

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

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Torrey's comprehensive manual on methods of Bible study, particularly topical study using concordances and topical textbooks. He provides systematic approaches for thorough examination of biblical subjects and lists major theological topics for organized study.

9 Chapters

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- Study of Individual Books

STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL BOOKS 1. An exceptionally good mental training.

2. Most difficult, yet most rewarding.

3. Should occupy the greater portion of our time.

Procedure in Studying Individual Books 1. The first work to do, is to select the book to study.

1.1 For your first book-study, choose a short book.

1.2 Choose a comparatively easy book.

1.3 Choose a book that is rich enough in its teaching to illustrate the advantages of this method of study and thus give a keen appetite for further studies of the same kind, i.e., 1Thessalonians, 1 John 2:1-29. The second work to do, is to master the general contents of the book, i.e., read the book over as many times as necessary at one setting.

3. The third work is to prepare an introduction to the book.

3.1 Questions a. Who wrote this book? b. To whom did he write? c. Where did he write? d. When did he write it? e. What was the occasion of his writing? f. What was the purpose for which he wrote? g. What were the circumstances of the author when he wrote? h. What were the circumstances of those to whom he wrote? i. What glimpse does the book give into the life and character of the author? j. What are the leading ideas of the book? k. What is the central truth of the book? l. What are the characteristics of the book?

4. The fourth work is to divide the book into proper sections.

5. The fifth work is to take up each verse in order and study it.

5.1 Get the exact meaning of the verse. a. Exact meaning of the words used, i.e., must have a concordance -- Strong's (best), Young's (second), and/ or Cruden's (third). [Note: Contemporary Bible students may be best served by computer based concordances found in such programs as the Online Bible.] b. Notice the context. c. Examination of parallel passages, i.e., The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge is helpful. [Note: Contemporary Bible students may be best served by computer based Cross References based upon The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, as found also in the Online Bible.] 5.2 Analyze the verse, i.e., write down what the verse teaches, (several different things).

6. The sixth work in the study of the book is to classify the results obtained by the verse by verse analysis.

7. We come to the seventh and last work. This is simply to meditate upon, and so digest, the results obtained.

- Topical Study

TOPICAL STUDY No one method of Bible study will answer, if one desires to be a well-rounded and well-balanced Bible student. We never know one truth correctly until we know it in its proper relationship to other truth.

1. Be systematic.

List of Topics

God.

God as a Spirit. The Unity of God. The Eternity of God. The Omnipresence of God. The Personality of God. The Omnipotence of God. The Holiness of God. The Love of God. The Righteousness of God. The Mercy or Loving Kindness of God. The Faithfulness of God.

Jesus Christ. The Divinity of Christ. The Subordination of Jesus Christ to the Father. The Human Nature of Jesus Christ. The Character of Jesus Christ. His Holiness. His Love to God. His Love to Man. His Love to Souls. His Compassion. His Prayerfulness. His Meekness and Humility. The Death of Jesus Christ. The Purpose of Christ's Death; Why Did Christ Die? For Whom Did Christ Die? The Results of Christ's Death. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Fact of the Resurrection. The Results of the Resurrection. The Importance of the Resurrection. The Manner of the Resurrection. The Ascension and Exaltation of Christ. The Return or Coming Again of Jesus Christ. The Fact of His Coming Again. The Manner of His Coming Again. The Purpose of His Coming Again. The Time of His Coming Again. The Reign of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit.

Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Deity of the Holy Spirit.

Distinction of the Holy Spirit from God the Father, and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son.

Names of the Holy Spirit. The Work of the Holy Spirit. In the Universe. In Man in General. In the Believer. In the Prophet and the Apostle. In Jesus Christ.

Man. His Original Condition. His Fall. The Present Standing Before God and Present Condition of Man Outside of the Redemption That is in Jesus Christ. The Future Destiny of Those Who Reject the Redemption That is in Jesus Christ.

Justification. The New Birth.

Adoption. The Believer's Assurance of Salvation. The Flesh.

Sanctification.

