

STUDY THE BIBLE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy of Scripture ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

I. FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

- A. The Old Testament contains 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books, total of 66 books.
- B. Testament means *"covenant"* or *"contract."*
- C. The Bible was written under the inspiration of Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors from all walks of life: shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers and kings. Despite these differences in occupation and the span of years it took to write it, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book. Not one book contracts itself with another book.
- D. The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- E. The Bible holds the distinction of being the first printed book; it was first reprinted in 1450. The Bible was printed in 1454 A.D. by Johannes Gutenberg who invented the "type mold" for the printing press. It was the first book ever printed.
- F. It is the only book that reveals the origin, mission, and destiny of man. It is God’s love letter for us and through reading and understanding we find His will for our lives.

II. ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH THE WORD

“In the beginning was the Word , and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:1-3)

- A. It is not enough to study the word of God only, but we must encounter Him by using His own language, which is the ***language of Scripture***, to speak to Him. We do this by having intimate dialogue with Him through the Word. The pathway to encountering God is simple and sure. We give ourselves to ***long and loving meditation*** of the word of God, while creating an active dialogue with Him from our hearts.

(Luke 10:39) Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard (encountered) His Word.

- B. Scripture is the ***“fuel for the fire”*** that gives us the ***“conversational material”*** in our prayer life. It gives us language for the desire and passion already within our hearts. Using the word of God in our prayer language makes prayer easy and enjoyable (Isa. 56:7). This includes singing the word as well (Col. 3:16).

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Eph. 5:19)

- C. Many of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day approached the study of Scripture in a purely academic way using only their minds. They believed that they could find life in God through the study of Scripture alone.

STUDY THE BIBLE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

However, Jesus said that unless they were willing to come to the One of whom the Scriptures testified, they would never find eternal life. Eternal life is found only in the experiential knowledge of a Person (Jn. 17:3).

(John 5:39) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

- D. Not only do we **encounter God** through the Word, but we **experience revelation** of the Word through encountering God. It takes encounter with God to experience revelation in the Word. He alone gives understanding. After the resurrection, Jesus opened the Scriptures to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and the eleven in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36-45).

III. THE NECESSITY OF AN ACTION PLAN

- A. Without having an ***action plan*** to reach your goals in the word, it's very easy to let "time fly by" simply imagining that you've been diligent or will be someday. ***"If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time."*** It's like giving financially; we imagine that we've given more, until we see the numbers at years end.
- B. After deciding your **goals** related to the word, make sure that you have an **action plan** that includes **what you will study** that translates into **real time** within your **schedule**. *What is your goal concerning the word of God? What will you study first? What days will you study? What time will you begin and end?*
- C. When deciding ***what to study***, here are some ***"wish list"*** options. You may study **books** (Daniel, Revelation, Old Testament Kings), **themes** (Sermon on the Mount, Apostolic Prayers, intimacy, intercession, urgency of end-times and justice), **people** (David, Mary, Elijah, Anna, John), **passages** (Ps. 27:4; Rev. 4-5; Luke 18:1-8; Matt. 24-25; Isa. 62) and **words** (worship, justice, beauty, fasting).

IV. HELPFUL STEPS TO READ THE WORD BETTER

1. Pray
2. First reading of a book
3. Second reading with color- highlighting
4. Read and make paragraph titles
5. Interpretations- Observations
6. Personal applications

Step #1 – Pray

Studying the Bible is an intimate time with God. He is the inspiration for everything written in His Word. Therefore we must rely on Him for understanding and for life-changing application as we study the Word of God. Invite the Holy Spirit to your time of Bible study. We aren't meant to read the Bible alone but with the person Holy Spirit!

STUDY THE BIBLE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (John 16:13)

Step #2 – Read the Entire Book (1st Reading)

There are many ways that God can speak to us. The Bible tells us that God sometimes speaks to us through dreams and visions, through circumstances, and through visible signs. Sometimes God sends an angel to speak to us, and some may even hear an audible voice, although this does not occur very often. The most common way that He speaks to us, however, is through His Word, the Bible that you and I have in our hands. Yet it is often this medium of communication that we neglect. Only about 10% of Christians have actually read the Bible all the way through. Some only look into the Bible when they need a solution to their problems. Others have a yearly reading plan and chop the books into parts. Much of what God wants to communicate to His people gets lost because we don't read correctly.

Step #3 –Color Coding your Bible (2nd Reading)

We want to take you to a much more sophisticated level of reading. You will learn to read with purpose. We know from experience that a minimum of five readings is necessary to gain even a basic understanding of a book.

Now, in this second reading, you are going to look more closely at the text. This reading will include Color Coding so that you start intentionally looking for things in the text. We will teach you how to choose different colors so that your color-coding makes sense to you! Here is an example done by Computer:

1. **Repetition-** Every author has certain things he wants to focus on. A big clue to this is to be looking for repeated words or phrases. For example the word Holiness is repeated 92x in Leviticus. The phrase “then they/you shall know that I am the Lord” is repeated about 80x in Ezekiel. In the Gospels, for example, Mark uses the word “Immediately” 36 times. John, on the other hand, gives major focus to Jesus' teaching and the famous “I am” statements.
2. **People and Places** - People are very important in the Bible – look out for the major characters and where they are.
3. **Atmosphere** - For example, Paul expresses lots of emotion in his writing – is he angry or joyful? Look out for clues so that we can think about why he feels that way. This is a really good way to find out what God is like, how He feels, what moves Him and this will give description of what He looks like.
4. **Others** - As you develop your Bible into color-coding you can learn to look out for important Commands or Promises, major Contrasts and Connectives. For example, the use of Contrasts is one of the most common devices in the Bible (light and darkness, Saul and David etc).

Step #4 – Make a List of Paragraph Titles (3rd Reading)

You will notice that all modern translations divide the text into paragraphs. These are not in the original text but neither were the Chapters and Verses! There is a useful article on this subject in the Appendix, which

STUDY THE BIBLE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

traces the origins of Chapters and Verses and explains why chapter and verse breaks are often in strange places!

In this step, you will give a title to each paragraph in the book. This step will help you get a better handle on the book. A paragraph title is four words (or fewer) from the text that captures the main point of the paragraph. Though this sounds like a lot of work, before you know it the paragraph titles will start jumping off the page at you.

How to do Paragraph Titles

Read the text through again, but this time pause at the end of each paragraph and write down a paragraph title. Only words from the Bible text can be used and you must write them down in their actual sequence. Try to use words that are close together in the paragraph. Avoid piecing words together from multiple sentences as this may make for a paragraph title that imposes a meaning not intended by the author in his original message.

You are allowed to use no more than four words, though often you may find that three, two or, occasionally, even one word is sufficient.

Step #5 What is Interpretation- Observation?

One of the most important steps in unlocking God's Word is careful observation of what the author is saying in the text. This is the foundational step during inductive Bible study. Your interpretations and applications will only go as deep as the observations you make, so don't rush this step! Shallow observations = shallow interpretations! During this step we are just gathering information to get a better understanding of what is being said. This is often overlooked and, as a result, people run the danger of taking verses out of their original literary context, and miss God's intended meaning.

- ❖ Observation *is the foundation of good Bible study.*
- ❖ Observation *is basically asking the following questions: who, what, where, when, and how.*
- ❖ Observation *is not determining what the text means; it is simply looking at what it says. The "why" question comes in the next step – Interpretation.*

Think of yourself as a detective investigating a crime scene. A good investigator gathers all the evidence and facts before drawing any conclusions. Observation is "*just the facts*". There is little room in observation for personal opinion.

How do I discover the Meaning of the Text?

Now that you have understanding of both the historical background (historical context), and the text (literary context), you are now ready to interpret. Interpretation is determining what the book's or passage's intended meaning was when it was first written.

Step #6 – Application

STUDY THE BIBLE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

“Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceived themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing.” (James 1:22-25)