look them up in Hebrew or Greek. Note the transliteration, definition, synonyms, and root word. Blue Letter Bible makes this easy.

4 Explore Meaning & Message

Consider the people, places, and context. How does this connect to other passages or concepts in Scripture? Add cross-references.

5 Summary & Application

Write a 1-2 sentence summary of what this verse teaches, and one specific way you will apply this truth to your life today.

◆ PRO TIP

Free tools like Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org) make it easy to look up original language meanings without knowing Hebrew or Greek.

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“Search me, God, and know my heart.”

— Psalm 139:23

Rather than studying passage by passage, a topical study follows a theme — like grace, prayer, forgiveness, or identity — across multiple scriptures to get the full biblical picture on a subject.

1 Choose a Topic

What topic or concept do you want to explore? Note why this topic matters to you.

2 Look Up References

Use a concordance or Bible search tool to find key verses on this topic.

3 Choose the Verses to Study

Select 5-10 passages that address your topic most directly.

4 Ask Guiding Questions

What does this teach about God? About Jesus? About people? What promises, commands, or warnings are given?

5 Read the Verses

Note what each verse says and how it answers your guiding questions.

6 Summarise Your Conclusions

What have you learned about this topic? List the key truths.

7 Write Your Application

How will you apply this truth in your life today and going forward?

◆ PRO TIP

Start with a topic that's personally relevant. You'll engage far more deeply when the subject connects to something you're actually walking through.

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Help me to live these truths out for Your glory.

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“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.”

— Titus 2:11

Systematic Theology is about studying what the *entire Bible* says about a specific doctrine — seeing the full, unified teaching of Scripture on key truths of the Christian faith.

Major Theological Categories:

- Bibliology (The Study of the Bible)
- Theology Proper (The Study of God)
- Christology (The Study of Christ)
- Pneumatology (The Study of the Holy Spirit)
- Angelology (The Study of Angels)
- Anthropology (The Study of Humanity)
- Hamartiology (The Study of Sin)
- Soteriology (The Study of Salvation)
- Ecclesiology (The Study of the Church)
- Eschatology (The Study of Last Things)

1 Choose a Major Category

Select a theological doctrine from the list above.

2 Define the Doctrine

Write a brief definition in your own words. Ask: What is this doctrine? Why is it important? How does it reveal God's character?

3 Gather Key Scriptures

List Bible passages that teach this doctrine and note what each one teaches.

4 Organise and Compare

Group related truths and themes. Note what they teach about God, humanity, and how they connect to other doctrines.

5 Synthesise the Teaching

Summarise the doctrine in a clear statement of belief. How does it fit into the big picture of Scripture?

6 Application

What should you believe, value, and do in light of this doctrine?

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“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.”

— John 20:31

The 4-H method is grounded in the conviction that all of Scripture — Old and New Testament — ultimately points to Jesus Christ. It helps you read every passage through a gospel lens.

H

History — What is the history of the text?

Consider the context, setting, characters, and literal meaning. What is happening in this passage?

H

How — How do I do what the text says?

What is this passage teaching me to do? What is the principle or command, and how can I apply it to my life today?

H

Him — Does the text teach me about Jesus?

How does this passage point to Jesus? What does it reveal about His character, work, or plan of redemption?

H

Hope — Where does this text give me hope?

What eternal truth does this passage reveal? How does it point to the hope we have in Christ and the life to come?

◆ PRO TIP

The 'Him' question is especially powerful for Old Testament passages. Ask: How does this foreshadow, point to, or find its fulfillment in Jesus?

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“Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.”

— Psalm 119:18

This method takes a single biblical word and studies it thoroughly — tracing its meaning, usage, and significance across the whole Bible. A single word can unlock an entire theology.

1 English Definition

Write the meaning of the word in your own words.

2 Original Word Meaning

Look up the Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic original word. Note the transliteration and short definition.

3 Translation Comparison

Compare how the word is translated across NIV, ESV, NLT, and KJV. What nuances appear?

4 Biblical Usage

How often does this word occur in the Bible? In which books? Where does it first appear? Which writers use it most?

5 Root Meaning & Origin

What is the root word and its meaning? How was it used in the culture of the day?

6 Biblical Usage & Context

How is this word used in Scripture? What truths does it reveal about God, people, sin, redemption, or the Gospel?

7 Application & Reflection

What does this word teach you? How should it shape your thoughts, heart, and actions?

8 Prayer Response

Thank God for showing you more of His truth through this word.

◆ PRO TIP

Suggested words to start with: Grace, Faith, Redemption, Love, Peace, Mercy, Gospel, Covenant, Sanctify, Repent.

“Study the Scriptures diligently, for in them you think you have eternal life.” — John 5:39

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“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

— 2 Timothy 3:16

Chapter Analysis takes you through an entire chapter with structured questions, helping you understand both the details and the big picture of a passage in its full context.

1 Read the Chapter Three Times

First read for overview. Second, read slowly for detail. Third, read prayerfully, asking God to speak.

2 Give the Chapter a Title

What one phrase best captures the main theme of this chapter?

3 Outline the Major Sections

Break the chapter into paragraphs or thought units and give each a brief title.

4 Identify Key People, Places, and Events

Who is present? Where is this happening? What events are taking place?

5 Note Repeated Words and Phrases

What words, ideas, or themes recur? Repetition often signals importance.

6 Find the Key Verse

Which single verse best captures the chapter's message?

7 Cross-References

How does this chapter connect to the rest of the book and the Bible?

8 Write Your Application

What one truth from this chapter will you carry with you today?

◆ PRO TIP

Reading the chapter in multiple translations before you study helps you catch nuances you might miss in one version alone.

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“Be still, and know that I am God.”

— Psalm 46:10

Not every Bible study needs to be structured or academic. The devotional method is about lingering in the Word — letting it speak to you personally and intimately. This method has ancient roots in the practice of *lectio divina*.

1 Choose a Short Passage

Select 1-5 verses. Shorter is often more fruitful for this method.

2 Read Slowly, Multiple Times

Read the passage 3-4 times, each time listening for what stands out.

3 Notice What Catches Your Attention

What word, phrase, or image lingers? Don't over-analyse — just notice.

4 Sit Quietly

Rest in silence for a few minutes. Let God speak to your heart.

5 Respond in Writing

Write a prayer, a declaration, or a simple reflection in your own words.

6 Memorise a Key Phrase

Choose one verse or phrase to carry with you through the day.

Lectio Divina — Ancient Rhythm for Modern Life

*A 4th-century practice of slow, prayerful Scripture reading: **Lectio** (read) → **Meditatio** (reflect) → **Oratio** (respond in prayer) → **Contemplatio** (rest in God's presence). It pairs beautifully with this devotional method.*

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You're Ready to Go Deeper

However you study God's Word — whether you're a list-maker or a free-writer, a deep-diver or a daily-devotional person — what matters most is that you show up. Open the Bible. Ask God to speak. Trust that His Word never returns empty.

“So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

— Isaiah 55:11

■ *Happy Studying* ■

Download the free printable Bible Study Journal — all 10 method worksheets included

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