

Comeback Offer!

If you'd like to purchase copies of this Bible study
for yourself or your group, visit our website at
WWW.NAVPRESS.COM and check out the special
discounts for our web customers.

THE NAVIGATOR BIBLE STUDIES HANDBOOK

NAVPRESS 
BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE
NavPress Publishing Group

P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80935

The Navigators is an international Christian organization. Jesus Christ gave His followers the Great Commission to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). The aim of The Navigators is to help fulfill that commission by multiplying laborers for Christ in every nation.

NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators. NavPress publications are tools to help Christians grow. Although publications alone cannot make disciples or change lives, they can help believers learn biblical discipleship, and apply what they learn to their lives and ministries.

© 1974 by The Navigators
Revised Edition © 1979, 1994 by The Navigators
All rights reserved. With the exception of pages 117-140, as specified on page 28, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from NavPress, P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, CO 80935.
ISBN 08910-90754

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION*® (NIV®). Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. Other versions quoted are the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975; *The New Testament in the Language of the People* by Charles B. Williams (WMS), © 1966 Edith S. Williams; and the *King James Version* (KJV).

Printed in the United States of America

FOR A FREE CATALOG OF
NAVPRESS BOOKS & BIBLE STUDIES,
CALL 1-800-366-7788 (USA)
or 1-416-499-4615 (CANADA)

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction | 7 |
| UNIT ONE: THE BASICS OF BIBLE STUDY | |
| 1. Know Your Goal | 11 |
| 2. Your Approach | 16 |
| 3. Steps for Changing Your Life | 20 |
| Summary of Unit One | 25 |
| UNIT TWO: TYPES OF BIBLE STUDIES | |
| 4. Bible Study for a Lifetime | 29 |
| 5. Question-and-Answer Bible Studies | 33 |
| 6. How to Do Verse Analysis | 36 |
| 7. How to Do the ABC Bible Study | 39 |
| 8. How to Do Search the Scriptures | 45 |
| 9. How to Do the Advanced ABC Bible Study | 55 |
| 10. How to Do Comprehensive Book Analysis | 69 |
| 11. How to Do a Topical Bible Study | 88 |
| 12. How to Do a Bible Character Study | 97 |
| Appendix A: Study Helps | 105 |
| Appendix B: A Suggested Long-Range Bible Study Program | 111 |

My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
*then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.*

PROVERBS 2:1-5 (emphasis added)

Introduction

Many Christians are discovering that the Bible is an open, exciting book whose truths, like valuable gems, enrich their lives. Yes, you can do inductive Bible study yourself in your own home! But the key to doing it is being systematic and consistent.

Your personal Bible study week by week with the self-help methods presented in this book will build and establish you in your knowledge of the Bible, help you maintain fellowship with Jesus Christ, and equip you to teach others. Then as you faithfully apply the Word of God to your life, your study will help you conform more and more to the character of Christ. This goal alone is worth the discipline of time and effort your study requires each week. Resolve now to let nothing keep you from regular, personal Bible study.

Solomon urged us to search the Word of God as for hidden treasure, as we would seek for silver—the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (see Proverbs 2:1-5). Jesus, speaking of the Scriptures, said, “These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39), and also affirmed, “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). He endorsed the testimony that He is revealed

8 Introduction

in all the Bible and confirmed to us the central motive for Bible study—*coming to know Him better*.

The two units in this handbook are:

- ◆ *The Basics of Bible Study*, which will give you important background information for all the methods of Bible study.
- ◆ *Types of Bible Studies*, which will teach you some of the time-tested methods of Bible study The Navigators have used in past decades.

Unit One

The Basics of Bible Study

CHAPTER ONE

Know Your Goal

God wants every believer to be like His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Romans 8:29). The transformation of your life into the likeness of Jesus Christ will enable you to join in fulfilling creation’s eternal purpose—to glorify the Creator.

Conformity to Christ is a lifelong process which is completed only when you pass into God’s presence. Paul described this process: “All of us, with faces uncovered, because we continue to reflect like mirrors the splendor of the Lord, are being transformed into likeness to Him, from one degree of splendor to another, since it comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18, WMS).

