

How to Study

THE BIBLE

With A Comprehensive Study Guide



R. A. Torrey

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The text for this reprint edition of *How to Study the Bible* comes from the 1903 edition, published by JAMES NISBET & COMPANY in London, England. Spelling, language, grammar, and punctuation in this reprint edition have been gently updated for the modern reader.

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Foreword

God wants Christians to study the Bible. The Bible is His final revelation to the world, and He wants individuals to know it, for without knowledge of the Word of God a person cannot be saved. While it is true that a person is saved by grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:8), it is equally true that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It is by hearing God’s Word that faith comes. Saving faith must be centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. There must be faith that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God; that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is come in the flesh; and that He died on the cross for sins. It is only through Jesus that a person can gain entrance to heaven. Because there is only one way to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ, Satan will do everything possible to keep a person from knowing the Bible and learning spiritual truth. Knowledge of the Bible will help the believer know how to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Psalmist understood this well, which is why he wrote, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11).

Historically, many religious structures have strayed from the Word of God in preaching or practice. In fact, there are many churches that do not encourage their members to bring their Bibles to the services, or study them in private. Certainly this has been true of the Catholic Church throughout her history. But it is

true of Protestant denominations as well, including Lutherans. I know. I have conducted Lutheran services. When I asked the people to open their Bibles for the preaching of the Word, there was silence. So I opened mine. While the Bible is not always encouraged to be read, or studied privately, the Word of God calls upon every believer to be a student of the Scriptures. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Bible Study

It would be fair to say that many people have a difficult time reading, or understanding the Bible, so they hesitate to obey the known will of the Lord in this matter of personal Bible study. Such souls must be challenged to make sure they are truly born again, for then there will be a natural love for the Word of God. Listen to the Psalmist as he says,

How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.
I have sworn and confirmed
That I will keep Your righteous judgments.
(Psalm 119:103–106)

A converted heart is a heart that will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. A greater reliance on the Holy Spirit is to be encouraged in personal Bible study, for Jesus promised that if anyone desires to know the will of the Father it can be known.

God the Holy Spirit Wrote the Bible

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, individuals wrote the Bible. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Bible can be understood. Jesus gave this promise in John 16:13–14. “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

A Humble Heart

There is to be humility, and an utter dependency upon the Holy Spirit for understanding of the Word of God, so that the prayer of Jesus can be honored. “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25). God’s people are to be instructed that knowledge of the Scriptures does not depend upon human intelligence, but upon a humble heart that is Spirit taught. Even a child can know that which is able to make him wise unto salvation. Listen again as Paul commends Timothy for knowing the Scriptures from childhood. “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

The Bible Commands Every Believer to Study

While every believer is to be encouraged to start a personal Bible study, and should be commended in the effort, the point must be pressed that the Bible actually commands the faithful to hear and study the Word of God. In every generation the command has gone forth to remember, or hear, or receive God's Word. Joshua cried out, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God is giving you rest, and is giving you this land" (Josh 1:13). The prophet Isaiah commanded, "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:10). Jeremiah declared, "Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel" (Jer. 10:1). The apostle James instructs the church saying, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21).

The religious, and holy duty to study the Bible on a personal level can become a delight, when it is remembered how unique the Bible is. What a marvelous Book is the Word of God!

A Few Facts about Scripture

The Scriptures were written by about 39 authors, dating from about 1900 B.C. to about A.D. 90, yet they harmonize perfectly. There is not one contradiction or mistake.

Prophetic statements made have been fulfilled. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20–21).

In A.D. 1228 the Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 books

in the New Testament for a total of 66 books. There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament, and 260 chapters in the New Testament, for a total of 1,189 chapters.

In A.D. 1448 the Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan. There are 23,213 verses in the Old Testament.

In A.D. 1551, the New Testament was divided into verses by Robert Stephanus. There are 7,959 verses in the New Testament, for a total of 31,173 verses. And each and every verse is, as the apostle Paul said, “God breathed.”

A Matter to be Pressed upon the People

Though the Bible is to be studied because it is the Word of God, because it shows the way of salvation, because it has been neglected, and because it is commanded, the objective is to have a profitable time in the Word. It will not do much good to study the Scriptures unless a person ultimately finds value and personal application. Duty is commendable, but it is not enough.

In considering this matter of having a profitable Bible study, I would like to share my own experience. Many years ago as a young Christian, I found this little book on the Bible by Reuben Archer Torrey. His thoughts on *How to Study the Bible* were very instructive and offered practical advice. Because other Christians are asking, “What method shall I pursue in my Bible study?” this book by R. A. Torrey is an answer to that inquiry.

Stanford E. Murrell

Preface

This book has been written for two reasons: first, because it seemed to be needed; second, to save the writer time and labor. Letters are constantly coming in from all quarters asking how to study the Bible. It is impossible to refuse to answer a question so important as that, but it takes much time to answer it as it should be answered. This book is written as an answer to those who have asked the question, and to those who may wish to ask it. Nothing is more important for our own mental, moral, and spiritual development, or for our increase in usefulness, than Bible study. But not all Bible study is equally profitable. Some Bible study is absolutely profitless. "How to study the Bible so as to get the largest profit from it?" is a question of immeasurable importance. The answer to the question, found in this book, has been, for the most part, given in addresses by the author, at the Chicago Bible Institute, before the summer gatherings of college students, at ministerial conferences, and Y.M.C.A. conventions. Many, especially ministers, who have heard these addresses, have asked that they might be put in a permanent shape. I have promised for two years to comply with this request, but have never found time to do so until now.

