



# How to Study the Bible

## *The Study of a Verse*

### I. APPLY THE EARLIER PRINCIPLES

- A. Apply the Principles for Studying a Word
- B. Apply the Principles for Studying a Phrase

### II. BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE VERSE

#### A. Read the Verse

1. Read the verse aloud a number of times until you feel completely comfortable with the rhythm of the verse.
2. All scripture, even that which is not poetry, has a natural rhythm to it. Reading it aloud several times in rapid succession is the best way to find this rhythm.
3. The natural rhythm gives evidence as to what parts of the verse receive the greatest emphasis.
4. This is also a great way to make sure you are noticing every word and phrase in the verse.

#### B. Write the Verse

1. Write the verse slowly two or three times making sure to notice every word.
2. God places importance on every word of scripture.
  - a. By “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:3).
  - b. “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5).
3. Much of good Bible study consists of careful observation. These first two exercises help the student of the word to notice every part of the verse.

#### C. Meditate upon the Verse

### III. BREAKDOWN THE VERSE

#### A. Verse Characteristics

1. How many words are in the verse?
2. How many letters are in the verse?
3. What verse number is the verse as pertains to the chapter and/or book?
4. Does this give any indicators as to the content of the verse?



## B. Punctuation Marks

1. What are the punctuation marks found in the verse? Notice how they structure the verse.
2. Be familiar with the basic purposes of the common forms of punctuation.
  - a. A comma indicates a slight pause for the reader.
  - b. A semicolon prepares the way for a parallel thought or thoughts.
  - c. A colon prepares the reader for a further explanation of what was said before.
  - d. A period marks the end of the main thought.
  - e. Note: These comments are only introductory explanations of the use of the punctuation marks. Actual usage is much more complex.
3. Allow the punctuation to help you see how the verse is organized.

## C. Parts of the Verse

1. Subject, verb and direct object
  - a. Write out the simple sentence or sentences in the verse. (subject, verb, direct object) (A direct object receives the action of the verb.)
  - b. Of course, there may be more than one subject, verb and/or direct object or there may be no direct object. Also, because many verses are only part of the sentence, you may have to look at surrounding verses to get the entire picture.
  - c. This will give you the main flow of thought in the verse.
  - d. Even if you are not exactly correct grammatically, the exercise of looking for the main parts of the verse will still be beneficial.
  - e. Here are some examples:
    - (1) Genesis 1:1—God + created + heaven, earth
    - (2) Philippians 4:7—peace of God + shall keep + hearts, minds
    - (3) Isaiah 55:11—word + shall not return + void; it + shall accomplish + that which I please; it + shall prosper
2. Nouns
  - a. List the nouns with a comment as to their place in the verse.
  - b. Nouns are those words that name a person, place, thing or idea.
  - c. Here are some examples.
    - (1) Genesis 1:1
      - a) Beginning—tells the time when creation occurred
      - b) God—the One who created
      - c) Heaven—the abode of God
      - d) Earth—the future abode of man
    - (2) Philippians 4:7
      - a) Peace—that which keeps our hearts and minds
      - b) God—the source of our peace
      - c) Understanding—that which cannot comprehend the peace of God
      - d) Hearts—our feelings and affections that are kept by the peace of God



- e) Minds—our thought life that is kept by the peace of God
  - f) Christ Jesus—the means by which God keeps us
3. Verbs
- a. List the verbs with a comment as to their importance.
  - b. Verbs describe action or state of being.
  - c. Here are some examples.
    - (1) Genesis 1:1: Created—all things came into being by the power of God.
    - (2) Philippians 4:7
      - a) Passeth—God’s peace exceeds man’s understanding.
      - b) Shall keep—our hearts and minds are kept by the peace of God.
4. Adjectives and adverbs
- a. List the adjectives and adverbs along with the words they modify.
  - b. Adjectives are words that describe nouns: the **big** dog. Adverbs are words that describe (or modify) verbs, or adjectives or other adverbs. Many adverbs end with -ly: the cat **merrily** chased the dog.
  - c. Here are some examples:
    - (1) Philippians 4:7: **all** understanding—adjective
    - (2) Isaiah 55:11: goeth **forth**—adverb
    - (3) Psalm 18:11 “He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.”
      - a) **Secret** place—adjective
      - b) **Dark** waters—adjective
      - c) **Thick** clouds—adjective
  - d. Note: Do not fret over getting everything exactly correct. The simple exercise of looking for them and seeing the relationships will help you to understand the verse.

#### D. Chart the Verse

- 1. Write the verse out in chart form.
- 2. This actually refers to a phrasing of the verse in such a way as to see how the parts of the verse fit together. This is possible by grouping the phrases and statements in a natural form and by using indentations to indicate sub-thoughts and by placing parallel thoughts directly below each other.
- 3. There is no exact science to this. Each person will chart a verse in a slightly different way. However, to further explain this kind of charting, some examples will be given below.
  - a. Genesis 1:1
    - In the beginning
    - God created
    - the heaven
    - and the earth.



- b. Philippians 4:7  
And the peace of God,  
which passeth all understanding,  
shall keep  
your hearts  
and minds  
through Christ Jesus.

#### E. Define Larger Words

1. List and define the words having three or more syllables.
2. The King James Bible is known for using shorter words. Therefore, when a longer word is used, it probably has some significance.
3. The two verses used in examples above (Genesis 1:1; Philippians 4:7) have only one word each with three or more syllables. Each of these words is worthy of some extra study.
  - a. Genesis 1:1—beginning
  - b. Philippians 4:7—understanding

#### F. Summarize the Content

1. Summarize the content of the verse in your own words.
2. At this point, you should be able to do this without even looking at the verse. However, this is not required.