Bible study is a vital part of this process. If you will study God’s Word faithfully, pray for understanding, and diligently apply the Scriptures to your experience and daily walk, your life will change and increasingly glorify God.

Many spiritual truths have thought-provoking parallels in the physical world. Take, for example, a thirsty person coming to a well. Before he can quench his thirst, he must let down the bucket, draw the water, and then take a drink.

God’s Word is able to satisfy the spiritually dry and

12 The Basics of Bible Study

thirsty person, even as Jesus promised “living water” to the woman by the well in Samaria. First, however, he must study the Bible to draw out its truths, then personally apply them to his own life.

Drawing the water compares to the academic study of God’s Word. Good study methods and habits help us toward proper understanding and application of Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote to a coworker, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Drinking the water compares to believing and applying God’s Word. James stated, “The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLE STUDY

Personal Bible study that is life-changing is not something that is done haphazardly. A study that is meaningful, applicable, and life-affecting will have the following five main characteristics.

It Must Be Systematic and Consistent

Jesus explained the Scriptures systematically (Luke 24:27), and the Berean Jews evaluated the Gospel they heard by its consistency with Scripture (Acts 17:11). Your study must also be systematic and consistent. R. A. Torrey, great Bible teacher of another generation, advised, “Have some good system of Bible study and follow it. System counts in everything, but it counts more in study than in anything else, and it counts more in Bible study than in any other form of study.”¹

It Must Be Original Investigation in the Bible Itself

Personal Bible study does not depend on what others have said *about* the Scriptures, but must involve the student in the

Know Your Goal 13

Bible itself. Again Torrey urges, “Do not study about the Bible; study the Bible.”² Libraries of books have been written about the Bible, but there is only one Bible. So go to the source. As you study, compare Scripture with Scripture. One portion of it sheds light on another, enriching your Bible study experience and answering your questions.

It Must Be a Written Reproduction of Your Findings

An important part of the learning process is reproducing in your own words what you have studied. Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, said, “Thoughts disentangle themselves passing over the lips or through the pencil tips.” If you want to master the truths of Scripture, write them down in your own words.

It Must Be Personally Applied to Daily Living

You need to follow the psalmist’s example when he wrote, “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments” (Psalm 119:59-60, KJV). The Scriptures are the means by which the Holy Spirit changes our lives, but in this ministry He needs our cooperation.

It Must Be “Pass-on-able”

A good personal Bible study method is one that is simple enough to be easily passed on. Teaching someone else how to study the Bible for himself is far better than sharing what you have received from your own study, though that is helpful too.

(These five characteristics of Bible study are drawn from the ministry of Lorne C. Sanny, former president of The Navigators.)

AS YOU BEGIN

Good Bible study methods alone cannot guarantee a changed life. The Bible can be understood fully only with the aid of the

14 *The Basics of Bible Study*

Holy Spirit. Apart from a growing personal relationship with God, the academic study of the Word will produce little change. Some important steps of personal preparation are necessary.

A Cleansed Life

Refusing to deal with sin in your life breaks fellowship with God. The secret of restored fellowship and the cleansed life is very simple. John tells us what we should do: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Before beginning your Bible study, stop and confess to God any known sins.

Prayer for Illumination

Since understanding the Scripture can come only through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, you need to follow the example of the psalmist when he prayed, "Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. . . . Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. . . . Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders. . . . Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight" (Psalm 119:12,18,27,35).

Dependence on the Holy Spirit

One of the Holy Spirit's ministries is to teach Christians the truths from the Bible. Jesus promised, "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Paul declared, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:12). You must rely on His instructions, following Solomon's wise advice, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

Know Your Goal 15

Willingness to Obey

Jesus pointed out that a prerequisite to knowing the truth is willingness to obey the truth. "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). The one who is willing to obey will receive God's instruction.

NOTES

1. R. A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1921), page 54.
2. Torrey, page 33.