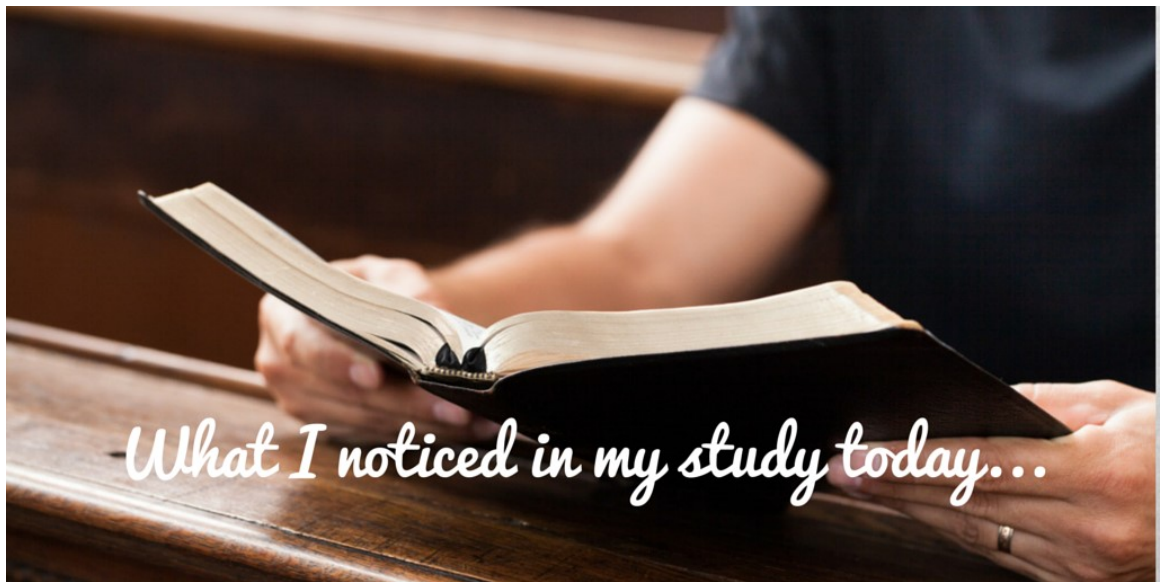



# How to Transform Your Life in 30 Minutes per Day!



God's Word transformed my life and it will transform yours as well! The secret of our transformation is to read and study God's Word.



# Congratulations on your decision to transform your Life!

God's Word is transforming my life and I know He will transform yours! How, you may ask? It's really very simple, read and study the Bible, God's Word.

Whether this is your first time reading the Bible or your 30<sup>th</sup> there is always something new to be learned from God's Word.

In this short paper I show you the exact 4-step process I am using to read and study the Bible. I've also compiled some of my favorite tips, tools, and techniques I've used that have helped me in my study of the Scripture over the years.

My prayer is that sharing this with you will help you as together we transform our lives by reading and studying our way through the Bible!

In His Service,



# Step #1


## Getting Started

Reading and studying the Bible is a noble pursuit for every Christian. Luke writes in Acts 17:11 about the Bereans who he described as having a “noble character” because they eagerly read and studied the Scriptures every day.

Here are three suggestions to get you started:

- 1) **Assemble your tools.** You’ll need a Bible (more on Bible selection later), a pen or pencil to write in the margins with, a highlighter, a ruler (unless you can draw straight lines better than I can!), a reading plan, and a place to capture your daily insights ( a handwritten journal, or a computer—whatever works for you).
- 2) **A place.** Casual reading can be done in an easy chair, but if you really want to study you’ll need a place where you can make notes in your Bible and write in your journal. Most days I use the kitchen table so I can spread out.
- 3) **A designated time.** If you want to make it through the Bible in a year you need to plan about 15 minutes a day for reading and another 15 minutes or so for journaling. Its best to schedule that 30-minute time slot at the same time every day, when you will not be interrupted. I have two time slots I like. The first is early morning when it is quiet, and the second is around my lunchtime. Pick a time that works for you and stick with it!

# Bible Selection



We are so very fortunate to have many versions of the Scripture to choose from. First, let me say that any of the more popular versions will work. It's better to read God's Word in some version than to not read it because you don't have the "right" version.

That said, some translations are better for study than others. Translations run on a continuum from paraphrases to literal. I am not a fan of paraphrases for study—they're ok for casual reading, but you lose a lot when it comes to study.

Literal translations attempt to translate from the original language word-for-word. These are great for study, but they can be difficult in some places simply because English doesn't have some of the same words and word meanings as those that exist in the biblical languages.

So some translators compromise by creating word-for-word translations where that makes sense, and then use meaning or thought translations where that makes sense. This approach tends to create a very readable text while retaining the meaning that stems from the original language.

