

## Learning God's Word

### How to Study the Bible

*Note: Links to all resources in this Discussion Guide can be found online at <http://bit.ly/venture-bible-resources>.*

My previous 2 posts dealt with the what and the why of studying the Bible as God's Word. Hopefully you know by now that you should be consistent in reading the Bible, in plugging into a group where you can ask questions about things you don't understand in the Bible, and that God will bear fruit in your life when you are persistent in studying the Bible over time.

This week we are focusing on the nitty-gritty details of how to study the Bible.

I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of different Bible study plans. Every single person who studies the Bible probably has their favorite.

The purpose of this life-group discussion is not to convince you that one plan is better than any other. It would be impossible to impose a ten-step process for Bible study that would maximize spiritual growth for every single person in the church. What might be the greatest breakthrough in helping one person consistently read and understand the Bible might seem like gibberish to someone else.

When considering a plan or process for your personal Bible study, consider these questions:

- **What is your learning style?** Do you retain learning best by listening, reading, discussing, miming, acting out a script, drawing/painting what you hear, touching, etc.?
- **What is your reading level?**
- **What is your attention span?**
- **How much time do you have?**
- **What distracts you more than anything else?**
- **How do you need to become more disciplined?**

### Finding Your Learning Style

I recommend trying different ways of reading the Bible to find what works for you. You might learn best by reading short portions or long. Or maybe by listening. The answer will probably be a combination.

For example, I understand the Bible best when I am able to listen to an entire book being read in one sitting. I very seldom have a one-hour block of time in an environment quiet enough to do that. So, my daily plan must involve reading a chapter at a time.

Every once in a while, you should try a method of Bible reading that is out of the ordinary for

you. This is the only way you will be able to know your best style of learning.

### Learn from Each Other

Don't try to be so individualistic in your approach that you can't join a small group. Gathering with the church for worship and small group study is ABSOLUTELY VITAL growing in your faith.

Everyone is different and we all have our own unique way of looking at things. Just because the preaching isn't exactly your favored style or the people in the small group don't learn exactly the way you do is no reason to stay away from the group.

We learn from each other as we read the Bible together. Do not miss this.

Take time in your group for every person to talk about their favorite methods for reading the Bible, Why are they your favorite? Pay special attention to older folks who have been consistent for many years. They probably have some secrets to share.

### Tools for Bible Study

Reading the Bible on its own terms (as opposed to reading what other people say about it) is the absolute most important thing that you can do for your faith. Most people will admit, however, some passages of Scripture are difficult to understand without help.

Here's a set of guidelines for getting a richer experience from your personal Bible study. These steps are listed in order of importance.

#### Step 1: Read the Bible!

Don't let anything keep you from doing this. Even when you don't feel like it or it doesn't make sense, just read. Don't feel bad if you miss a day of reading or if you don't read very much. We have the promise that all Scripture is God breathed and profitable. Some reading is far better than no reading.

#### Step 2: Study Together & Talk About It

Have an accountability partner and/or small group to meet with once a week to talk about what you are reading. If Austin is preaching through Titus and your small group is studying Titus, read Titus every week. You will know far more about Titus at the end of the sermon series than you even dreamed possible. Seek out someone who is a serious student of the Bible.

#### Step 3: Follow the Chain

Almost every English Bible contains what we call chain references. When the text references another text, look for a small letter with a corresponding footnote. That footnote will often point you to another passage of Scripture.

If you read something meaningful, underline it. Then when you are done reading, go back and read the footnotes and Scriptures referred to in the chain reference.

## Step 4: Mark It Up

Use pen to mark up your Bible and/or write in a journal. Just the act of underlining important words or phrases will help you to remember them. They will also help you next time you read that passage.

Jot down your thoughts about what you just read. This will help your mind both remember it and process what it means.

My grandfather was a missionary pastor who died when I was four years old. His old Bible is one of my most valuable possessions. If your children come to faith in Christ as a result of your life, a worn out and marked up Bible and journal will be one of the most cherished gifts you ever leave them.

