

▲ Personal Bible Study, Part 1 ▲

Objectives: LEAD participants will know why to study the Bible on their own, be able to select a time and place, and know several resources for deeper study.

Plan ahead:

- Time required: 70min
- Gather tools (cookies - 1/LEAD, bowl, spoon, spatula, measuring cup, bag of chips, scissors, measuring spoons, pan, grease for pan, oven; hammer, wrench, screw drivers x2, screws, nails, etc.)

Before this lesson, LEADs must:

- Read the two pages, "Getting Started" and "Tools of the Trade"

Supplies:

- Blank paper for each group (4 groups)
- Newsprint or white board and pens
- Bibles in different translations and paraphrases
- Commentary
- Concordance
- Bible Dictionary
- Bible Atlas
- Print-outs from online tools

Accompanying documents:

- Notes page (last page of this doc)
-

❖ **Get Started (hook, 5 min)**

Give each person a cookie. As they are eating, discuss what tools were used to make that cookie. Then look at more traditional tools. Ask in what situation they would use each tool. Present a situation (making a bench, fixing their tent platform, hanging a picture on the wall, for example). What tools would they use for that? Bottom line: we use each tool for the appropriate situation. That is the same in Bible Study. For example, if the situation is, "I need to hear from God," then the tool is "a quiet time (morning watch)," which includes Bible study and prayer at the least...

❖ **Learn / observe (book / look, 35 min)**

Part 1: Why should we study the Bible?

- Why should we study the Bible? (Get some answers. Affirm the ones you can.)
- What is the Bible? (Get some answers. Hopefully they will remember some from what they learned earlier this week. Be ready to ask further questions to steer them in that direction, if they don't go there.)

In John 10:10, Jesus says, "*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*" Or, "Have it to the full." Who wants abundant, full life? (get a show of hands) That's just one more reason to study the Bible, as we'll find out in a moment.

LEARNING TASK (5 MIN): (Break into 4 groups. Have each group use their verse to answer the question of "why study the Bible?" Regroup and share info.)

- John 20:31 - To have life in His name (John 10:10)
- Psalm 119:11 - To defeat sin
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - To be thoroughly equipped for every good work
- Isaiah 40:8 - In a world of change, only the truth of Bible never changes

Summary: So we study the Bible because, in this crazy ever-changing life, it never changes, though God speaks through it to every situation you may face. It also prepares us to do good things, which is good, of course. It helps us defeat the sin that pulls us down, which is good. And it is given to us so that we might experience real, full *life*! If something is that good, why would we NOT study it?

So then the question that remains is, "How do we study it?" Let's brainstorm:

- How can we study the Bible? (Get answers, which may include: Alone, in groups; In print, by hearing; In our heart language or any other we know...)

There are many ways to "get" the Bible, either in print or audibly or in movies, etc. Let's look at the one that is closest to the original written text and which you have the most control over: your own reading of the Bible!

Part 2: How do we structure the time?

Let's say you are convinced that you should sit down and read your Bible. Let's design the ideal Bible reading time together.

LEARNING TASK (20 min): In your groups (same groups as before), design a quiet time. Use these questions as a guide. (Put these questions on the board for their reference. Leave space between for their answers, if able. Give each group a blank paper to work on.)

- What do you do to prepare (time, place, etc)?
- How is the time structured? What things do you do during this time?
- What tools do you use?

Use all available resources. Use the article you read for this class. Use your Morning Watch guide. Think about other Quiet Time guides you may have used in the past. You have 10 minutes to put together a Quiet Time guide, then we'll put our ideas together.

(Regroup after 10 min, and share what they came up with. Have everyone open their notebooks to the Notes Page and use it to take notes on what is on the board. It should look something like this. If they miss something major, make sure you emphasize it now.)

To Prepare for your Quiet Time:

- Find a quiet place
- Get alone
- Collect your stuff (Bible, notebook, pen, etc)

Anatomy of a Quiet Time (how to structure the time):

- Pray - for understanding and insight
- Read - best according to a reading plan
- Think - meditate, consider what you read and how it interacts with your life
- Journal - write your thoughts, observations, questions, prayer requests, etc
- Come up w/a PRACTICAL APPLICATION for TODAY
- Pray - thanking God and for help w/your application

The most important part of your quiet time is the _____

Quiet Time Follow-up:

- Continue to consider what you read and your application
- Consider telling someone else (a mentor or someone who is discipling you)

It's not that difficult, is it? You don't need fancy guides or books. Just your Bible, notebook and pen, and a quiet place and time.

But that's not all there is to Bible study is it? Well, yes and no. If you did this all your life, you'd be far better off than if you don't do it...but yes, there are tools and methods to dig deeper. Especially if you start having questions...

Part 3: Tools to dig deeper - quick overview.

So let's consider some of the tools to dig deeper. We'll talk about Methods next week.

Let's brainstorm some tools you can use to dig deeper into the Bible. (Be ready with question to lead them toward the tools listed. Maybe bring the books in a bag, then pull them out and talk about them briefly when someone mentions each one.)

