



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

MEETING

4

step **1**







“HIGHS” & “LOWS,” AND PRAYER TIME

A “high” is a positive memory from the day. A “low” is a not-so-good memory or a challenge from the day. Sharing “highs” and “lows” as a daily habit is a simple way of connecting with what is going on in each other’s lives.

step **2**

FOLLOW UP

How did you do in abiding with the LORD? If you need, look back at your plan on page 15. Discuss with your group the struggles and successes you had in abiding with the LORD. It’s okay to have struggled this time. It takes time to build a habit. Keep putting forth effort. Remember, when you come back next time, everyone needs to be green light. Do whatever it takes!

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step 3

HOW TO READ YOUR BIBLE

THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF CHRIST – BEING FISHERS OF MEN

A disciple-maker is two things. First, a disciple-maker is a follower. So far, your GO Group has hopefully challenged you to take greater steps of obedience in your walk with Christ. This will continue to happen throughout your GO Group experience, as long as you are committed to obedience. Yet a disciple-maker is not just a follower. A disciple-maker is a fisher as well. This definition is best seen in Matthew 4:19, as Jesus beckoned Peter and Andrew to become his disciples. “And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” What does it mean to be a fisher of men? It carries the idea of not just learning how to follow Christ, but being able to train other people how to follow Christ the way you do. So, a disciple-maker is a follower, one who grows in obedience to Christ. A disciple-maker is also a fisher, one who teaches others how to follow Christ the way he/she does. The goal of this GO Group is to help you become both of these things.

Let’s start talking about how to be a fisher. If you study the life of Jesus, you will find that he trained his disciples to be fishers of men. He taught them certain competencies that were critical to their ability to follow him. But he didn’t just teach them. He also practiced with them. In fact, he trained them so well that his disciples would be able to go out and train others. We’ve identified four essential competencies from the four Gospels that Jesus taught his disciples. We call them the Core Competencies of Christ. He taught them (1) how to understand his Word, (2) how to pray, (3) how to serve, and (4) how to share the gospel. Then, they practiced these things over and over. Thus, if you are going to be a fisher of men (or women), you will need to know these competencies so well **that you could train someone else**. And that’s exactly what you are going to do together! Throughout this GO Group, there will be different meetings that cover these competencies. Today, we are going to cover the first competency: How to Study the Bible.

Jesus taught his disciples how to understand his teaching (Mark 4:10-12) and the Old Testament (Matthew 5-7, Luke 24:32). Put that with the New Testament writings, and you have the Bible. God’s Word alone has the power to transform and mold the human heart. Therefore, it is CRITICAL that we are able to read and understand God’s Word. There is no such thing as a mature Christian who does not read their Bible. Before we can GO out and change the world, we have to let God’s Word change our heart. You may already know how to read your Bible really well, but remember you have to be able to train someone else in it. Get familiar with the process you are about to see. This competency takes the most practice; so we are starting with it.

The method you are about to learn for reading your Bible has 3 R’s: Read, Reflect, Respond (RRR). Go ahead; say it like a pirate... RRRRRR! Below we are going to walk through what it means to Read, Reflect, and Respond when you are studying God’s Word. Next, you will practice it alone. Finally, during your meeting, you will practice it together. Our prayer is that this tool will help you (and others) better abide with God daily. Now, let’s start working through this process.

READ

It seems unnecessary to have a step called Read. It is so rudimentary and obvious. Why even include it as a step? Yet, for reasons that will be explained in the next section (Table 2 below), it is very important that we first observe the passage before we jump to any conclusions. The main goal of Read is to answer this question: What do I see? We accomplish this by doing three things.

1. Read the passage in its entirety.

This is the obvious step. We must start by reading the entire passage we are looking at, but we aren't finished here.

2. Make a few observations for each verse.

Next, we want to write down what we observe in the passage. This is a crucial, step in reading the Bible. The best Bible scholars are the best at what they do because they do this step very well. What counts as an observation? Technically anything you notice within the verse can count, but a helpful place to start is asking these two questions:

- “What does this verse tell me about God?”
- “What does this verse tell me about man?”

Let's look at the verses below and make some observations.

*⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
-Ephesians 2:4-5*

OBSERVATIONS

V4

- The “but” contrasts with the previous statement.
- God is the subject of this sentence.
- **God is rich in mercy.**
- **God loved us with a great love.**
- The reason God made us alive was because of the great love with which he loved us.

V5

- **We were dead in our trespasses.**
- **God made us alive.**
- **We were made alive with Christ.**
- **We have been saved by grace.**
- “Alive” contrasts with “dead”.

There are many more observations that could be made about these verses, but we learn quite a lot with these 10. When you do this on your own, you don't need this many. The bolded observations tell us something about God or man. The other observations are given as examples of the many different kinds of observations you can make, but we won't get into those today. For more observation skills, check out the advanced Bible Study videos mentioned in the Reflect section.

There is an important distinction to make between an observation and a conclusion. An observation answers the question, “What do I see?” whereas, a conclusion answers the question “What does it mean?” The goal at this point is just to write out what we see. Notice how none of the observations above advance Paul's thought whatsoever. We will delve into meaning in the Reflect step. Let's look at the difference between the two. Take the 1st observation under verse 5 above: “We were dead in our trespasses”. This simply repeats what is seen in the verse. A conclusion would be “we were *spiritually* dead in our trespasses”. This advanced Paul's thought beyond what is seen in these verses. Now in this case, it is absolutely correct. Yet if it were incorrect, it could lead to a mistake when we move into the Reflect step. So, in the Read step, we are only trying to write down what we see. It helps us get a better understanding of the passage before moving forward. Eventually, with enough practice, noticing what is in a passage will become second nature and you won't need to write all this down.

3. Write down any questions you might have.

The last thing we do in the Read step is write down any questions we have. There may be some passages where you don't have any questions, and that is totally fine. These questions are the who, what, when, where, why, and how questions that come naturally as you read the passage. We will take these questions and try and answer them in the Reflect step. Below are a couple of example questions from Ephesians 2:4-5.

- What does it mean that we were dead in our trespasses?
- How did God make us alive?

REFLECT

If you notice, we don't go straight from reading the Bible to applying it to our life. It is not Read-Respond. Instead, we add this middle step: Reflect. Why? With most other instructions in life, we read it and then we do it. As a young boy, when my dad told me to "Get ready!" in the morning, I would shower, get dressed, brush my teeth, and sometimes apply deodorant. This is because I understood his command in my context. I didn't have to reflect, because I knew exactly what my dad intended me to do. Yet if I am a soldier on the battlefield and my commander shouts "Get ready!", do I start brushing my teeth? Certainly not! If you came to my air-conditioned house and said, "I need a glass of water", I would calmly proceed to comply. Now, if you came to me in the middle of the desert and said the same thing, there would be nothing calm about my response. So, it is clear that the same words can have different meanings depending on the context in which they are spoken.

COMMAND	MEANING #1	MEANING #2
"Get ready."	Prepare for school.	Prepare for battle!
"Give me a glass of water."	I am thirsty.	I am dying of thirst!

Table 1: Meaning is Determined by Context

When the human authors of the Bible (under the inspiration of the Divine Author) wrote the Bible, they only had one intended meaning. This means that when the Bible gives us a command, there is only ONE truth they are trying to convey. I might apply that truth differently to my life than you do to yours, but that truth is the same in the past, present, and future. Yet the Bible was written 2,000 years ago on the opposite side of the world to the people of that day. Do you think it is fair to assume that their context was a little different than ours? People in the past, who failed to read the Bible in its context, justified horrible things using the Bible (i.e. slavery in America). This is so important. Still not convinced? The table on the next page shows the differences between how our modern world and the ancient world read the same words of the Bible.

