



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

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

How would you like to study the Bible on your own? Go deeper into the Scriptures? Learn more about God and His plan? You can. Here are five keys to help you get more out of your personal Bible study.

Key #1 Make Observations



Making observations is the most important aspect of Bible study. The more observations you find, the better you'll understand a passage of Scripture. And the more time you spend observing, the more observations you'll get. So take a passage and juice it. Observe! Observe! Observe! List everything you think of. And when you get tired, put it aside for awhile. Come back fresh the next day when your mind is relaxed. The number of observations is unlimited. That's the genius of the Scriptures.

Principle: There's always one more observation to be made. There's always something you missed—something you haven't seen. Spend more time and you'll find it!

Key #2 Ask Questions



Some observations lie on the surface and are found with little trouble. But most lie below the surface and take some work. How are these hidden gems mined? By asking the right questions! The secret of effective Bible study is addressing appropriate questions to the text and searching for answers to those questions. The search may take you all over the Old and New Testaments.

You say, "What questions should I ask?" Start with the interrogative words Who? What? When? Why? Where? and How? Address these questions to the text and just see what you unearths! Usually one question leads to another and another. Keep asking questions and keep looking for answers to those questions. This process will lead you deeper and deeper into the mine where the rewards are most spectacular. This is Bible study at its best—to delve beneath the surface looking for hidden gems of truth. It's just you, your Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the quest for truth.

Caution: You'll often come up with questions you can't answer. Don't be discouraged. Put them on the back burner and let them simmer. Someday you'll stumble across the answer while studying an entirely different passage. Over the years your knowledge of the Scriptures will increase. You'll be able to see things you can't see now.

Key #3 Compare Scripture with Scripture



Comparing Scripture with Scripture is important because no single passage contains everything the Bible has to say on a matter. The various details are usually scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Bible student's job is to cull and harmonize them into a single whole.

Comparing one passage of Scripture with another is beneficial in three ways:

- *Amplification: The second passage provides more information on the subject you're pursuing.*
- *Explanation: The compared passage sheds more light on difficult passages.*
- *Confirmation: The compared passage may contain similar information that confirms the truth of the first.*

Key #4 Slow Down



One of the biggest problems in learning the Bible is reading it too fast. Slow down! Read for comprehension. It doesn't matter how much you read or how much territory you cover; it's how much you get out of what you read! Quality is much more important than quantity. Use a pencil and notepad. Make outlines, sketches, and diagrams—anything to help you visualize a doctrine or integrate a passage of Scripture.

Key #5 Be Persistent



Effective Bible study is an art. It's a set of skills that take time to develop. Don't expect immediate results; you won't learn these skills overnight. They take a few years to develop and many years to perfect—but you've got the rest of your life. These skills are developed by continual practice; they're something you learn by doing. The more you practice the more efficient you'll become.

Anyone with average intelligence can learn to study the Bible on their own if they're willing to spend the time, work hard, discipline themselves, and be persistent in finding answers to their questions. You must be willing to make certain sacrifices (perhaps giving up your favorite television programs) in order to enjoy the sweet rewards of effective Bible study.