

How to Understand What You Are Reading in the Bible

Learning to Read Scripture With Understanding

The Bible is not just a book to finish—it is God's Word given to reveal who He is, what He has done, and how He calls us to live. For many beginners, opening the Bible can feel overwhelming. There are different books, unfamiliar names, historical events, and teachings that may seem difficult at first.

Understanding the Bible is a journey. You do not need to know everything before you begin. As you continue reading, praying, studying, and asking questions, your understanding will grow.

The goal is not simply to gain information. The goal is to know God more deeply and allow His Word to transform your life.

After spending time using this resource you will find important links at the bottom of our “4 Pillars” page: [A Bible link](#), [A Concordance link](#) and [A Bible Dictionary link](#).

Remember this is not a race but a time for you to find your pace. Take your time and ask questions when in doubt, struggling or just want to check-up.

Before You Read: Prepare Your Heart

1. Begin With Prayer

Before reading, ask God for wisdom and understanding.

A simple prayer:

“Lord, open my heart and mind to understand Your Word. Help me see what You want to teach me today and show me how to apply it to my life. Amen.”

Remember, prayer is a conversation with God. Come with humility, honesty, and a willingness to learn.

While You Read: Ask the Right Questions

1. What Does This Teach Me About God?

The Bible is ultimately a story about God.

Look for:

- His character
- His promises
- His faithfulness
- His love
- His holiness
- His mercy
- His justice

Ask:

What does this passage show me about who God is?

2. What Does This Teach Me About People?

Scripture reveals the human condition and our need for God.

Consider:

- What choices did people make?
- What can I learn from their successes and failures?
- What does this reveal about human struggles?
- Where do I see my own life reflected?

Ask:

What does this passage teach me about myself and others?

3. What Does This Teach Me About Jesus?

Jesus is the center of Scripture.

As you read, consider:

- How does this passage point to God's plan of salvation?

- What does this teach me about following Jesus?
- How does this help me understand His character and mission?

Ask:

How does this passage help me know Christ better?

4. How Can I Apply This Today?

The purpose of Bible reading is transformation, not just knowledge.

Ask:

- Is God encouraging me?
- Is God correcting something in my life?
- Is there a command to follow?
- Is there a promise to trust?
- Is there someone I need to forgive or encourage?

Ask:

What is one thing I can do differently because of what I read?

Understand the Context

A helpful way to understand Scripture is to look at the context.

Before drawing conclusions, consider:

Who wrote this?

Understanding the author can help explain why the passage was written.

Who was it written to?

The original audience and their circumstances often help explain the message.

What was happening?

Look at the surrounding verses and chapters.

A verse should be understood within the whole message of Scripture, not separated from its context.

Pay Attention to Different Types of Writing

The Bible contains many types of literature. Understanding the style helps you understand the message.

History

Examples:

- Genesis
- Acts

These describe events and show God's work through history.

Poetry and Wisdom

Examples:

- Psalms
- Proverbs

These often use emotion, imagery, and practical wisdom.

Prophecy

Examples:

- Isaiah
- Revelation

These contain messages from God, often using symbols and visions.

Letters

Examples:

- Romans
- Ephesians

These were written to teach, encourage, and guide believers.

Understanding the type of writing helps you read it as it was intended.

When You Do Not Understand Something

It is normal to encounter difficult passages.

Do not stop reading because something is confusing.

Try these steps:

1. Read the Passage Again

Sometimes a second reading reveals something you missed.

2. Read the Surrounding Verses

The meaning is often clearer when you see the whole section.

3. Write Down Your Questions

Keep a notebook nearby. Questions are a sign that you are learning.

4. Seek Help

Talk with mature believers, pastors, teachers, or trusted study resources.

Learning Scripture is not meant to be done completely alone.

A Simple Bible Study Method: S.O.A.P.

A simple method for beginners is:

Scripture

What passage did I read?

Write down a verse that stood out.

Observation

What do I notice?

What is happening in this passage?

Application

How does this apply to my life?

What is God asking me to believe, change, or do?

Prayer

Talk with God about what you learned.

Remember: Understanding Grows Over Time

The Bible is a lifelong journey, not a one-time assignment.

Some passages will immediately make sense. Others will become clearer as you grow in faith and understanding.

Do not measure your progress by how much you know. Measure it by how much you are growing closer to God.

Every time you open Scripture, you are creating space to hear from Him.

One passage.

One lesson.

One day at a time.

God's Word has the power to guide your steps, strengthen your faith, and transform your life.