

# How to Actually Study the Bible on your Own (Dave Latham)

## Opening Questions:

- Why do you think people have a hard time studying the Bible?
- Have you ever been frustrated by your own efforts to study the Bible? What made it frustrating?
- What have your past attempts looked like? How did you pick which verses to read?

There's nothing 'mystical' or 'spiritual' to the way you actually study the Bible. We approach it systematically and God works miraculously through it.

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12 ESV)

## A Few Foundational Steps:

1. Actually read your Bible: it sounds silly, but learning how to study the Bible means nothing if you never put it into practice. Set aside time, pray for wisdom, take it off the shelf, crack it open, and read it.
2. Pick a book and stick with it- you have 66 to choose from, pick one and stick to it
  - a. Good places to start: 1<sup>st</sup> John, The Gospel of John, Romans, Hebrews
3. Get a reading plan or use a devotional, study commentary, etc... (A few examples below)
  - a. M'Cheyne's Daily Bible Reading Plan (a PDF can be found online)
  - b. *Heart Aflame*- a study through the Psalms by John Calvin
  - c. *Let's Study Philippians*- small study commentary through Philippians with application questions
  - d. *Jesus Storybook Bible*- yes, it's a kids' Bible...but it is extremely helpful for seeing the big picture
4. Get a good study Bible- look for one with study notes, cross references, and articles
  - a. In my opinion, the *ESV Study Bible* is the best one on the market right now

## Look at the book:

1. Identify the Genre: Is this narrative? Is it a letter? Is it poetry? (Ex: You do not read a scholarly article like you read a poem. Each genre has its own unique features.)
2. Who wrote it? When? Why? (Put yourself in the shoes of the writer and the audience)
3. What is the big idea/theme of the book?

## Look at the passage:

1. Context, Context, Context- Read more than 1 verse and find where it fits into the whole (2 Types):
  - a. Literary (what's going on in the book?)
  - b. Historical (what's going on in history?)
2. What was the original author trying to convey to his audience?
3. How does this apply to the overall theme/big idea?
4. What does it say about God? (His character, His power, His grace, His attributes, etc.)
5. What does it say about me? (my heart, my struggles, my sin, my doubts, my joy, etc.)
6. Application: How am I called to respond to the text? How does this impact my life?

Hit a tough/seemingly boring passage? Hang in there and remember 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Then, keep reading.