

A Short Plan for Studying Bible Passages (Adapted)

1. What is the Bible passage you want to examine? Is it a complete thought?
Sometimes a complete thought is a single verse, a paragraph, or a whole chapter.
2. Read the passage carefully, word-for-word. Jot down words or phrases that catch your eye as potential keys to what the passage is saying. Try reading the passage in a variety of translations. You can find many at Biblegateway.com.
3. Look up the key terms in a bible dictionary, theological wordbook, or lexicon like Biblehub.com/lexicon and record your findings.
4. Clarify the literary context of the passage. What biblical material immediately precedes and follows the passage?
5. Clarify the canonical context. Where is this passage located in the Bible as a whole? What connections does the passage have to other passages? How does this fit into the broad sweep of the entire biblical story?
6. Clarify the historical and geographical context. What was going on at the time the passage was written? What do we know about the author, the date and place of writing? Who were the original recipients? What issues or problems were they facing? Scholarly commentaries can be helpful in this effort.
7. State the original meaning of the passage. Based on your study what did the original author intend?
8. How does this ancient message apply (or not) to our current situation? How is our situation similar or different from the persons who first heard the passage? What do we share in common with the first audience or how do we differ? What equivalent issues do we face? What different issues do we struggle with? How do tradition, reason, and experience inform our interpretation and application?