Cleansing.

Consecration.

Faith.

Repentance.

Prayer.

Thanksgiving.

Praise.

Worship.

Love to God.

Love to Jesus Christ.

Love to Man. The Future Destiny of Believers.

Angels. Their Nature and Position. Their Number. Their Abode. Their Character. Their Work. Their Destiny.

Satan or the Devil. His Existence. His Nature and Position. His Abode. His Work. Our Duty Regarding Him. His Destiny.

Demons. Their Existence. Their Nature. Their Work. Their Destiny.

2. Be thorough.

2.1 Examine every passage in the Bible that bears on this subject.

2.2 How to find all the passages that bear on any subject. a. By the use of the Concordance, i.e., each passage and synonymous words. b. By the use of a Bible text book, i.e., Inglis' The Bible Text Cyclopedea. [Note: Contemporary Bible students may find hard copy and online copies of The New Topical Textbook and Nave's Topical Bible to perform a similar function.] 3. Be exact, i.e., get the exact meaning of each passage.

4. Classify and write down your results. [Note: This is a good place for a simple, computerized data base.]

- Biographical Study

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY 1. It is really a special form of topical study.

2. Method.

2.1 Collect all passages in the Bible which the person is mentioned.

2.2 Analyze the character of the person.

2.3 Note the elements of power and success.

2.4 Note the elements of weakness and failure.

2.5 Note the difficulties overcome.

2.6 Note the helps to success.

2.7 Note the privileges abused.

2.8 Note the opportunities neglected.

2.9 Note the opportunities improved.

2.10 Note the mistakes made.

2.11 Note the perils avoided.

2.12 Make a sketch of the life in hand, i.e., vivid, realistic, etc.

2.13 Summarize the lessons we should learn from the story of this person's life.

2.14 Note the person in hand in his relationship to Jesus.

- Study of Types

STUDY OF TYPES 1. Be sure you have Biblical warrant for your supposed type.

2. Begin with more simple and evident types, e.g., Passover (Exodus 12:1-51 and 1 Corinthians 5:7); High Priest; Tabernacle.

3. Be on your guard against the fanciful and overstrained.

4. In studying any passage of possible typical suggestion, look up all the Scripture references.

5. Study carefully the meaning of the names of persons and places mentioned.

- Study of the Books in Order

STUDY OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN THE ORDER GIVEN IN THE BIBLE

Advantages:

1. It is the only method by which you will get an idea of the Book as a whole.
2. It is the only method by which you are likely to cover the whole Book, and so take in the entire scope of God's Revelation 3:1-22. It is the best method to enable one to get hold of the unity of the Bible and its organic character.
4. It is a great corrective to one-sidedness and crankiness, i.e., Calvinistic and Arminian, Trinitarian and Unitarian, etc.

It would be well to have three methods of study in progress at the same time:

1. The study of some book.
2. The study of topics (perhaps topics suggested by the book studies).
3. The study of the Bible in course.

(Every other method of Bible study should be supplemented by studying the Bible in course.)

- Studying in Chronological Order

STUDYING THE VARIOUS PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE IN THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER 1.
"Clews to Holy Writ" by Miss Petrie (American Tract Society).

- Study for Practical Usefulness

STUDY OF THE BIBLE FOR PRACTICAL USEFULNESS IN DEALING WITH MEN

Classes of Men:

1. The careless and indifferent.
2. Those who wish to be saved but do not know how.
3. Those who lack assurance.
4. Backsliders.
5. Those who know how to be saved but have difficulties.
6. Those who are cherishing false hopes.
7. Skeptics.
8. Infidels.
9. Those who wish to put off the decision.
10. Roman Catholics.
11. Jews.
12. Spiritualists (occult).
13. Christian Scientists.
14. Secret Disciples.
15. The Sorrowing.
16. The Persecuted.
17. The Discouraged.
18. The Despondent.
19. The Morbid.
20. Worldly Christians.
21. The Stingy.

