

How to Study Like a Theologian

According to Christianity Today

- 19% of churchgoers personally (not as part of a church worship service) read the Bible every day.
- 18% of churchgoers rarely or never read the Bible.
- 25% indicate they read the Bible a few times a week,
- 14% say they read the Bible "Once a Week"
- 22 percent say "Once a Month" or "A Few Times a Month." (Note that "churchgoers" does not mean "born again" or other things-- just what it says.

According to Barna

- The percentage of people who do not believe there are any sacred writings (including the Bible) doubled between 2011 and 2016.
- The percentage of people who view the Bible as a sufficient guide for living a meaningful life dropped from 53% in 2011 to 45% in 2016
- The percentage of people who believe the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches dropped from 46% in 1991 to 33% in 2016

Skepticism about the Bible is gaining a stronger cultural foothold.

Younger generations no longer accept the song "Jesus Loves Me This I Know" because they won't allow a "gay-bashing-book" to tell them so.

Sometimes it feels that modern Christians have no other reason for embracing the Bible than that a spiritual mentor told them they should.

Many men who will one day be asked by their children and grandchildren WHY they so value the Bible or WHY it's the Word of God, will be forced to respond "I'm not sure." As post-modernism and post-Christian attitudes flood our culture, you can no longer afford the luxury of lazy intellectualism.

The Church is desperately in need of men who will influence their families, their neighborhoods, and their society by studying the Bible to demonstrate how the most pressing of modern questions are answered in God's Word, and how Jesus is the solution to peace we pursue.

You need to deepen your study.

Goal: Every man can deepen their study by answering three questions about the Bible.

[SLIDE] Where do we get the Bible?

- The Biblical author writes (the autograph)
- Readers pass the autograph around
- Readers recognize the significance of the writing and begin to copy it (manuscript).
- Multiple manuscripts are made.
- Copies are made from the copies.
- The original autograph is eventually lost or destroyed.
- Mistakes are made in manuscripts as copies are created.
- Until the printing press in 1454 every manuscript was copied by hand.
- Thousands of Biblical manuscripts are in existence today—all of them are several generations removed from the original autograph.

[TRANSITION SLIDE]

The Bible has been adapting to technology for centuries:

[CLICK] 1. Stone (1400 BC)

- Many famous inscriptions have been found in Egypt and Babylon inscribed on stone.

- God gave Moses the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone (Ex. 31:18; 34:1, 28).
- Two other examples are the Moabite Stone (850 B.C.), and the Siloam Inscription found in Hezekiah's tunnel by the Pool of Siloam (700 B.C.).

[CLICK] 2. Clay (1000 BC)

- Clay was the predominate writing material in in Assyria and Babylonia.
- Clay was formed into small tablets and symbols call cuneiform writing were impressed into the material then baked or sun dried.
- Thousands of these have been uncovered

[CLICK] 3. *Wood.*

- Wood was the common writing surface in Greece for many centuries.
- Many scholars believe Isaiah 30:8 and Habakkuk 2:2 refer to this writing material.

[CLICK] 4. *Leather.*

- The Jewish Talmud requires Scriptures be copied on animal skins: leather.
- Rolls were made by sewing several skins together that measure up to 100 feet in length.

[CLICK] 5. *Papyrus.* (300 AD)

- Original New Testament autographs were almost certainly written on papyrus.
- Rolls averaged about 30 feet in length, but one has been found that is 144 feet long.

[CLICK] 6. *Vellum or parchment.* (175 BC)

- Vellum came into existence around 175 BC.

- The King of Egypt cut off the supply of papyrus to King Eumenes II of Pergammum so he perfected a new process for the treatment of skins.
- Originally vellum was made from the skins of calves and antelopes while parchment was from the skin of sheep and goats.
- This produced a new kind of leather capable of handling writing on both sides.
- By the 4th Century AD it was more popular than papyrus
- Almost all known manuscripts are on vellum.

