

How to Do Personal Bible Study *Howard Hendricks*

Introduction.

- A. A believer is either in the word or in the world being influenced by it.
- B. I have seen believers travel hundreds of miles to attend a Bible conference but they won't walk across their study to get into the word for themselves.
- C. When I got saved someone told me to get into the word.
 - 1. I started with Ezekiel then Revelation.
 - 2. This discouraged me and I closed the book for one year till someone helped me.
- D. Today I want to teach principles on how to get into the word of God for yourself.

I. Why study the Bible?

- A. It is a waste of time to teach people how to study the Bible until they are convinced they need it.
 - 1. My son at college finally realized that personal Bible study is essential.
 - 2. There is no growth in the spiritual realm apart from the word of God.
 - 3. We need the word as a baby needs milk. (1 Peter 2:2)
 - a. My girl was born premature and required feeding every few hours.
 - b. There was no denying her as she made her needs known.
 - c. We are to develop an appetite for the word of God that we may grow.
 - d. Fellowship is no substitute for the word of God.
 - e. Dullness of receptivity in spiritual things hinders growth and we need to pay attention to the revelation. (Hebrews 5:11-14)
 - 1. Passing time does not indicate spiritual growth.
 - 2. Maturity comes by exercising the senses to discern good and evil; we must experience a genuine response to truth.
- B. Once we become convinced of our need for the word we are ready to study.

II. Three step process in Bible study.

- A. Observation, answering the question, what do I see?

1. Most questions that people have could be answered by reading the text.
2. We need to learn to read.

B. Interpretation, answering the question, what does it mean?

C. Application, answering the question, how does it work?

1. Too much Bible study begins and ends with asking what it means.
2. We satisfy our curiosity with meaning and close the book.
3. Some people read books, listen to tapes, and attend seminars but fail to apply what they learn.
4. Failing to apply the truth will starve a believer.
5. My problem is not what I don't know; it's what I know and am not experiencing.

III. Unpacking the three step process..

A. Observation; what do I see?

1. When the psalmist prayed for his eyes to be opened to behold wondrous things in the word he was praying for observation.
 - a. I was driving down a street in Dallas to see a building with a decoration that I had never seen before and my wife laughed.
 - b. She told me that decoration had been there for years.
2. Learn to observe by learning to read.
 - a. Zealously guard your child's desire to read.
 - b. My child had a problem reading and his teacher thought it was more important that he be happy.
 - c. I said he might be happier if he could read.
 - d. *How to Read a Book* is a good book, though not easy reading.
 - e. *How to Read Better and Faster* gives exercises that help us read better.
 1. Most think that if they read slower they retain more.
 2. This is opposite of the truth.
3. Learn to observe by knowing what to look for.

- a. My physician looks in my mouth to determine what's wrong with me.
- b. I could look in your mouth till Jesus comes and not understand a thing.
- c. What should we be looking for in the word?
 - 1. Who are the people in this passage, what do they say, and what is said about them?
 - 2. What is going on?
 - 3. Where is this taking place?
 - 4. When is this taking place?
 - i. Early in the ministry of Christ or later?
 - ii. Mark 1:35 occurs after Jesus' busiest day of ministry.
 - 5. Why is this included in the word, and why here?
 - 6. Wherefore (so what) is this here? What difference would it make in home or business?

B. Interpretation—what does a passage mean? Four areas to look at include.

- 1. Content in terms of the facts recorded.
- 2. Context—what went before the verse and what went after the verse in question?
 - a. A verse out of context is dangerous.
 - b. All major cults so this so read before and after with them.
- 3. Comparison of Scripture with Scripture.
 - a. A good Bible concordance is necessary; Strong's or Young's unabridged concordances are good.
 - b. The numbers listed beside the words in a concordance is the key to the concordance because these numbers refer you to the back of the concordance to give you meaning.
- 4. Study the culture.
 - a. Jesus said I am the good shepherd, and unless you understand something about sheep you probably don't understand much of what he meant.
 - b. In Philadelphia we used to read the psalm about lifting up you heads o ye gates.

1. I discovered in the early days of David Jerusalem was unconquered and the people used to taunt him. When he became king he conquered the city.
2. This psalm 24 is a processional hymn the Israelites sing as they march into Jerusalem, glorifying the King of glory who empowered David.

5. Consultation of secondary sources.

a. Commentaries. Every Christian should have a collection of good books.

1. Bible dictionaries, more than one.
2. Bible commentaries, a good one volume one is the Wycliffe Commentary on the entire Bible.
 - i. Read the word first.
 - ii. Then read commentaries.
3. A good Bible atlas.
 - i. Find out where Jesus walked.
 - ii. Israel is a small country and can be understood.
4. A good book on archaeology.
 - i. Unger wrote *Biblical Archaeology*.
 - ii. Archaeology makes the time come alive.
 - a. Er of the Chaldeas was advanced for its time.
 - b. This is where Abram was called to leave.

C. Application, how does a thing work?

1. How do I get the word of God into my life in a practical way?
 - a. Get a specific time for Bible study.
 1. Morning or evening is equally profitable.
 2. Some people are morning people and some are evening people.
 3. Carve out a time and keep this appointment sacred.
 - b. Get a specific place.

1. Not in front of the TV.
 2. Get out your study books.
 - c. Get a specific program.
 1. I study a book a month.
 2. This may be too slow or too fast for you.
 3. Work your way through it.
 4. Take a paragraph at a time.
 - d. Get a specific outlet.
 1. Teach a group of juniors or teens.
 2. Teach a Sunday school class and make it relevant.
 2. My wife and I study a passage independently and then compare.
 - a. I understand Greek and Hebrew but she understands application better.
 - b. You will be amazed at what your partner can add to your study.
- D. Study this passage. (Mark 4:35-41)
1. Ask and answer the six questions I gave you.
 2. Be sure to plug this paragraph into the context of before and after the stilling of the storm. Determine why the context is important.
 3. Later we will compare our results to encourage each other.