PASSAGE	WHAT AN AMERICAN HEARS	OUR CONTEXT	INTENDED MEANING	THEIR CONTEXT	HOW IT WOULD SOUND TODAY
<p><i>“For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.”</i> 1 Cor. 11:6</p>	<p>Paul is trying to control women’s hairstyles & what they wear. What a chauvinist!</p>	<p>Our society is hyper-sensitive to the issues of gender equality.</p>	<p>A Christian wife should not convey that she is unmarried or a prostitute.</p>	<p>In that day, a woman who didn’t cover her head announced her sexual availability. Long hair was seen as a sexual object, reserved only for her husband. In the city of Corinth, prostitution was extremely common. A prostitute wore no head covering and had short hair. Bottom line: a wife who did these things appeared immoral in that time.</p>	<p>Wives, don’t take your wedding ring off when you go in public.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Ladies, don’t dress like a prostitute.</p>
<p><i>“You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the Lord.”</i> Lev 19:28</p>	<p>God doesn’t want people to get tattoos.</p>	<p>All kinds of people get tattoos in America. The vast majority do not get tattoos to appease or worship their god.</p>	<p>As the nation of Israel, avoid pagan practices that characterized the Canaanites.</p>	<p>God had called the nation of Israel to look different than the rest of the world. He gave them the Mosaic Law to explain how they were to be different. The Canaanites were wicked people who occupied the land of Israel before Israel got there. They worshipped many gods, but Israel was to worship only the true God. This meant they could not associate themselves with the worship of false gods.</p>	<p>This command does not apply to us today. We are not under the Mosaic Law. It’s okay to have a tattoo.</p>
<p>A husband speaking to his wife: <i>“Your belly is a heap of wheat surrounded by lilies.”</i> Song of Solomon 7:2b</p>	<p>This guy has a death wish. Your wife’s belly is not a heap of anything!</p>	<p>Most of us are not farmers. A heap of wheat seems like a negative image. It is not a romantic term! You use that to feed cattle!</p>	<p>Your stomach is soft and touchable.</p>	<p>Israel was an agrarian society. Most people were farmers. Lots of grain was a sign of prosperity. After harvest, grain would be threshed into a heap. This heap was soft enough to fall asleep on (see Ruth 3:7).</p>	<p>You are as soft as silk, and I am at rest when I am with you.</p>

Table 2: The Need for Reflection

1. Answer your questions using the surrounding context.

When you are trying to determine what a word, phrase, or idea means within a passage, something you can do is read the verses that are before and after your passage. The goal of our reflection is to get into the author’s head. By doing this, we are able to trace the logic of the author. Remember, we want to know what he intended the passage to mean. Then we can determine what it would sound like today. Let’s look at my question from Ephesians 2:4-5: “What does it mean to be dead in our trespasses?” Well, context really helps us out here. In 1:1, we learn that Paul is talking to Christians who are in Ephesus. In 2:1, Paul says “you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked”. From this, we learn that this death was in their past. They were dead, but they are no longer. Is Paul describing God physically raising people from the dead here? The answer is no because physically dead people don’t do anything. In verses 2:2-3, these dead people are doing actions (walking, following, and carrying). Thus, if we put this together verses 2:1-5, we can conclude that Paul is probably not talking about being physically dead. If it’s not a physical death, then what is Paul talking about? The next tool will help with that!

2. Cross-reference to help understand a word or phrase.

If you want to understand what a word means in the Bible, the best place to look for a definition is the Bible, not a dictionary. The dictionary is going to define terms in our context, but the Bible is going to shed light on how a word or phrase was used back then. In our case, as we try to understand what “dead” means in Eph. 2:5, we can work smart not hard. Instead of searching the whole Bible, it may be helpful to just look at how the New Testament uses the word “dead”. Or, better yet, how Paul uses it. You might be thinking, “That is all well and good, but I don’t have time to read all of Paul to find out where he uses a word!” Do not worry! There is a powerful tool we can use called the **Blue Letter Bible**. You can access this tool at www.blueletterbible.org, or you can download the app. After choosing ESV as your preferred translation (your answers won’t match mine unless you do), follow these steps:

1. Type “dead” in the search bar.
 - a. If you are on the website, it is the first thing you see.
 - b. If you are using the app, click the Magnifying Glass (fourth icon from the left on the bottom).
2. Change your Search Range to “Pauline Epistles” (this is everything Paul wrote).
 - a. If you are on the website, click on “Adv. Options”.
 - b. If you are using the app, click on “Search Range”.
3. Perform the Search.

If you left the search range as The Whole Bible, there would have been 307 occurrences to wade through. But, when you refined your search to just Paul’s writings, there are only 44 occurrences. This is much easier! From a **quick** scan of these verses, two definitions arise:

1. It most often refers to the physical death of the body.
2. It sometimes refers to a hopeless spiritual separation.

Romans 6:11 and Colossians 2:13 were especially helpful in coming up with this second definition. It was evident from Ephesians 2:1-5 that a physical death was not being described. In reading the surrounding context of these new verses, it became apparent that Paul is describing the human condition. All of us are sinful. We are enslaved to sin, to do what is contrary to the things of God. This separates us from God and destines us for hell. Paul uses the word “dead” to depict our spiritual inability to rescue ourselves. Dead people can’t save themselves. They can’t do anything. They are dead. Thus, there is a hopelessness to our dilemma. We needed a savior. Paul in verse 5, says that God has made us alive with Christ by grace. God sent Jesus to be that Savior. This matches perfectly with what is seen in Ephesians chapter 1 (as you will see in Step 4).