[NOT IN SLIDE] Codex (100-200 AD)

- the sheets of writing material were put together in a book form instead of joining them side by side to make a roll.
- The codex was easier to carry and made it possible to have much more scripture in one place.¹

[CLICK] 397 – Council of Carthage: Among the first to define the Bible as the Jewish Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.

[CLICK] 405 – Latin Vulgate: first printed version of the complete canonized Bible

[CLICK] 1382 – Wycliffe translate Bible from Latin Vulgate into English

[CLICK] 1454 – Gutenberg uses the Latin Vulgate as the first document to be used on his new printing press

[CLICK] 1516 – Erasmus prints the first New Testament in Greek.

[CLICK] 1525 – William Tyndale, translating from the original Greek, prints the first New Testament in English.

¹ Duffield, G. P., & Van Cleave, N. M. (1983). *Foundations of Pentecostal theology* (p. 31). Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College.

[CLICK] 1535 – The Coverdale Bible is printed: first complete English Bible

[CLICK] 1537 – Matthew Bible is printed: combined edition of Tyndale and Coverdale

[CLICK] 1539 – The Great Bible: First authorized Bible. Required to be read in every church and was chained to the church desk.

[CLICK] 1560 – The Geneva Bible: most popular Bible of the century. Used in homes across England. First Bible to have verse divisions. Was the Bible of Shakespeare and the American Pilgrims

[CLICK] 1611 – King James Version: is actually a revision of Tyndale's earlier work. Is also called the authorized version and has been the most popular bible for 400 years.

[CLICK] 1885 – English Revised Edition: Revision of the KJV using more reliable manuscripts.

[CLICK] 1901 – American Standard Version: The ASV cleared up the archaic writing of the KJV but also lost much of the beauty of the language.

[CLICK] 1952 – Revised Standard Version: a revision of the ASV using newly discovered manuscripts. Attempted to retain the linguistic beauty of the KJV.

[CLICK] 1970 – New American Standard: revision of the ASV

[CLICK] 1982 – New King James Version by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 130 respected Bible scholars, church leaders, and lay Christians worked for seven years to create a completely new, modern translation of Scripture, yet one that would retain the purity and stylistic

beauty of the original King James. With unyielding faithfulness to the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts, the translation applies the most recent research in archaeology, linguistics, and textual studies.

[CLICK] 1984 – New International Version: Translated by scholars from more than 13 denominations and 5 different countries.

[CLICK] 1986 – Bob Pritchett of Logos releases a simple program to quickly search through the KJV in plain text.

[CLICK] 2002 – The Message: strives to help readers hear the living Word of God—the Bible—in a way that engages and intrigues us right where we are. Eugene Peterson recognized that the original sentence structure is very different from that of contemporary English. He decided to strive for the spirit of the original manuscripts—to express the rhythm of the voices, the flavor of the idiomatic expressions, the subtle connotations of meaning that are often lost in English translations.

[CLICK] 2007 – YouVersion website opens

[CLICK] 2008 – YouVersion releases on IOS as one of the first apps for the iPhone.

[CLICK] 2011 – NIV is updated. By working with input from pastors and Bible scholars, by grappling with the latest discoveries about biblical languages and the biblical world, and by using cutting-edge research on English usage, the Committee on Bible Translation has updated the text to ensure that the New International Version of the Bible remains faithful to Howard Long’s original inspiration.

[CLICK] 2017 – YouVersion – Over 900 language, over 1200 Bible Versions, 200 Million app downloads

[CLICK] 2013

- ~~95 different English translations of Scripture~~
- ~~518 languages have the complete New Testament~~
- ~~1005 have at least one Book~~
- ~~1275 have the New Testament~~
- ~~5.8 billion people have access to Scripture in their language~~