- Fundamental Conditions of the Most Profitable

FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THE MOST PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY 1. The student must be born again. a. 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 ["13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)], John 3:3 ["Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)]. b. It requires spiritual sense to make a man a competent teacher of the Bible.

2. A love for the Bible. a. Job 23:12 ["Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12)], Jeremiah 15:16 ["Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of Hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16)]. b. Abounding life means abounding hunger for the Word. c. Study of the Word stimulates love for the Word.

3. A willingness to do hard work. a. Proverbs 2:1-5 ["1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5)], Psalms 1:2 ["But his delight is in the Law of the LORD; and in His Law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalms 1:2)], Joshua 1:8 ["This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8)], Luke 2:19 ["But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19)]. b. Intellectual laziness lies at the bottom of a large percent of fruitless Bible reading. c. One pound of beef well chewed and digested and assimilated, will give more strength than tons of beef merely glanced at. d. Spend fifteen minutes on each word in Psalms 23:1 ["The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1)] or Php_4:19 ["But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php_4:19)].

4. A will wholly surrendered to God. a. John 7:17 ["If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17)]. b. It is simply impossible to get the largest profit out of your Bible study until you surrender your will to God. c. A surrendered will will do more to make the Bible an open Book than a university education.

5. The student of the Bible who would get the greatest profit out of his studies must be obedient to its teachings as soon as he sees them. a. James 1:22-24 ["22 But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth

his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:22-24)]. b. Truth obeyed leads to more truth. Truth disobeyed destroys the capacity for discovering truth. c. Use, and you get more; refuse, and you lose all. d. Whatever duty you find commanded in the Bible, do it at once. e. Truth not lived and stood for, flees.

6. A child-like mind. a. Matthew 11:25 ["At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, LORD of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25)]. b. A child is not full of its own wisdom. c. Do not come to the Bible full of your own ideas, and seeking from it confirmation of them. Come rather to find out what are God's ideas as He revealed them there. d. Every time we open our Bibles we would do well to get humbly down before God and say, "Father, I am but a child, teach me."

7. Study it [the Bible] as the Word of God. a. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 ["For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13), Romans 9:20 ["Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20), Genesis 5:24 ["And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24)]. b. Involves

(1) The unquestioning acceptance of its teachings when definitely ascertained, even when they appear unreasonable or impossible.

(2) Absolute reliance upon all its promises in all their length and breadth.

(3) Obedience -- prompt, exact obedience, without asking any questions -- to its every precept.

(4) Study it as in God's presence.

8. Prayerfulness. a. Psalms 119:18 ["Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law" (Psalms 119:18)], James 1:5-6 ["5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:5-6). b. What new light shines from an old familiar text as you bend over it in prayer. c. Prayer will do more than a college education to make the Bible an open and a glorious Book.

- Final Suggestions

FINAL SUGGESTIONS 1. Study the Bible daily. a. Acts 17:11 ["These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11)]. b. Many will say I cannot spare the time. It will be time saved. c. Fix upon some time, even if it is no more than fifteen minutes to start with, and hold it until you are ready to set a longer period.

2. Select for your Bible study the best portion of the day you can give it. a. Do not put your Bible study off until nearly bed-time, when the mind is drowsy. b. Do not take the time immediately after a heavy meal. c. The early hours of the day are the best for Bible study. d. It is well wherever possible, to lock yourself in and lock the world out.

3. In all your Bible study look for Christ in the passage under examination. a. Luke 24:27 ["And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)].

4. Memorize Scripture. a. Psalms 119:11 ["Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalms 119:11)], Matthew 4:4; Matthew 4:7; Matthew 4:10 ["4 But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:4; Matthew 4:7; Matthew 4:10)], Isaiah 1:4 ["Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, the yare gone away backward" (Isaiah 1:4)], 2 Timothy 3:17 ["That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:17)]. b. Memorize the Scripture in systematic form.

5. Utilize spare moments in the study of the Bible. a. Or one can utilize it in the meditation upon texts stored away in memory. b. There is no way of economizing time so thriftily as putting the moments that are going to waste into the study of or meditation upon the Word of God.

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