

How to Study the Bible

A Beginner's Guide to Going Deeper
Using the READ · COMPARE · APPLY Method

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You Can Do This

Many people feel intimidated when they open the Bible. It's an ancient book, written in different cultures, across thousands of years, in three different languages. Where do you even start?

The good news is that the Bible was written to be understood. God gave it to us because He wants to communicate with us — not to confuse us or make us feel small. And the more time you spend in it, the more it opens up.

This guide will walk you through the READ / COMPARE / APPLY method used throughout Greater: A Study of Hebrews. It's a simple, three-step process that works for any passage, any chapter, any book of the Bible.

THE THREE-STEP METHOD

Step 1: READ

Read the passage slowly — then read it again.

Most of us read the Bible too fast. We skim for familiar phrases or look for what we want to find. Instead, try reading a passage at least twice — once for overview, once for detail.

As you read, ask these questions:

- What is actually happening in this passage? (Stick to what the text says, not what you assume.)
- Who is speaking, and who are they speaking to?
- Are there any words I don't understand? (Look them up — a Bible dictionary or blueletterbible.org is a great free tool.)
- What is the mood or tone — urgent, joyful, warning, comforting?
- Is there anything that surprises me or doesn't fit what I expected?

Tip: Try reading the passage in a different Bible translation to see it with fresh eyes. The NLT (New Living Translation) is especially helpful for new readers.

Step 2: COMPARE

Let the Bible explain itself.

The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. When you find a concept, word, or theme in one passage, look for where else it appears in Scripture. This is called cross-referencing, and it's one of the most powerful tools in Bible study.

As you compare, ask:

- Is this word or phrase used anywhere else in the Bible? (Use the search feature in a Bible app like YouVersion or BibleGateway.)
- Does the Old Testament help explain something in the New Testament here?
- Are there other verses that say the same thing in a different way?
- Does comparing these passages change how I understand the original one?
- What does this passage tell me about the character of God?

Tip: Don't worry about looking up every cross-reference. Pick one or two that seem most connected and go deep on those instead of trying to cover everything.

Step 3: **APPLY**

Bring it into your actual life.

Bible study is not just about gaining information — it's about transformation. The final step is the most personal: asking what the passage means for your life right now.

As you apply, ask:

- What does this passage tell me about God that I need to believe more fully?
- Is there a sin, habit, or attitude this passage calls me to change?
- Is there a promise here I need to hold onto — especially in a hard season?
- Is there someone in my life who needs to hear what I just learned?
- What is the one thing I want to remember and live differently because of this passage?

Tip: *Write your answer to the apply question in a journal. Something about putting it in writing makes it more real — and gives you a record of how God has spoken to you over time.*

HELPFUL TOOLS

Bible App (YouVersion) — Free app with hundreds of translations, audio Bible, reading plans, and built-in notes. Download it at bible.com.

BibleGateway.com — Free website with multiple translations side by side, cross-references, and commentaries.

Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org) — Free website and app to look up the original Greek and Hebrew words. Tonya recommends this throughout Greater.

Strong's Concordance — Lists every word in the Bible and where it appears. Available free online. Best used with KJV, NKJV, or ESV.

A Study Bible — A Bible with notes and cross-references built in. The ESV Study Bible and NLT Study Bible are both excellent for new believers.

A SAMPLE WALK-THROUGH

Let's try the method with Hebrews 4:15 — one of the most comforting verses in the entire book.

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” — Hebrews 4:15

READ: Jesus is our High Priest. He can and does sympathize with our weakness. He was tempted in every way we are. He did not sin.

COMPARE: Look up Hebrews 2:17-18. Jesus had to be made like us in every way so He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest. He didn't watch us struggle from a distance — He came and lived it.

APPLY: What are you struggling with right now that feels too shameful to bring to God? This verse says Jesus has been there. Come boldly. He is not surprised by you.

Want to practice this method through the entire book of Hebrews?

Greater Than: Unveiling the Matchless Greatness of Jesus walks you through every chapter using the READ / COMPARE / APPLY method — one passage at a time.

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