[CLICK] 2017

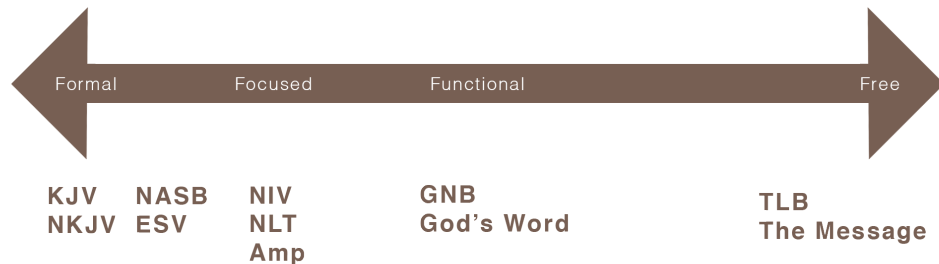
- 636 languages have the complete New Testament
- 1145 languages have a portion of the Bible
- 1442 languages have a portion the New Testament
- All told, that's 3223 languages with some form of Scripture
- 6 billion people have access to Scripture in their native language
- But still, 1.5 billion lack Scripture in their original language

II. What Bible should I use?

a. Definitions.

- i. Original Language – the language one is translating from
- ii. Receptor Language – the language one is translating to
- iii. Historical Distance – differences that exist between the original and the receptor language. Includes issues of words, grammar, idioms, culture and history
- iv. Formal Equivalence – the attempt to keep as close to the form of the Greek or Hebrew in both words and grammar. Word for word translation
- v. Functional (Dynamic) Equivalence – the attempt to translate the sense of a sentence or phrase into the receptor language. Sense for sense translation. Translating the meanings of complete sentences or phrases.
- vi. Focused (Optimal) Equivalence – the attempt to find a balance between formal and functional equivalence.

- vii. Free Equivalence – the attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another.



III. How Should I Study?

a. Inductive Bible Study

i. Observation

1. What does the passage say?
2. How does the passage say it?
3. A passage emphasizes one principal truth
4. You seek to find out how the writer develops the principal truth in the passage.
5. You need to determine what is primary and what is subordinate in the passage.
6. You need to evaluate how the principal truth of the passage fits into the surrounding context.

ii. Interpretation

1. What did the passage mean to them, at that time, in that location?
2. Look for situational clues in the passage itself.
3. Ask yourself...
 - a. ...what situation is the writer talking about?
 - b. ...what situation is the writer writing from?
 - c. ...what situation is the writer writing to?
4. Look for purpose clues in the passage itself.

5. Ask yourself...
 - a. ...what is the writer's purpose?
 - b. ...what is the writer trying to accomplish?
6. Look at what the passage says in light of the situation and writer's purpose.

iii. Application

1. How does the principal truth of the passage apply to me, where I am, right now?
2. Look for a universal timeless principle that can be applied today.
3. The Bible was written using Local
 Temporal Details
4. It's truths are available as Universal Timeless
 Principles
5. Look to see if there is a comparable situation in our world to the one in the text.
6. Notice in what ways the "then and there" and "here and now" are similar and different.
7. There must be a line of continuity between the "then and there" and the "here and now."

iv. Communication

1. How can I share what I've discovered with others?
2. Preaching: proclaims the message of the passage
3. Teaching: structures a learning experience to help someone discover what the passage says
4. Sharing: showing someone else what you've discovered.

b. Steps of Inductive Bible Study

i. Observation

1. *Step 1 (1): Identify Purpose Clues

- a. Purpose clues are the very words of Scripture that identify why a Biblical writer wrote to an audience.

- b. Purpose clues inform modern readers about the original meaning of a passage.
- c. To find a purpose clue, read a sentence and ask yourself, “Does this explain why the author was writing to this group of people?”
- d. Keep an eye out for writing that appears to be directed to a particular person or group of people. These are often purpose clues.
- e. Words such as “you” and “us” often are near purpose clues.

2. *Step 2 (2): Identify Situation Clues

- a. Situation clues are the author’s own words that give insight into what is happening in the life context of the original reader.
- b. Situation clues tell us about the original culture, emotions, and happenings of Biblical life.
- c. Situation clues are usually found by inference. Rarely does a writer come right out and say something is happening. Instead the writer will allude to an event or emotion, and we can infer about a situation.
- d. To find a situation clue, read a sentence and ask yourself, “Does this give me a hint about the situation the Biblical author is writing to?”