Bible - One good study translation. A *translation* is an English Bible translated directly from the Greek and Hebrew with as little diversion from the original words and ideas as possible. Some good translation are the English Standard Bible, the New International Version, and the New American Standard Bible. You will want to use several translations in the course of your study, but you can access many online or via downloadable programs.

There are also some good *paraphrases*. A *paraphrase* is a rewording of the text using modern day language and expressions to give greater understanding. After your in depth study, you may want to use a paraphrase as a sort of succinct Commentary. Some examples are the Message, the Living Bible, Good News for Modern Man, and the J.B. Phillips paraphrase. These are also available free online or via downloads.

Commentary - A commentary is a collection of insights, or comments, from Bible scholars that explain and interpret Scripture. There are single-volume commentaries that give a brief explanation of every book in the Bible, and there are multiple-volume commentary sets that go into great detail. A commentary is a very helpful tool, but you shouldn't let another person (the commentator) do all your work. After you have studied a passage for a while, go to a commentary to "check" your interpretation with a scholar. *The best commentaries are NOT available free online.*

Concordance - An exhaustive concordance lists every occurrence of each word that appears in the biblical text. For instance, under the listing for the word "continue" are all the Scripture references in which that word appears. In addition, the reference is followed by a number which corresponds to the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries in the back of the concordance. By looking up the original word used, you can find its meaning in the original text. This is an essential reference tool in doing the Word Study Method. *Online tools are extremely useful for this, and can even look up all the instances of the word in the original language.*

Bible Dictionary (NOT a regular dictionary) - Use a regular dictionary for words you don't know the meaning of in English. But be aware that many alternate meanings or connotations or specific usages of an English word may differ from that word in the original language. A *Bible dictionary* defines and explains many of the words and concepts that appear in Scripture, in the context in which they appear and taking into account the word in the original language. Each entry includes a variety of interpretations on the subject, any relevant archaeological findings, a historical perspective, and a bibliography for further study. *Online tools are normally good for this, but be careful, as with all online tools.*

Bible Atlas - In order to best understand Scripture, it helps to know where the towns, rivers, mountains, and countries were located. When reading about Paul's travels, for instance, it is helpful to know how far he went on each journey. *These are also available online.*

❖ Get Practical (took, 20 min)

Now that we have seen the tools, let's practice using them.

LEARNING TASK (15 min) - (Hand out a Commentary, a Concordance, a Bible Dictionary and a Bible Atlas, one to each group. Simulate studying a passage and coming up with at least one question that requires using each resource. An example is listed below.)

Sample Study: Acts 17, middle of Paul's second missionary journey. Read the chapter aloud. Pause at the verses below to ask what resource you would use to dig deeper. Look up one item in each resource book and read a little more about it.

Acts 17:1 Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica -- Bible Atlas

Acts 17:10 Berea -- Bible Atlas

Acts 1:15 Athens -- Bible Atlas

Act 17:18 Epicurean and Stoic philosophers -- Bible Dictionary

Act 17:19 Areopagus -- Bible Atlas or Dictionary, maybe found under "Athens"

Act 17:28 for *"In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."* -- Commentaries: several of them in order to get a balanced view. This is one rare occasion where you might start with commentaries to find out how you might begin further research on the origin of this phrase. Otherwise, you might research online or at a local library. Since this is a phrase with a secular origin, the Bible-specific books may not contain much info, depending on how deep you want to dig.

Acts 17:29 *Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone...* What does it mean that we are God's offspring? - Bible Dictionary is a start, but how else can we learn about a word's meaning? How do you figure out a word you hear in conversation? (Use questions or an example to lead them to the answer:) **Context.** So a good way to find the meaning and connotation of a word - the sense of a word - is to read the ways it is used elsewhere in the Bible. To do that we use a Concordance - or similar tool.

-- Have a question for each reference book, for example:

Atlas - How easy or hard was it to get from one of these cities to another? Would people and information have traveled easily between these?

Dictionary - Who were the philosophers Luke is referring to? How might their comments have influenced the local believers?

Commentary - What does this commentator think about the statement Luke quotes?

Concordance - How else does God use the word "offspring" in the Bible? Look up enough to see that you have to read the context of each instance of the word to answer the question.

-- Talk online tools - These are all available online. BUT be very careful about online stuff. Trust a person whose life reflects ONGOING change to be more like Jesus through the Holy Spirit before you trust anything online. Anyone can put anything online. There are good tools there, but there is no oversight. BE CAREFUL with online tools.

❖ Homework (follow up assignment)

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Getting Started

(Excerpts and ideas from Page 96-105 of Camp Cedarbrook CILT Manual)

Why am I doing studying the Bible? Is it just a dusty old book written thousands of years ago by men and women who could not possibly imagine what your needs and thoughts are now? Or does it still matter today?

God's desire is for you to discover that the Bible was written by real people who were experiencing a genuine relationship with Him. The point is not necessarily to fall in love with the Bible, but to fall in love with God, who is revealed throughout the Bible. The Bible may be a fascinating book, but it's not really as exciting as God Himself. Through studying the Bible, you will discover that God—yes, the same God who created the universe—is inviting you to know Him more intimately.