This is how you can make use of a cross-reference. It is a powerful tool, especially when you get to a tricky passage. There are more advanced skills you can learn and practice for both Read and Reflect. Each of these skills have been explained in a video for you to practice on your own time, if you’d like. These videos provide instruction, an example, and a passage for you to practice that skill on (with answers!). These videos can be found by accessing the online content of Meeting 5 (www.yourgogroup.org).

RESPOND

After reading and reflecting, you now have a much better grasp on what the Bible is trying to teach you. The goal of Bible Study was never to just gain more knowledge. The goal and intention of reading God’s Word is to leave changed. We don’t just gather God’s commands in our brain and do nothing with them. We respond to the Truth we have just encountered by obedience. So, we now want to apply the passage we have just read to our relationship with God and with others. This isn’t an easy task. Fortunately, you are in a GO Group. This group is all about our obedience to the truth of God’s Word. You practice this skill every time you pledge to complete another GO. So, you are well on your way toward honing this skill! But since you are only on your 5th meeting, let me give you a basic guide towards turning God’s Truth into your GO.

To come up with a GO from your reading of Scripture, remember **SPEC**. SPEC represents 4 questions you can ask to extract some marching orders for you to follow. They the only questions you can ask, but they will certainly get you started in the right direction. The four questions are:

- Is there a **SIN** to avoid?
- Is there a **PROMISE** to trust?
- Is there an **EXAMPLE** to follow?
- Is there a **COMMAND** to obey?

This is simple enough. Let's apply SPEC to **Ephesians 2:4-5**.

Is there a SIN to avoid? • N/A	Is there a PROMISE to trust? • N/A
Is there an EXAMPLE to follow? • God loved me when I was his enemy. I can follow this example by loving those who don't always love me back.	Is there a COMMAND to obey? • N/A

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE – RECAP

READ WHAT DO I SEE?

REFLECT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

RESPOND HOW DO I RESPOND?

step **4**

PRACTICE READING YOUR BIBLE ALONE

This step is to be completed by each member before they come to Meeting 5.

So now you have some tools to read and better understand the Bible! It's time for you to practice. You are about to go through the RRR process for Ephesians 1:3-14. I have done this already and have shown my work in Appendix C. Try going through the whole process yourself before looking at my notes. There are many possible answers, especially for the Read section, so don't feel the need to match what I have. Use my work as a reference if you get stuck.

Read

Let's get started. Start by reading the entire passage below.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

-Ephesians 1:3-10 (ESV)

Verses 3-10 are one sentence in the original Greek, making it the longest sentence in the entire Bible. If you don't read the whole passage carefully, you will get lost in all the pronouns and clauses. Making observations REALLY helps us get a handle on this passage. So, what do you see in the verses above? ***Since we are just starting off, only write down what you learn about God and man.*** Don't worry about getting everything. Just try and get at least one or two per verse. Reference my answers in Appendix C if you get stuck.

Observations

V3-4
V5-6
V7-8
V9-10

GREAT JOB! Did slowing down your reading and jotting down some observations help you better understand this long passage? As you read through this passage, what questions did you come up with? I have given you a few here (again, the rest of mine can be seen in Appendix C). If you were unsure of who a pronoun was referring to or how some of the pieces of this long sentence fit together, include these as questions.

1. What does it mean to be predestined for adoption?
2. What does redemption mean?

REFLECT

Now that you have a better handle on the passage, do your best to answer your questions in context. First read 1:1-2 and 1:14-2:10. Give it your best shot. Remember, we are just starting here. Compare with my answers after you give it a swing in the space below.

Let's see where else Paul uses the word "redemption". Let's practice our cross-referencing skill. Pull up Blue Letter Bible on your phone or computer. Set your version to ESV. Type in "**redemption**" into the search bar. Set your range to be The Pauline Epistles. Execute the search. If you did it right, you should have 6 occurrences of redemption, all from the writings of Paul. If you didn't, you would have 26 occurrences.