R. A. Torrey



REVIEW OF FOREWORD & PREFACE

1. What does God want every Christian to do with the Bible?
Why?
2. How is a person saved? Provide Scriptural support.
3. How does faith come to a person?
4. What did the Psalmist commit himself to doing and why?
5. Who divided the Bible into chapters? When?
6. How many books are in the Old Testament canon of Scripture?

7. How many books are in the New Testament canon of Scripture?
8. How many chapters are in the Old Testament?
9. How many chapters are in the New Testament?
10. How many total chapters are in the Bible?
11. How many verses are in the Old Testament as divided by Rabbi Nathan? When?
12. How many verses are in the New Testament as divided by Robert Stephanus? When?
13. For what two reasons did R.A. Torrey write, *How to Study the Bible*?

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Why is the reading and study of the Bible not always encouraged?
2. What are some ways that you can encourage God's people to read and study the Bible?
3. How does a person learn to rely upon the Holy Spirit in studying the Bible?
4. Why does the Bible student need humility?
5. Can you think of a book that needs to be written in order to fill a current void within the Church?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Examine your own heart to make sure you are a born again believer.
2. Commit to personal Bible study.
3. Encourage others to study the Bible with you.
4. Rely on the Holy Spirit for biblical understanding.
5. Be diligent.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

HEARTWORK

1. I know I am a converted person.
True____ False____
2. I have good Bible study habits.
True____ False____
3. I make an effort to memorize Scripture.
True____ False____
4. By remembering God’s Word, I have been kept from sin.
True____ False____

5. I find the Scriptures to be “sweeter than honey to my mouth.”

True_____ False_____

6. I am humble enough to know that I do not know everything.

True_____ False_____

7. I am willing to rely on the Holy Spirit for spiritual understanding.

True_____ False_____

What You Will Learn

Seven Methods of Bible Study

- Study the Bible by Individual Books
- Study the Bible by Topics
- Study the Bible by Biographies
- Study the Bible by Types
- Study the Bible in Course (Verse by Verse)
- Study the Bible in Chronological Order
- Study the Bible for Practical Usefulness in Dealing with Men

Eight Fundamental Conditions for Profitable Bible Study

- The Student Must be Born Again
- The Student Must have a Love for the Bible
- The Student Must be Willing to do Hard Work
- The Student Must be Wholly Surrendered to God
- The Student Must be Obedient to Biblical Teachings as Soon as He Sees Them
- The Student Must have a Child-like mind
- The Student Must Study the Bible as the Word of God
- The Student Must Study the Bible Prayerfully

Four Practices Involved in Studying the Bible

- First, studying the Bible involves the unquestioning acceptance of its teachings.

- Second, studying the Bible involves absolute reliance upon all it promises.
- Third, studying the Bible involves, obedience, prompt, and exact obedience.
- Fourth, studying the Bible as the word of God involves, studying it as in God's presence.

Two Bible Doctrines

- Doctrine of Election
- Doctrine of Divinity of Jesus Christ

What the First Epistle of Peter Teaches about the Believer

- A Detailed Outline of 1 Peter 1:1—5:14

Five Final Suggestions

- Study the Bible Regularly
- Study the Bible While you are Refreshed
- Study the Bible to Find Christ
- Study the Bible to Memorize Scripture
- Study the Bible During Spare Moments

Part 1

The Methods of the Most Profitable Bible Study

Introduction to Methods of Bible Study

We shall consider the most profitable Methods of Bible Study before we consider the Fundamental Conditions of Profitable Bible study. Many readers of this book will probably be frightened, at first, at the seeming elaborateness and difficulty of some of the methods of study suggested. But they are not as difficult as they appear. Their practicability and fruitfulness have been tested in the classroom, and that not with classes made up altogether of college graduates, but largely composed of persons of very moderate education; in some cases of almost no education. They do require time and hard work. It must be remembered, however, that the Bible contains gold, and almost any one is willing to dig for gold, especially if it is certain that he will find it. It is certain that one will find gold in the Bible, if he digs. As one uses the methods here recommended, he will find his ability to do the work rapidly increasing by exercise, until he can soon do more in fifteen minutes, than at the outset he could do in an hour.

Bible Study Provides Good Mental Training

The first method of study suggested will be found to be an exceptionally good mental training. When one has pursued this

method of study for a time, his powers of observation will have been so quickened, or enhanced, that he will see at a glance what, at first, he only saw upon much study and reflection. This method of study will also train the logical powers, cultivating habits of order, system, and classification, in one's intellectual processes. The power of clear, concise, and strong expression will also be developed. No other book affords the opportunity for intellectual development by its study, than is to be found in the Bible. No other book, and no other subject, will so abundantly repay close and deep study. The Bible is much read, but comparatively little studied. It will probably be noticed, by some, that the first method of study suggested is practically the method now pursued in the study of nature; first, careful analysis and ascertainment of facts; second, classification of facts. But the facts of revelation far transcend those of nature in sublimity, suggestiveness, helpfulness, and practical utility. They are also far more accessible.

Every Believer can be a Profound Bible Student

We cannot all be profound students of nature; we can all be profound students of Scripture. Many an otherwise illiterate person has a marvelous grasp of Bible truth. It was acquired by study. There are persons who have studied little else, who have studied the Scriptures, by the hour, daily, and their consequent wisdom is the astonishment, and sometimes the dismay of scholars and theologians.

*** *End of Free Sample* ***