

Refresh

BIBLE STUDY METHODS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS

Kara Aguilar

Advent Source

Refresh: Bible Study Methods For Growing Christians

Author: Kara Aguilar

Cover design and layout: Ramsey Mesnard

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Introduction

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44). Is God’s Word your treasure? Are you searching it daily?

Ellen White wrote, “The Bible is the great mine of truth which we are to work as those seeking for hidden treasure. In no case is the attention to be diverted from that Word. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent’ [John 17:3]. Christ declares His Word to be spirit and life [John 6:63]” (8LtMs, Lt. 4, 1893).

But not only are we to read, we also are to study and dig into the Bible. We are told, “But there is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through, and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning” (*Christian Education*, p. 58).

Nothing should take the place of studying the Bible—not time in nature, listening to sermons, or even reading Spirit of Prophecy. Many years ago, a “world survey conducted by Andrews University professor Roger Dudley... revealed less than half of Adventist church members around the world are involved in daily Bible study and prayer.” (*Adventist Review*, June 18, 2008, “Still ‘People of the Book?’” by Mark A. Kellner). Adventists used to boast about being “people of the Book.” Is that still true today?

We have a great need to set aside all the other things that are distracting our minds and hearts and get back to reading and studying God’s Word deeply, daily, applying its words to our lives, and letting God change our hearts and characters. May this book be a catalyst for invigorating our daily Bible study.

How to Use this Book

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE STUDY METHODS

In this book you will find 45 Bible study methods for youth and adults. Some methods may take only five minutes to complete, others could take hours or several days of your devotion time. Every person is different, so it's recommended you try each method at least once (several times is even better) to find the methods that appeal most to you. Each method has steps to guide you in how to use it and an example that will illustrate what it would look like in an actual Bible study.

Questions have been designed to be broad so that they can be answered from most portions of the Bible you choose to read that day; but there may be exceptions, in which case, simply skip the question or choose a different method. Some methods tend to work better reading a larger section of Scripture (i.e., a chapter) and others work well with only a handful of verses or even one verse. You may choose to read a chosen section from the Bible and then choose the method you believe would work best based on the content.

Each study encourages you to begin with prayer for the Holy Spirit to teach you. As Ellen White explains, "The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wrestling truths difficult of comprehension... We should make the psalmist's petition our own: 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law' (Psalm 119:18)" (*Prayer*, p. 95).

You are strongly encouraged to use a notebook or journal to write out answers to the questions posed in each Bible study method. The act of writing helps you slow down, it gives the Holy Spirit a chance to bring additional thoughts to your mind, and provides you a good way to look back over the study to draw lessons and

applications for your life. Give this a try, even if you aren't inclined to use a journal or notebook.

These Bible study methods were designed primarily to be used in your personal devotions, however, sometimes they can be modified and used in a group Bible study setting. One way this might be accomplished is by using the teaching technique Think-Pair-Share¹:

- T: (Think) The Bible study leader asks a question about the verses read together as a group and allows individuals to think about it for a few minutes, possibly writing down their thoughts.
- P: (Pair) The leader then asks the group members to get into pairs. The partners share the answers they have thought about or written down and briefly discuss them.
- S: (Share) The group leader then opens discussion up to the whole group so the pairs can share insights they have gained together with the larger group.

DEVOTIONAL TIPS FOR BUSY PEOPLE

Finding time to study the Bible can be difficult for many people. The first step, if you feel this applies to you, is committing to change and find a way to make it work. Consider the following ideas:

- Evaluate how you use your time and prioritize things. Think about the different things you spend your time doing during the day and list them out, including work, chores at home, childcare, recreation, leisure activities, etc. Ask yourself the following questions, some of which are difficult to consider:
 - What do I need to cut back on to create balance and time for God?
 - What activity is taking priority in my life instead of God?
 - Do I have time to watch a show, movie, sports, surf social media, enjoy hobbies or play sports, but no time for personal devotions? If yes, what does that tell me?

¹<https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/think-pair-share>.