# The Translation Continuum

Here's a list of popular Bible translations available today from most literal (word-for-word), to paraphrases (thought-for-thought):

NASB	New American Standard
AMP	Amplified
ESV	English Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NKJV	New King James Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NAB	New American Bible (Catholic)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic)
NIV	New International Version
TNIV	Today's New International Version
NCV	New Century Version
NLT	New Living Translation
GNT	Good News Translation
CEV	Contemporary English Version
Living	Living Bible
Message	The Message

I personally started with an NIV, but now use an ESV most of the time, though I also like the HCSV, the NRSV, and the NASB.



# Step #2

## Prepare Your Heart

Your motivation for reading and studying God's Word is important. You're not doing it so you can check something off of your "to do" list. You're not doing it so you can brag to your neighbor in church, or the folks in your small group.

No, you are reading and studying the Bible to come closer to God, to know Him better, and ultimately, to be the best version of you that you can be!

So before you begin your reading, prepare your heart. Come to God in prayer, and ask Him to open your heart to hear what He has for you.

**Psalm 119:130 (ESV)**

<sup>130</sup> The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

**2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.


Remember, all Scripture is from God and is useful for us, so don't be tempted to skip through sections that don't seem exciting (like those lists of names, or the description of the sacrifices)! Be open to ALL of God's Word!

# Step #3 Read

There are at least a dozen well-regarded methods of studying the Bible, but since we are reading through the Bible chapter-by-chapter the Chapter Study Method is appropriate.

There are four steps in the Chapter Study Method that I use:

- 1) **Observations.** Slow down and read carefully. As you read make notes about things you observe, and questions you have. (More on observations later.)
- 2) **Interpretations.** It's time to interpret what we've read.
  - Ask yourself interpretive questions and try to answer them as you go. Typically interpretive questions start with “what” or “why.”
    - Why did the writer say this?
    - Why is this important?
    - What does this mean?
    - What makes this significant?
    - What is the implication of this?
  - Ask yourself what difficulties you might be having with a particular section of the text. Not everything makes sense the first time through—or even the 30<sup>th</sup> time through!


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- Try to get the right meaning for the text.  
Remember, we live in a very different world than when the Bible was written: the time, the world, the culture, and the language are all different so it is important to read the scripture with the right interpretive lens!
    - What is the context?
    - Do I understand the meaning of the words and phrases?
    - How does the meaning of this passage compare to other similar passages written by the same author?

3) **Correlations.** Ask yourself, “How does this passage correlate with other passages?” Scripture is the best explanation for other scripture.

- Study bibles often have cross-references listed in the margins or at the bottom of the page. These are real time-savers because the writer has already provided you with a set of cross-references for that verse.
- Some cross-references will point to the same chapter, some will point to other material by the same author, and some will point to similar ideas throughout the scripture.

4) **Applications.** Last, and its last on purpose, is to consider what applications you can draw from this passage. Often we are tempted to read a passage and





jump immediately to thinking of what does this mean to me? Be careful! Try to avoid jumping to application conclusions prematurely!

- Think about possible applications from the passage.
- Make a list of the applications.
- Look for similarities in the applications. Often there are several applications that can be summarized in a single thought!

# Step #4 Journal

You've read the scripture, and you've studied the chapter, now its time to record your insights in your journal. I know you may be tempted to skip this step, but don't!

Journaling makes all the difference for me!

There is something about writing down my insights that forces me to organize my thoughts in a way that just doesn't happen if I simply read and quit.

Your journal can take any form you want. It can be pen and paper, a Moleskin journal, or as in my case, a simple Word file in my computer.

Here are the things I try to record:

- The date and chapters I read along with a VERY brief statement of what's covered.
- Questions I have that I want to look into further.
- Observations I've made.
- Conclusions I make and how these conclusions might be applied to my life as a Christian. Ultimately, if reading and studying God's Word doesn't affect change in my life then I might as well have been reading a novel.

Finally, write for yourself. This is your journal so be casual, and have fun. God's Word is never dull!

# Observations

The most important aspect of reading and studying the Bible for me is to observe. By that I mean I try to see things I've never noticed before. Slow down when you read and make a point of looking for new insights. If you do, I bet every time you read a passage you'll say, "I never noticed *that* before!"

Here are 10 of the more common things I try to look for:

- Key words, especially repeated words or phrases.
- Questions being asked and answered.
- Commands and warnings.
- Things that are alike, and things that are different.
- Cause and effect (do this and this will happen).
- Promises and their conditions.
- Progression from general to specific, or progression from specific to general.
- Tone of the passage (is it serious, or light-hearted).
- What connections are used (articles, prepositions).
- Emphasis (like "very, very" or expanded explanations).

Don't worry about practicing all of these observational techniques all the time. The more you read and sharpen your observational skills the better you will get!