3. *Step 3 (3): Identify the Key Center

- a. The Key Center is the main idea of the passage in the writer’s own words.
- b. Often the Key Center sums up the intent of the passage.
- c. Sometimes the Key Center does not summarize, but instead, clearly marks itself as the most important content piece of the passage.

- d. To find the Key Center, read a sentence and ask yourself, “Does this sentence, or a phrase in the sentence, seem to stand out in importance above the rest?”

ii. Interpretation

1. Step 4: Identify Paragraph Points

- a. Do not trust the English version you read to divide paragraphs appropriately.
- b. Read the passage and identify for yourself where new paragraphs exist.
- c. One way to simplify this task is to retype the passage into a word processing document with no paragraph markings. Then divide the passage into paragraphs into appropriate paragraphs
- d. Knowing where paragraphs begin and end help the biblical student understand the original author’s thinking.
- e. These are the main ideas of the paragraph
- f. Use the biblical writer’s own words to identify the Paragraph Point
- g. Be able to summarize the Paragraph Point with one or two words.

2. *Step 5(4): Structurally Diagram the Passage

- a. This is similar to sentence diagramming that you practiced in grammar, but there are no rules.
- b. Pictorializing is the process of taking each sentence of the passage out of the normal left-to-right reading.
- c. Place the words of the sentence in different orders and locations to show how the words relate to each other.

- d. There is no right or wrong way to Pictorialize the passage. It is done in a way that makes sense to you.

3. **Step 6: Pinpoint Critical Topics**

- a. Now that you know what the paragraph structure looks like and you have seen how the words of the passage relate to each other through Pictorializing, identify the critical topics that the passage is speaking about.
- b. Be able to support each topic with the scripture passage.
- c. Since scripture interprets scripture, now is the time to use other scriptures to confirm the meaning you are beginning to assign to this passage.
- d. Many Bibles have cross references built into them. These are useful at this point in the study.
- e. A useful tool is www.biblestudytools.com, or www.biblegateway.com, or a desktop Bible software like Logos or PC Study Bible
- f. Write down the other scriptures that support your thinking about meaning.
- g. Also write down the scriptures that seem to deconstruct your thinking about the passages meaning.
- h. Draw conclusions about the meaning of the passage based on your studies to this point.
- i. This step may lead you into additional passage studies using this inductive method in order to reach a conclusion on passage meaning.

iii. Application

- 1. ***Step 7(5): Identify the Main Promises and Universal Theme**

- a. Scripture is full of promises. What promises are available in this passage?
 - b. God's promises are not bound to time or space. Look for statements in Scripture that can be safely interpreted as a broad promise without removing it from context.
 - c. Universal Themes are similar to Promises.
 - d. They are not bound to time or space.
 - e. The difference between a Promise and a Theme:
 - f. Themes are broad ways in which God tends to work.
 - g. Promises are agreements God establishes between Himself and man
2. **Step 8:** What does the passage say about Christ?
- a. All of Scripture is about God redeeming man to Himself.
 - b. God redeems us through Jesus.
 - c. Therefore, all of Scripture is going to point to Jesus.
 - d. The Old Testament points forward to Him.
 - e. The Gospels reveal Him.
 - f. The New Testament points back to Him.
 - g. In the identification of our Main Promises and Universal Themes we should look for how these relate to Christ.
3. ***Step 9(6):** Identify the area of greatest application for you (or others)
- a. Based on what you have studied, the main promises, the universal theme, and what the passage says about Christ, determine the points of greatest application.
 - b. This could be different each time you study the passage

- c. Application usually relates to current life experiences and situations.
- d. Listen to the Lord tell you about universal applications.

iv. Communication

1. **Step 10:** Determine how you will communicate what you learned

- a. How can I share what I've discovered with others?
- b. Preaching: proclaims the message of the passage
- c. Teaching: structures a learning experience to help someone discover what the passage says
- d. Sharing: showing someone else what you've discovered.