- Study a text while doing other things. Pick one verse to study during the day, writing it on a card, sticky note or on your phone and intentionally think about it during moments when you aren't busy (i.e., in the elevator, driving to work, walking to your car, etc.). The advice is, "Let the student keep his Bible always with him. As you have opportunity, read a text and meditate upon it. While walking the streets, waiting at a railway station, waiting to meet an engagement, improve the opportunity to gain some precious thought from the treasure house of truth" (*Education*, p. 191).
- Complete a simple Bible study method while doing chores. Try various methods in this book, such as the STUDENT or Jesus' Qualities method, by reading your chosen section of Scripture and then answering each question while working on something that doesn't require a lot of mental focus. This can help you turn your thoughts to God despite tasks you may need to do.
- Go to bed earlier to have morning devotions. It's been said that you prepare for having devotions the night before by being intentional about going to bed early enough to feel rested to get up and spend time with God in the morning. As it's said of Jesus, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35, NKJV). Try going to bed early enough so you can wake up while your home is still quiet to have personal devotions.
- Use "Golden Moments" to study, pray or memorize verses. Consider adding mini-personal devotions throughout your day. "Several times each day precious, golden moments should be consecrated to prayer and the study of the Scriptures, if it is only to commit a text to memory, that spiritual life may exist in the soul" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 459).

HOW TO GROW YOUR LOVE OF BIBLE STUDY

You may be convicted that you should love reading the Bible, but you don't. First, don't be discouraged, because this is normal. "It is not natural for the heart to love the Bible; but when it is renewed by grace, then the mind will feast upon the rich truths and promises contained in the word of God" (*Appeal to Youth*, p. 79). Don't give up; there are things you can do to grow your love of the Bible.

- **Study the Bible.** The more you read the Bible, the more you will love it. Ellen White affirms this as she writes: "But if you neglect the reading of the Bible, you will lose your love for it. Those who love the word of God are those who read it most" (*Appeal to Youth*, p. 79).
- **Abstain from stimulants.** Have you ever noticed that after something exciting happens (such as a movie, an exciting story, an activity) how boring it sounds to read or study your Bible? We are told that, "If the intellectual and moral taste has been perverted by the over-wrought and exciting tales of fiction, so that you are disinclined to apply yourself to the diligent study of God's word, then you have a battle to fight with yourself to overcome this depraved habit... The mind that is occupied with exciting stories, loses all relish for solid reading that would improve the memory and strengthen the intellect" (*Review and Herald*, October 9, 1883). Try fasting from it and, after you go through withdrawal (I'm speaking from personal experience—it happens!), you'll notice your desire to study God's Word increase.
- **Feast on the Bible throughout the day.** "When a real love for the Bible is awakened, and the student begins to realize how vast is the field and how precious its treasure, he will desire to seize upon every opportunity for acquainting himself with God's word. Its study will be restricted to no special time or place. And this continuous study is one of the best means of cultivating a love for the Scriptures" (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 463). Give this a try! It can have a huge transforming effect on your life. The Bible can nourish us like nothing else can.
- **Pray and ask God to help you love His Word.** God can help your desires change to honor Him, so consider praying for your love of the Bible to grow. After all, we are told, "It may be difficult for you to love to study the word of God at once, when you have not been in the habit of studying it, but God will help you. Pray for his forgiveness for neglecting his holy word so long, and then beg of the Lord to give you love and interest in his word, be in earnest in the matter" (*Youth's Instructor*, June 1, 1856).

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Prayer is very important in our spiritual lives along with Bible study. Although this book is not about how to improve your prayer life, here are a few tips of practical things you can do.

Pray using a format such as this:

P: What can you **praise** God for?

R: What **requests** do you need to ask God for?

A: What sins do you need to **admit** and confess to the Lord?

Y: What do you need to **yield** and surrender to God in your life?

- **Pray in song.** Try singing a hymn or Christian song as a prayer that is written in the form of talking to God (i.e., My Jesus, I Love Thee, I am Thine Oh Lord). Inspiration tells us, "Indeed, many a song is prayer" (*Child Guidance* p. 523).
- **Multitask Prayers.** The Bible says we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which we see Nehemiah doing in the middle of a conversation with the king (Nehemiah 2:4). Consider how you can talk to God while doing other things during the day. "There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God" (*Steps to Christ* p. 99).
- **Intercessory Prayer Book.** Intercessory prayer is about intensely praying for a person, a group of people or for a specific situation or need. Use a small notebook or journal dedicated to one person or issue you're praying about. On the top of each page write topics you're praying for (i.e., repentance, obeying God's Word, healing, coming back to church). Next, write Bible verses that speak to these things under that topic heading, which you can claim as you pray through the book.