### IV. CLASSIFY THE VERSE

#### A. Classify the Contents

1. Classify the contents of the verse as history, prophecy, doctrine, commandment, prayer, promise, condemnation, question, or other.
2. Many verses may fit into more than one category.

#### B. Identify Keys of the Verse

1. Is this a key verse for a particular doctrine?
2. Is this a key verse for a practical issue?
3. Is this a key verse in the life of a person?
4. Is this a key verse in identifying a place or event?

### V. LOOK AT THE CONTEXT

#### A. What Precedes the Verse

1. Look at the three or four verses preceding this verse. How do they lead in to the verse you are studying?



2. This may be inadequate when the verse begins a book. However, there are still times when this step proves helpful.
3. How does this context help explain the meaning of the verse?

#### B. What Follows the Verse

1. Look at the three or four verses following this verse.
2. What connection exists between these verses and the one you are studying?

### VI. OTHER KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE VERSE

#### A. People

1. List the persons mentioned in this verse. Include the titles of God and the different persons of the trinity.
2. Briefly tell what part these persons play in the verse.

#### B. Time

1. Note any references to time that are made in the verse.
2. Include relational words such as “before” and “after.” These may not mention a particular time, but they can show a time relationship.

#### C. Places

1. What places are referenced?
2. This includes geographical locations (Bethlehem), specific locations (in the house) and generic locations (in thick darkness). List them all.
3. Some verses will not have any reference to a place or location.

#### D. Comparison and Contrast

1. What comparisons are made?
  - a. We learn new material in three basic ways: rote learning (repetition and drilling), comparison (seeing how things are like one another), and contrast (seeing how things differ from one another).
  - b. Proverbs and Psalms are full of parallel statements. Many of these make comparisons. Other portions of scripture likewise contain many comparisons.
  - c. God often uses comparisons to help define words and phrases in the Bible. Always be on the outlook for such helps. Many times the words *like* or *as* will be used in these verses.
  - d. Sometimes comparisons can even be unexpressed, i.e., Luke 13:32.
2. What contrasts are made?
  - a. Things that contrast are things that differ from one another.
  - b. Example: Isaiah 55:11



- (1) *Goeth forth with return*
- (2) *Void with prosper*

#### E. Cause and Effect

1. Look for instances of cause and effect: one thing or action being the cause or the result of another. Look at Philippians 4:7. We must have the peace of God (cause) in order to have our hearts and minds kept through Christ Jesus (effect).
2. Look also for any sequence of events. That is, are there any places where certain things must occur before another event occurs? For example, look at Isaiah 55:11.
  - a. First, the word of the Lord goes out.
  - b. Then, it accomplishes and prospers according to God's will.
  - c. Finally, it returns to the sender with fruit.

#### F. Omissions

1. Proper Bible study not only assumes that God inspired the words in the Bible, but also assumes that the omissions are of the Lord.
2. Omissions are on purpose and are meant to draw your attention to what the Lord wants emphasized.
  - a. See Matthew 14:19.
    - (1) The Lord gave the loaves to His disciples and His disciples to the multitude.
    - (2) We add in our mind the concept that the disciples gave the loaves to the multitude, yet the Bible omits the idea that the disciples *gave* the loaves. This places the emphasis on the fact that the Lord ultimately gave the loaves to the multitude, the disciples were only instruments.
  - b. See Philemon 1:12.
    - (1) We read the last phrase as though it says, "as mine own bowels."
    - (2) The Bible, however, omits the word *as*. This places a stronger emphasis on what the apostle Paul was trying to get across.

#### G. Incomplete Thoughts

1. Sometimes verses will not complete a thought, nor will the verses that surround it in the context. This is on purpose.
2. This will leave you to consider that there are several possible solutions to complete the thought.
3. See Psalm 6:3.
  - a. We see the sorrow of David in the words, "My soul is also sore vexed."
  - b. In the end of the verse David says, "but thou, O Lord, how long?"
  - c. What is David asking? How long till what?



4. See Luke 15:21.
  - a. In Luke 15:18-19, we are given the statements that the prodigal son intended to say to his father.
  - b. In Luke 15:21, we are given what he said. The prodigal son did not say the last phrase that he intended to say.
  - c. This may be because he was interrupted by the father in Luke 15:22 and the father did not have to hear the final words of the prodigal son.

#### H. Repetition

1. Are certain words or phrase repeated within the verse? If so, what does this add to your understanding of the verse?
2. The repetition or even lack thereof can be important even down to the word *and*.
  - a. The omission of *ands* will hurry you along through a list and push you to another point of emphasis.
  - b. The repetition of *ands* will slow you down going through a list to bring emphasis to the individual points of the list (See Genesis 19:12; Luke 15:22-23; Acts 1:8).

#### I. Cross-References

1. What verses contain similar phrases or thoughts?
2. How do these verses build your understanding of the verse being studied?

### VII. OUTLINE THE VERSE

#### A. Make an Outline of the Verse Content

1. Genesis 1:1—Creation
  - a. When Created—in the beginning
  - b. Who Created—God
  - c. What Created—heaven and earth
2. Philippians 4:7—Obtaining Peace
  - a. The Source of Peace—God
  - b. The Substance of Peace—passing all understanding
  - c. The Strength of Peace—keeping hearts and minds
  - d. The Satisfaction of Peace—through Christ Jesus

#### B. Make a Doctrinal or Practical Outline

1. Some verses strengthen the case for a doctrinal truth. If the verse you are studying fits into this scenario, make an outline of those points.
2. Many verses teach practical truths. If this verse contains such teaching, make an outline of what can be learned and applied to your walk.