

How to Become a Discoverer

Attitudes Toward Bible Study

If you wish to become a discoverer, one of your first needs is to consider the attitudes which will hinder or help you. As one Bible scholar has stated, too many people suffer from an inferiority complex when they approach Bible study. Let us list some of the attitudes which can help or hinder you in becoming a discoverer.

Faulty Attitudes

THE DEFEATED: I won't be able to understand anything anyway, so why try to study the Bible?

THE NEGATIVE: I would like to learn how to study the Bible better, but I doubt if anything I discover would be any good or right. I am afraid to express my ideas because I fear they will be wrong.

THE CLOSED HEART: I don't believe everything the Bible teaches. Since it was written so many hundreds of years ago, how can it have any value today? So why study it?

THE LAZY: I suppose if I tried I could understand more than I do, but what I read seems rather hard and dull. I don't know if I want to invest the energy to learn how to study.

Helpful Attitudes

THE POSITIVE: I want to learn how to study the Bible. No doubt I will have trouble learning some of the Bible study skills. I am sure there will be things in the Bible I'll not understand. But I believe that through the help of the Holy Spirit I too can learn how to gain insight into God's Word.

THE RECEPTIVE: God asks of me only an open heart and an open mind so that he can reveal himself and his truths to me. I don't have to understand everything.

THE EXPECTANT: I am coming to God's Word to let him speak to me. It is good to know that I don't have to inject ideas into my reading or to try to squeeze truths out of it. As I study and pray, I believe that the message in any Scripture passage will unfold itself to me.

THE FAITHFUL: I cannot expect much from Bible study unless I am willing to invest some energy and discipline in the study. I realize that God has placed a price on his Word: faithfulness and diligence in study. If I only scratch the surface, my reward is a few crumbs. If I dig deeply into the Word, my reward will be rich treasures.

Approaches to Bible Study

Usually you study the Bible with some definite purpose in mind. Possibly you have been invited to conduct a Bible study at a meeting or you are to teach a church school class. Or you may be studying it on your own for your personal inspiration. Whatever your reason, there are several approaches you can use.

HIT-AND-MISS APPROACH: You might approach your study in a hit-and-miss fashion. Maybe you read a passage several times. You may write down some of the ideas you gain in the reading. You may read it in another translation or look in a commentary. You may spend some time thinking and praying about what you read. You have no logical pattern that you follow.

THE APPLICATION APPROACH: This is one of the most common approaches. You quickly read the passage and then spend your time thinking about ways it might be applied to life.

THE COMMENTARY APPROACH: You read the Bible passage and then immediately read some commentaries for further insight. You let the commentary be your teacher.

THE HOLY SPIRIT APPROACH: This varies from the others in that you spend most of your study time in prayer and meditation. You read the passage and then look to the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the insights and truths in the passage without doing any serious study.

THE METHODICAL APPROACH: In this type you follow an orderly and logical pattern as you study your Bible. This approach does not discount the validity of the other approaches but incorporates them where appropriate. The methodical approach is not limited just to Bible study. The farmer follows a methodical pattern as he plants his crops. The cook follows definite steps as she prepares her dough for bread or batter for cake. Both know that the mechanics in the process will do much to insure the success of the product. Method is

as important in Bible study as it is in farming or baking. As a Bible student, if you hope to become a discoverer, you need to develop an orderly and logical procedure in your study. In doing so you will find that you gain more insight and receive much greater satisfaction in your study than if you proceed in a hit-and-miss fashion or let the commentary be your teacher.

Process in Methodical Bible Study

Method implies a regular order. If you desire to develop a methodical pattern in your study of the Bible, there are definite procedures to follow, and it is best if they are done in a certain order. On the next page we have listed some of the procedures in Bible study and their most logical order. These processes are true in all study, not just Bible study. They lead from one to another and overlap each other. As you read the list, think about how you follow these procedures even when you are reading the daily newspaper.

Why This Emphasis on Logical Steps?