IF I WERE THE DEVIL...

Various things have been written from the perspective of the devil to reveal his attacks on Christians. Consider this version as you begin this journey of spending more time in the Word of God.

If I were the devil, I would make it my aim to keep people from reading the Bible to prevent their exposure to the truth and salvation. I would make them think that their church membership, believing a list of fundamental beliefs, and not doing any "major sin" was enough to get them into heaven. I would help them find the Bible boring and uninteresting by saturating their senses constantly with media and excitement. I would feed them information so easily that reading would feel tiring.

If I were the devil, I would try to make them busy, or at least think they are so busy, that they wouldn't have time to open God's Word. I would fill their free time with watching or playing sports, surfing social media, binge-watching shows, constantly following the news or watching movies. I would keep them up late at night, so they're too tired in the morning to spend time studying God's Word.

Yes, if I were the devil, I would make people think that spending time in nature was equal to spending time in the Bible. This would lead them to skip church and neglect studying the Bible and think that they're still spiritually fine. I would also tell people to sleep-in Sabbath morning because their week was too exhausting to go to church—where they might hear something from the Bible that encourages, rebukes or edifies them.

If I were the devil, I would let them start a new personal devotion life and then hit them with so many problems at work or family that there was "no time" to continue this habit. I would convince them to justify skipping devotions because they're so exhausted, or tell themselves they'll get back into the practice tomorrow. I would have them get bored easily, get stuck in harder portions of the Bible, or just let them read it without thought of application to change anything in their lives.

If I were the devil, I would hate a book like this, which encourages people to study the Word of God and apply it to their lives. I would have some people criticize it, find flaws and pick it apart, or just bury it on the bookshelf to collect dust. I would tell others, "No, that's silly. You don't need that. Don't try it. You hate to write in journals or notebooks—don't do it," rather than discover a book of tools that will help unlock the treasures of God's Word.

And if I were the devil, my main goal would be for people to not meet Jesus in the Bible, to love Him, to serve Him and give their lives to Him. Then they would be mine and lost forever.

May you not let Satan's plans come true for you, but may you make studying the Bible a priority in your life, learn to love it, and love the beautiful Savior of the Bible as well.

BIBLE STUDY METHOD

History

USE THIS METHOD FOR THE STORIES OF THE BIBLE

STEPS FOR THE STUDY

1. Begin by praying for the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher (John 14:26) as you open the Bible.
2. Choose a story from the Bible and read it through.
3. Using a notebook or journal, write out your answers to each of the following questions to help you unpack it:
 - What do you wonder about in the story?
 - What do you imagine the characters in the story are thinking and/or feeling?
 - What did you learn about God in this story?
 - What lessons can you learn from this story?
 - How can you put into action what you have learned? Write your answer as “I will...” statements.

EXAMPLE: THE FALL OF ADAM AND EVE (GENESIS 3).

What do you wonder about?

- I wonder why Eve wasn't concerned that a snake was talking to her.
- I wonder why Eve believed a snake she didn't know, but questioned God whom she did know.

What do you imagine the characters in the story are thinking or feeling?

- Eve: Confusion, amazement, "if I can just eat this fruit, I will be able to do wonderful things like this talking snake," guilt, sadness, fear
- Adam: "Why did you eat the fruit?!" Fear, guilt, shame, sadness
- God: Love, sadness, compassion, "They now know what evil is like."

What did you learn about God in this story?

- God pursues lost, disobedient people.
- God seeks to heal broken relationships.
- God loves us despite our sin.
- God gently but firmly shows us our wrongs.

What lessons can you learn from this story?

- God isn't trying to keep good things from us (i.e., the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) but spare us from bad things.
- Our eyes and mind can trick us into thinking something is "good for us" (Genesis 3:6), when it is actually bad.

How can you put into action what you have learned?

- I will stay away from things that give me a knowledge of sin (like the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). There are some things I am watching that can lead me away from God and into sin.
- I will stop hiding and running from God. I'm not happy with sin in my life. Satan promised good things but it was all a lie. I need to spend time with God every day in personal devotions.