What did you learn about the meaning of redemption from looking at other passages? How does Paul use this word?

Using this search and the surrounding context of Ephesians 1, what do you think redemption means in 1:7?

RESPOND

Come up with a GO to follow by answering SPEC for this passage.

Is there a SIN to avoid?	Is there a PROMISE to trust?
Is there an EXAMPLE to follow?	Is there a COMMAND to obey?

What is one GO that you could take away from this passage? Take one principle (something you ought to do) from SPEC, and make it something you want to do. Then answer WHEN and HOW you want to do it, just like you do in a normal meeting.

NAME	What You Want to Do	Make It Measurable
_____	_____	When: _____
_____	_____	How: _____
_____	_____	_____

GREAT JOB! This is a lot to take in for one sitting! It might seem overwhelming, but a lot of these steps are common sense and they will become second nature with practice. As you set out to stick to your plan for abiding with God, try applying RRR to your daily reading of Scripture. It is a tool to use when you need it. You don't need to do a cross-reference search for each passage.

Yet do be familiar with these tools. Be so familiar with them that you could teach someone else. This is exactly what you will be doing when you become a GO Group Leader!



PRACTICE READING YOUR BIBLE TOGETHER

This step is to be completed during Meeting 5 as GO Group.

DISCUSSION

- Start the group off by discussing what you thought while reading the Read, Reflect, Respond process (Step 3).
- How did your solo practice go (Step 4)? Was it helpful for you?
- Were you able to implement RRR into your daily reading of Scripture?

Read

Now we are going to practice RRR again as a GO Group. Go through James 1:19-27. Ephesians 1:3-10 was heavy on theology, but this passage is very practical. There will be a lot of commands. You can reference your work with mine, which is found in Appendix C.

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James 1:19-27 (ESV)

What do you learn about God in the verses above? About man? Try and get at least one or two per verse.

Observations

V19-20
V21-22
V23-25
V26-27

As you read through this passage, what questions did you have? Write these down in the space below.

Reflect

Now that you have a better handle on the passage, do your best to answer your questions *in context*. See my answers if needed.

Let's see where else the Bible uses the word "meekness" by practicing our cross-referencing skill. Pull up Blue Letter Bible on your phone. Type "**meekness**" into the search bar. Set your range to be The Whole Bible. Execute the search. If you did it right, you should have 5 occurrences of meekness in the Bible.

Have each member of the group look at one of the other 4 verses where meekness is used. What does meekness mean in these verses? You may have to read the verses before and after them to get the context.

Which of these 4 is going to be the most helpful in determining the meaning of meekness in James 1:21? Why?

What do you think the meaning of meekness in James 1:21 is?

Respond

Come up with a GO using SPEC for this passage.

Is there a SIN to avoid?	Is there a PROMISE to trust?
Is there an EXAMPLE to follow?	Is there a COMMAND to obey?

What is one GO that you could take away from this passage? Take one principle (something you ought to do) from SPEC, and make it something you want to do. Then, answer WHEN and HOW you want to do it. Add this on top of your pledged GO in Step 6.

NAME	What I Want to Do	Make It Measurable
_____	_____	When: _____
_____	_____	How: _____
_____	_____	_____

Advanced Bible Study Skills

As mentioned in Step 3, there are many more skills you can learn for how to better Read and Reflect. These are simply tools in your belt to pull out when you need them. Each skill was put into a video and can be accessed under Meeting 5's online material. If you want to do them all, it is recommended that you go in order. Our prayer is that they will better enrich your time of abiding with the Lord.



GO TIME!

For this meeting, everyone's GO is going to be the same. **You are going to continue to abide with God in the Word and through prayer according to the plan you developed in Meeting 3.** Since practice makes permanent, **you are going to apply RRR to your time in the Word.** You don't have to do every step (like going to Blue Letter Bible or writing down all your questions) each time, but think through Read, Reflect, and Respond for each passage you cover.

If you don't have a reading plan. My recommendation is to start working through the book of Colossians.

Remember, everyone must be green light on this GO! Get serious about this! If you don't have time, make time. Cut something else out. Abiding with God is the only fuel that sustains us on mission.

Practice RRR in your daily time
in the Word.



END GROUP WITH PRAYER

NEXT MEETING OBJECTIVES

You have nothing else to complete before next week besides your GO(s).