Maybe you are saying that you see no real sense in following such a logical procedure, that it makes Bible study so mechanical. We admit that there is a danger of method becoming an end in itself and that we cannot separate the study process into neat categories. Often one process overlaps with another. You will find that while one process leads into another, the procedure will be like a spiral in which you come back to previous processes. Interpretation will help you gain new insights into observations; summarization and application will give you additional insights into both observation and interpretation.

But there is real value in deliberately trying to do one process at the time. Most of us have a one-track mind. We accomplish the most when we concentrate on one thing at the time. This is especially true when we first try to understand something, whether it is a piece of literature or a scientific problem.

The scientist makes no interpretation and draws no conclusions until he has observed thoroughly all the facts. So it should be with you as a Bible student. First *observe!* No interpreting, no applying—until you have observed carefully what the author has written, observed *all* he has written!

This emphasis on the logical approach does not discount the importance of the Holy Spirit as the Revealer of truth. We need his guidance as we observe, interpret, evaluate, apply, and actualize. He is a part of the entire process, enabling us to be alert in our observations, discerning in our interpretations, honest in our evaluations and application and courageous in actualizing the truths in our own lives.

Procedures in Bible Study

<p>1. OBSERVE exactly what the author is saying.</p>	<p>This is the most important step in Bible study and must come first. The more careful and thorough your observations, the more meaningful will be your interpretations, the fairer will be your evaluations, and the richer will be your applications.</p>
<p>2. INTERPRET objectively what the author has written.</p>	<p>After you have observed carefully what the author is saying, determine what he really meant by what he said. You are to try to discover the thoughts, attitudes, emotions, purpose of the author.</p>
<p>3. SUMMARIZE concisely the key ideas in a passage.</p>	<p>While summarization is listed as Step 3, it really is a process which should be done in connection with both observation and interpretation. Try to summarize the facts you observe and then the meaning of the facts.</p>
<p>4. EVALUATE fairly what the author has written.</p>	<p>Not until you have a clear concept of what the author has written and what he meant by what he wrote can you honestly judge the validity of the passage. Thus evaluation must come after observation and interpretation.</p>
<p>5. APPLY personally the message revealed.</p>	<p>While application is listed fifth in the process, this does not mean that it is fifth in importance. Application is the fruit which will come forth through the other processes. Application is a growing process, not superimposed in a superficial way, but rising out of all the other processes.</p>
<p>6. ACTUALIZE your convictions.</p>	<p>Someone has said, "Don't just study the Bible, <i>do</i> something!" Too often Bible study is mainly intellectualizing and emotionalizing the truths, but no actualizing—actually doing what the Lord revealed to us.</p>

Tools for Bible Study

A BASIC STUDY BIBLE: You should use an accepted standard version for your basic study Bible. If your Bible is old and has small print, buy a new one. There are many basic versions to select from such as the *King James*, *Revised Standard Version*, *New English Bible*, *New American Standard*, *Jerusalem Bible*, *The New International Version*. All of these are based on original manuscripts. The translators have tried to be as accurate as possible in translating from the early manuscripts. All of the illustrations used in this resource will be taken from the *Revised Standard Version*.

SEVERAL TRANSLATIONS AND PARAPHRASES: Besides one basic study Bible, you should have several other translations. Among these you might want to have some of the more “free” translations and paraphrases, such as *The Living Bible*, *Today’s English Version* (Good News for Modern Man), *Phillips*, or *Amplified Version*. All of these will give you insight into the meaning of words. It is possible to secure four to eight translations in a volume.

CONCORDANCE: A concordance is an alphabetical index to help you find Bible passages on particular subjects. While you do not need a large concordance, you may have one in the back of one of your Bibles. You need a concordance for finding cross-references.

DICTIONARY: A dictionary is a very important tool in Bible study. Looking up definitions of key words will give you new insight into meanings.

COMMENTARIES, BIBLE DICTIONARY, BIBLE ATLAS: These are very helpful in providing background to the geography, background, and culture of the Bible times, as well as insight into some of the difficult passages. These are listed last and should be used last in the process of interpretation.