

SCRIPTURE READING/STUDY | WEEK 1

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Read | What is Bible study?

It seems like an intuitive question, but it's worth addressing. Here's a working definition: *Bible study is meditation on Scripture for the purposes of worship and obedience.* These three parts of the definition are essential:

1. **Meditation:** thinking deeply and prayerfully about a biblical text.
2. **Worship:** that Bible study is about more than becoming more knowledgeable; it should lead us to see and celebrate the glorious God of the Bible.
3. **Obedience:** that Bible study is meant to lead to life change.

Over the next four weeks, we're going to look at each of these three points a little more deeply. But for this week, we'll address some practical questions to develop a Bible study plan.

Practical tips for getting started

Tip 1—Carve out time. Bible study will be most fruitful if we can schedule it in advance and protect that time. Try to find a 30-minute (or a minimum of 15) block of time each day in which to study without distraction.

Tip 2—If you can, find a good study Bible. A good study Bible is a middle ground between no resources and too many resources: It gives enough explanatory notes without getting us lost in the weeds. A great one to consider is the ESV Study Bible.

Tip 3—Write your thoughts, and maybe even your prayers. If you want to really focus, you will be helped by journaling your thoughts. For this month, try to journal every time you study the Bible to help yourself think.

Basic questions to ask of a passage

We're going to flesh these out through our four weeks, but here are the questions we'll use as practice exercises for Bible study. I don't expect you'll always use these, but they'll get you thinking in the right direction. Don't think of these questions as a test you have to get exactly right; pray, and then take a stab at each one in 2-4 minutes:

1. What is the **structure** of the text? Does it tell a story, make an argument, circle around one theme, etc.?
2. What **emphasis** does the structure reveal?
3. How does the immediate **context**—the closest passages on both sides of your text—inform the meaning of your text?
4. Drawing on your work in structure, emphasis, and context, state the central **theme** of the text in one complete sentence. (*A theme should reveal the big idea or primary teaching point in the passage.*)
5. What are a few ways that your text **relates to the gospel** (e.g., the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, repentance, forgiveness of sins)?
6. In one sentence, what is the **author's aim** for his audience in this text? Given that aim, what **implication(s) and/or application(s)** would you draw from this text?

To get started, we're going to make a five-day plan for each week. Read the assigned passage for each day and journal through the six questions above as well as you can.

THIS WEEK'S READING PLAN

Day 1: Colossians 1:1-14

Day 2: Colossians 1:15-23

Day 3: Colossians 1:24-2:5

Day 4: Colossians 2:6-15

Day 5: Colossians 2:16-23