## Step 5: Gain Understanding Using Commentaries

Get a commentary to read after you do your Bible reading for the day.

There are three basic types of commentaries:

### **Paraphrase**

This is where a Bible scholar rewrites the original Greek or Hebrew into modern English. It's different from a translation because those are done by committees of scholars while paraphrases are done by individuals. Translations are more accurate than paraphrases, because there is more accountability to the original text when it has to be approved by an entire experts in the original language. Paraphrases, however, can add a lot of depth that might get lost in the formal translation process. My all-time favorite paraphrase is The Message by Eugene Peterson. John Phillips also has an excellent paraphrase.

### **Study Bible**

We recommend the CSB Study Bible, The ESV Study Bible, the MacArthur Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible. There are other good ones, but these are the ones that we use as pastors on a regular basis. All of the notes are informative and written by scholars who can be trusted for their views on Scripture.

### **Multi-Volume Commentary**

These usually cover one book at a time and go into extreme depth about the background, language, and application for each individual verse. A serious Bible student should be serious about commentaries. My personal favorites are New American Commentary, the MacArthur Bible Commentary, the New International Commentary, the Pillar Commentary, or the Tyndale Commentary. For practical application of each verse of Scripture, Preaching the Word, edited by R. Kent Hughes, and Warren Wiersbe's Be commentaries are good to read. There are other great commentaries, but you should be aware of what each individual author believes about the

nature of the Bible as you read it. Some commentaries outside of the ones listed above will present ideas that are inconsistent with Scripture. Austin also has some good single-volume commentaries listed in his sermon notes.

### Step 6: Listen and Learn

Listen to lectures about Scripture and expositional preaching. Start with Venture's archive of podcasts. We preach expository sermons because we believe the Bible is the most important thing for you to learn.

You can also find all kinds of good podcasts and online sermons from:

- Grace to You
- Ligonier Ministries
- Desiring God
- The Gospel Coalition

These four websites and podcasts will offer you enough Bible learning tools to last for years.

## Bible Study Resources

This list\* contains all the resources recommended by Austin Rammell and Jonathan Pugh. Don't worry. You don't have to use all of them. Just start with one and bookmark this page to come back when you're ready for more.

\*Links to all the resources in this list can be found at [bit.ly/venture-bible-resources](http://bit.ly/venture-bible-resources).

### Venture Downloads

- Sermon: How to Study the Bible by Austin Rammell
- Austin's Bible Study Resources
- Venture Message Archives (Audio, Video & Sermon Notes from 2015 – Present)
- Venture Podcast (Audio from 2009 – Present) iTunes | Google Play Music

### Understandable and Reliable Bible Translations

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

### Paraphrase Bibles

- The Message by Eugene Peterson
- John Phillips Bible Paraphrase

### Helpful and Trusted Study Bibles

- ESV Study Bible
- HCSB Study Bible
- MacArthur Study Bible

- CSB Study Bible
- Reformation Study Bible

#### Helpful and Trusted Comprehensive Bible Commentaries

- New Bible Commentary (Wenham, Motyer, Carson & France)
- IVP Bible Background Commentary (InterVarsity Press)
- New American Commentary
- MacArthur Bible Commentary
- New International Commentary
- Pillar Commentary
- Tyndale Commentary
- Preaching the Word Commentary
- Warren Wiersbe Be Commentary

#### Websites That Provide Sound Biblical Study Materials at No Cost

- Bible.org
- TheGospelCoalition.org
- BibleStudyTools.com
- Monergism.com

#### Digital Bible Library and Software

- Logos.com

#### Recommended Podcasts

- Grace to You (gty.org)
- Ligonier Ministries (ligonier.org)
- Desiring God (desiringgod.org)
- The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org)

#### Bible Apps for Your Tablet & Smartphone

- BibleGateway.com
- YouVersion.com