



INTRODUCTION

...the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:9-11)

Nothing on this side of eternity is more valuable or precious than God's Word. Yet, the vast majority of Christians struggle to even read their Bible on any consistent basis, much less study it. For some, it's a matter of priority; reading the Bible just doesn't make the cut. But for others, it's not so much a matter of "want to," but "how to." Where does one begin in studying the Bible?

Help Me Study the Bible is a summer-long series intended to help Christians learn to read, study, and apply God's Word. Each week, we will look at a new passage from a different book of the Bible with the goal of learning what questions to ask in order to uncover the riches of Scripture. We will use the COMA method made popular in David Helm's book *One to One Bible Reading*. With slightly modified questions based on the genre of the passage, we will work together to understand the **context**, make **observations**, determine the **meaning**, and **apply** the truths discovered in the passage, all with an eye toward Christ, in whom the scriptures find their fulfillment (Luke 24:44).

SIX PILLARS OF FAITHFUL BIBLE STUDY

Keep the following principles in mind whenever you are studying the Bible. They will serve as road signs to keep you focused on the path of reading, understanding, and applying Scripture as the Divine Author intends.

1. The Bible is Inspired (God is the author).

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. -- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (CSB)

20 Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, 21 because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. -- 2 Peter 1:19-21 (CSB)

Every word in the Bible comes from the mind and mouth of God himself. In his wisdom, he used over 40 men to write down the words of Scripture, speaking to them directly, giving them visions, or more often than not, moving in their minds and hearts to record everything he intended to say to his people. To reject the Bible, then, is to reject God himself (John 15:7-11).

2. The Bible is Inerrant (There is no mixture of error in its matter. Therefore, it is totally true

and the Scripture cannot be broken -- John 10:35 (CSB)

7 The instruction of the Lord is perfect,
renewing one's life;
the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy,
making the inexperienced wise. -- Psalms 19:7 (CSB)

God perfectly communicated his message through human authors to his people. Because the printing press had not been invented yet, the Bible was hand-copied and passed down to each generation. Inevitably, minor misspellings, misplaced marginal notes, and other errors occurred along the way. However, we have so many early copies of the Scriptures (more than any other "holy book" or work of antiquity) that we know that we have 99% of the original words, and those words that we are not certain about do not affect any major Christian belief. So, when you read a modern translation of the Bible, you are

reading an accurate reflection of what God initially gave his people thousands of years ago. There is no reason to doubt that you are studying the very words of God. In fact, you have every reason to be confident that God has faithfully preserved his Word throughout history for his glory, the good of his people, and the advancement of the gospel.

3. The Bible is Infallible (Scripture is completely trustworthy).

30 God — his way is perfect;
the word of the Lord is pure.

He is a shield to all who take refuge in him. -- Psalms 18:30 (CSB)

7 The works of his hands are truth and justice;
all his instructions are trustworthy.

8 They are established forever and ever,
enacted in truth and in uprightness. -- Psalms 111:7-8 (CSB)

The Bible is God's good gift to his children. Since God himself is trustworthy, we can be sure that his words are trustworthy also. Every time you open God's Word, you can be certain that you will never be led astray from what is true and right. Knowing his Word is trustworthy gives us confidence to obey the Lord, even if it costs us everything.

4. The Bible is Authoritative (It is the definitive source for knowing what to believe and how to live).

2 You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the Lord your God I am giving you. -- Deuteronomy 4:2 (CSB)

3 If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words. -- 1 Timothy 6:3-4 (CSB)

God's Word is final. No matter what situation in life we find ourselves in, Scripture is to be our guiding light, showing us what we are to believe about himself and the various aspects of his world, as well as how we are to speak and act. We are not free to live however we please, since the Lord, who bought us with the blood of his Son, has spoken his very words "for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).

5. The Bible is Sufficient (Everything needed to be saved and to grow as a Christian is found in God's Word).

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. -- 2 Timothy 3:14-15 (CSB)

3 His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 By these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. -- 2 Peter 1:3-4 (CSB)

While creation shows us that God exists, only the gospel of Jesus Christ can lead us to a saving relationship with him (Romans 10:17). Not only that, but God's Word is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to grow us in godliness. As we study and obey the Bible, the Holy Spirit works in us "both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

6. The Bible is Clear (Everything God has chosen to reveal to his people can be clearly understood).

29 The hidden things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law. - Deuteronomy 29:29 (CSB)

14 I rejoice in the way revealed by your decrees as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on your precepts
and think about your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word. -- Psalms 119:14-16 (CSB)

Though there are some things in the Bible that can be hard to wrap our minds around (2 Peter 3:16), everything needed to love and live for Christ can be clearly understood by the one who is willing to study (Psalm 119:9-11).

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

A narrative is a story. When we read the book of Genesis, we are reading an account of the beginning of the world and God's people, Israel. Naturally, then, this is a good place to start in learning to study the Bible.

Before you start reading, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand, believe, and obey his Word. Bible study, after all, is intended to help us see more clearly and savor more intensely our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Genesis 22:1-19

1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he answered.

2 "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

3 So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together.

7 Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father." And he replied, "Here I am, my son." Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.

9 When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am." 12 Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." 13 Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. 14 And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, so today it is said, "It will be provided on the Lord's mountain."

15 Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn," this is the Lord's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, 17 I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. 18 And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command."

19 Abraham went back to his young men, and they got up and went together to Beer-sheba. And Abraham settled in Beer-sheba. -- Genesis 22:1-19 (CSB)

COMA QUESTIONS FOR GENESIS 22:1-19

Work your way through each section of COMA, allowing the questions to guide your journey through the text.

Context

- What has happened so far in the narrative? Have there been any major events, characters or themes?
- What has happened just prior to the section you are reading?

Observation

- What do you learn about the main characters in this section? How does the author describe them? How do they describe themselves?
- Is time or place significant in the events that happen in the passage?
- Is there a conflict or high point in the passage?
- Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story?
- What surprises are there?

Meaning

- Are there any 'editorial' comments from the author about the events in the narrative? How do these comments illuminate what is happening?
- Does someone in the narrative learn something or grow in some way? How? What does this person learn?

- How does the passage point forward to what God is going to do in the future? Does it prophesy or anticipate Jesus Christ in some way?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

Application

- How does this passage challenge your understanding about who God is and what he is like?
- Is there some attitude or behavior you need to change?

*The COMA study method and questions are produced by Matthias Media and Holy Trinity Church. They have been taken from ***One-to-One Bible Reading*** by David Helm. For more one-to-one Bible reading resources, or to purchase the book, please visit www.matthiasmedia.com.