So hopefully you are asking, how do I get to know God better? It's not hard. This first section, *Getting Started*, introduces Personal Bible Study to you and gives some helpful hints for studying the Bible on your own. The second section, *Tools of the Trade*, explains the various resources you will need. The final section, *Bible Study Methods*, contains the studies themselves.

You will need a separate notebook or a computer file, etc., to use as a journal, to record your thoughts, observations and questions. And to record God's responses.

A few helpful hints for successful study:

- **Pray: Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance.** Always begin your study time with prayer, asking God to help you understand the words and then apply them to your life. Remember, God inspired the biblical writers, so he can certainly teach you!
- **Find a quiet place to study.** You won't get much done if you try to work at the kitchen table while your mom fixes supper and your brother watches television in the next room. Find a place where you can concentrate and will have few interruptions.
- **Make your study a regular, consistent discipline.** Just like you can't eat once or twice for the whole week, you can't study the Bible once or twice for the week. You need soul-nourishment, practical guidance and real encouragement daily. So study your Bible daily.
- **Keep a journal.** In written or digital form. Take notes as you study. Write down things you are learning, how they might impact your life, what questions come up, what you have prayed about and how God has responded. Make sections in it for your daily studies, your more in depth studies, and your prayers if you want. The SOAP method (see your Morning Watch material) is a good one. Whatever method you use, keep your journal neat and organized so that it is pleasant to review and use. And above all else, regardless of its format or specific structure, JOURNAL about what you study in the Bible.
- **Share with others** what you are learning. Share your new insights with a friend, someone from camp, your family, or a teacher. Putting your thoughts into words can make the lesson "stick."
- **Put the passage in its context first, and then apply it to your own life.** You will miss much of a verse's meaning if you don't consider its context. What has the author been writing about in the previous verses and chapters? What information follows this verse? Taking another step back, who what this written by, and to whom was it written? How may it have been meant or received in its original culture and situation? Once you understand the original meaning and implications, you can often see more clearly its relevance today.
- **Be prepared to think.** Although you don't have to be a Bible scholar with many years of training to understand Scripture, you do have to use your head. It takes work to understand any book, including the Bible.
- **Allow time for reflection and memorization.** At the close of each study, don't just shut the books and walk away. Reflect on what you have learned. Choose a key verse or passage to memorize. Let God's Word "take up residence" in your life, rather than just sitting on the shelf.
- **Be prepared to change.** No one can stand before God and remain the same. God loves us dearly, and He wants to mold us into the likeness of Jesus. As you study the Bible, God will show you areas of your life that need changing. Spend the time to come up with and commit to a "next step" toward this change. And pray that God will work these changes in you as you take that step.

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Tools of the Trade

(Excerpts and ideas from Page 96-105 of Camp Cedarbrook CILT Manual)

The only essential "tool" for effective Bible is a willing heart and mind. If you are willing to do the work and then to make the changes required by what you discover, you are well on your way to being a successful Bible student. However, there are additional resources that can assist you in studying God's Word. Some of these tools are books (now often available online) and some are a variety of study methods. Books are listed here; some websites with these tools are listed below. Methods will be discussed later.

Bible

Of course the first thing you need is a good Bible. There are several good *translations*. A *translation* is an English Bible translated directly from the Greek and Hebrew with as little diversion from the original words and ideas as possible. Some good translation are the English Standard Bible, the New International Version, and the New American Standard Bible. There are also some good *paraphrases*, a *paraphrase* is a rewording of the text using modern day language and expressions to give greater understanding. Three primary examples are the Message, the Living Bible, Good News for Modern Man, and the J.B. Phillips paraphrase.

A translation - or several different ones - is recommended for in-depth Bible study. However, in the course of your study, you may want to use a paraphrase as a sort of succinct Commentary...

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A commentary is a collection of insights, or comments, from Bible scholars that explain and interpret Scripture. There are single-volume commentaries that give a brief explanation of every book in the Bible, and there are commentary sets that go into great detail. A commentary is a very helpful tool, but you shouldn't let another person do all your work. After you have studied a passage for a while, go to a commentary to "check" your interpretation with a scholar. *The best commentaries are NOT available free online.*

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Bible Atlas

In order to best understand Scripture, it helps to know where the towns, rivers, mountains, and countries were located. When reading about Paul's travels, for instance, it is helpful to know how far he went on each journey.

Bottom line: Buy yourself a Bible in one of the *translations* listed above. The rest of the resources may be available at your church or public library, or from your pastor, Sunday School teacher, etc. Many of these tools are now available online through websites like [Blue Letter Bible.com](http://BlueLetterBible.com) and [Bible Gateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com). GotQuestions.org is also a good reference. Be very careful with anything you read online, however. Anyone can post anything online, and there is no oversight to say, "this is false." So always compare what you read online with your own Bible, and ideally, with a person who is discipling you.

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Notes page

To Prepare for your Quiet Time:

Anatomy of a Quiet Time (how to structure the time):

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Quiet Time Follow-up:

Notes on Tools of the Trade: