

# BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

*Dayton Women in the Word*

*Part of our mission at Dayton Women in the Word is to give you tools to help you better understand and engage with the Word of God. While we believe that the only essential for our Bible Reading is the Holy Spirit, we have found many of these secondary tools helpful in engaging with the Scriptures. **For further teaching on these tools, watch our At Home in the Word video series at [daytonwomenintheword.com/bible-study-tools](http://daytonwomenintheword.com/bible-study-tools).***

## PRAYER

Invite the Lord to work in you during your study and illumine the text. Pray before, during, and after your study time. Pray for help when you get stuck or with thanksgiving when you read something particularly meaningful to you. Ask God questions. Lay your study at His feet. (See also PRAYER JOURNALING below.)

## REPETITIVE READING

We recommend repetitive reading of the Biblical text; that is, reading the same passage multiple times as you study it. This allows you to become very familiar with the content of the passage. You can also listen to the passage repetitively with an audio Bible app.

## CONTEXT

We find it extremely helpful to know the historical and literary context of the passage we are reading. These five context questions are helpful to ask before you begin studying a book of the Bible or longer passage of Scripture:

- Who wrote it?
- When was it written?
- To whom was it written?
- In what style was it written?
- Why was it written?

You can find a printable version of these questions for future use [here](#). We typically use the introductory material in a study Bible or a trusted commentary to help answer these questions. It may also be helpful to explore the setting of the book, the major themes, how it fits into the bigger story of the Bible (metanarrative) and what the literary structure is like. For more information on Biblical genres, take a look at our [Quick Guide to Biblical Genres](#).

## ANNOTATION (TAKING NOTES)

We find it helpful to print out a double-spaced copy of the text to make notes on. Here are some examples of things to take note of as you read:

- Repeated words, phrases, and ideas
- Specific attributes of God
- Promises of God
- Lists or several points in a row
- Words, phrases, or ideas you don't understand - to revisit later
- Key transition words such as "if/then," "likewise," "but," "because," or "in the same way." Try drawing an arrow to connect from one idea to the other.
- Definitions of words you don't know – to look up later. See LOOKING UP DEFINITIONS below.
- Any questions you have to revisit later

## CROSS REFERENCING

**By Verse:** Verse cross references are the small letters following the words in a study Bible that match up with the list of references in your margins. They point us to other relevant Scriptures related to our primary text. If you don't have a study Bible, you can find them by looking up the passage online or using the free Crossway Bible Study app. There are many, many cross references, and you do not need to look them all up for every passage! Ask the Lord to focus you in on areas that you need a fuller understanding and follow that trail.

**By Book:** Cross referencing by book refers to reading whole books of the Bible that are written chronologically before, during, or after the time of the book you are studying. These are also called 'contemporary' books. An example of this is to read Esther while studying Ezra/Nehemiah.

## LOOKING UP DEFINITIONS (WORD STUDY)

Looking up definitions is just like it sounds. When you come to a word that you don't know or want to study more closely, look it up. You can start with an English dictionary or look the word up in the original language (Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic) in a concordance (we like using the Blue Letter Bible app). Looking up a definition can sometimes lead you on what we call a "word study," which means to look at one word in every place that it's used in the Bible. Looking up definitions helps us to clarify the author's original meaning and intent.

## COMPARING TRANSLATIONS

It can be extremely helpful to read a difficult passage in a different translation of the Bible. Some of our suggestions outside the ESV include the New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), New King James Version (NKJV), and Revised Standard Version (RSV). Try to stay away from paraphrases like the New Living Translation (NLT) and the Message (MSG) for study purposes (consider them more like commentaries, not direct translations). You can find all of these on the YouVersion app or biblegateway.com.

## OUTLINING

An outline is an ordered list of the main topics and supporting ideas in a text. This can be as simple or as complex as the Spirit leads, and there's no "right way" to do it. You may use the headings in your Bible for help, but don't feel the need to follow them. Outline in a way that feels natural to you and helps you understand the passage more fully. Feel free to revise as you get a deeper understanding of the text.

## PARAPHRASING

To paraphrase is to rewrite a passage in your own words. Take your time with this, and utilize the previous tools to get a fuller understanding of what the text is saying before you try to paraphrase. There is no right way to paraphrase. Just do your best to grasp what the author is trying to say and put it into your own words. It is often helpful to think about how you would explain the passage to a child or someone who is not familiar with the Bible.

## READING COMMENTARY

We recommend saving this tool for the end of your study. Focus first on what God is revealing to you in his Word before you read what God has revealed to someone else. Sermons, lectures, blog posts, podcasts, and books are all considered commentary. When you're ready, choose a commentary from a trusted source. Ask your Bible teacher or pastor if you need help choosing a commentary.

## RESPONDING TO THE TEXT

After you have studied and explored the passage in depth, ask yourself these questions to evaluate the text and apply it to your life.

- What does it say? (Comprehension)
- What does it mean? (Interpretation)
- How should it change me? (Application)

## PRAYER JOURNALING

Prayer journaling is a method of reflecting on what you've read in the text. It is prayer in written form. This tool can help you to clarify your thoughts on the text as you put pen to paper. It can be a stream-of-consciousness style of writing in which you write exactly what comes to mind at that given moment, or it can be a more organized compilation of thoughts - whatever works for you! You can praise the Lord for what He has taught you as you've studied; ask Him questions that have arisen as you've read or petition the Lord to help you put into practice something you learned. This is your personal journal between you and God - how you use and organize it is up to you!

## MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

Memorizing Scripture simply means committing a passage of God's Word to memory. This is more of a practice than a tool, but it is similar to repetitive reading because it helps us to internalize the truths we are learning. We suggest starting with a shorter passage of 1-3 verses if you are just starting out, and working up toward longer passages. Choose a passage that has special meaning to you or hits on a main theme from the larger passage you are studying.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin

*Dig Deeper* by Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach