
GROW

GET IN IT: PRAY, REFLECT, OBSERVE

Read + Observe Everything Within the Passage - What Does it Say?

1. Before you start reading spend time being still. Ask God to show you what's on your heart and mind. Prayerfully ask Him for a desire to know and love Him more. Ask Him to meet you in this time with Him in the Bible and to change you to be more like His Son.
2. Read the passage a few times and carefully observe the words; give full attention to what it says. The purpose of *observation* is to saturate yourself completely with the content of the passage. Look for things such as: important words (what's being talked about), conjunctions (how is one idea connected to another), admonitions (something being commanded), contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repeated phrases/words, mood, and grammatical construction (verb tenses, prepositional phrases, etc.). Linger here, listening to what God is saying in the detail of His words.
3. Ask questions. This is the bridge between *reading* the passage and *understanding* it. Don't rush this step (even if think you know the answers). Ask yourself many *questions for understanding* such as: Who is writing? Who are the characters? What's the meaning of...? I wonder why...? What's the relationship between...? What is written before and after the passage (context is everything)? What is unexpected in this passage? What rubs me wrong about this passage? How does this fit into the grand story of the scriptures (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Culmination)? What do I learn about myself from this passage? What do I learn about God in this passage? What is the definition of...? Etc.

RESOURCES: PRAY, INTERPRET, ANSWER

Tools to Help You Answer Your Questions - What Does it Mean?

The goal here is to use resources to help unleash the meaning. You want to be careful not to bring your own assumptions, perspectives, thoughts, background, and experiences to the text. Though our experiences are helpful, presuppositions can also result in an incorrect, shallow, or unbiblical meaning. Interpreting the passage flows out of your previous questions for understanding (above). Use some of these tools below to help you. Aim to discover the author's purpose in writing.

1. Use the passage and surrounding context: Look before, after, and in your passage to answer as many questions for understanding as possible. Allow scripture to interpret scripture. Context is everything.
2. Pray. Reading the Bible is your conversation with God. Remember to keep talking with Him. Ask Him for clarity and answers; wrestle with Him over hard truths. Confess, rejoice, seek Him.
3. Define words: Look in a dictionary to discover the meaning of key words.
4. Compare translations: Read the passage in several translations to hear it afresh.
5. Study cross-references: Use the footnotes to find similar verses. We recommend the ESV Study Bible.
6. Concordances: A concordance is an alphabetical topical index of Bible passages. You may have one in the back of your Bible. Look up the topic of your passage to find parallel verses. You can find three great concordances here: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/>.
7. Discuss it with others: Share observations and questions with other believers (3D's). How do others understand this passage? What can you learn from their questions and answers?



8. Commentaries/Bible Atlas/Bible dictionary: These are very helpful in providing background to the geography, history, and culture of biblical times (particularly for harder passages)
9. Check out www.bestcommentaries.com. We recommend the NIV Application Commentary Series, Matthew Henry Commentary (Free Online) and God's Word for You Series.
10. Online Study Tools: www.blueletterbible.org | www.esvbible.org | www.bible.org | www.biblestudytools.com
11. Sermons + Articles: www.desiringgod.org | www.thegospelcoalition.org | www.monergism.com

OUTLINE IT: PRAY, SUMMARIZE, SYNTHESIZE

Ways to Write Out What You Are Learning - What is the Main Idea/Truth?

Now you're ready to clarify what you've learned about God and yourself in this passage. You've taken it apart; now put it back together. Choose from these helpful ways to synthesize what you've just read.

1. Outline the text; capture the specific flow of the argument or story.
2. Write the passage in your own words. Make sure to capture the main idea.
3. Illustrate, draw, paint, what is happening in the passage.
4. Journal about what stood out to you in the passage, and pray through it.
5. Diagram or flowchart the key concepts in the text.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? PRAY, APPLY, TRANSFORM

Obey God's Word in Your Life Today - How Do I Respond?

Knowing God in His word is a core piece of your life-changing relationship with Him. It is crucial to stop and decide to respond to God in obedience. He loves you. You can trust Him, believe in Him, and obey Him.

1. *What am I to believe?* – Did I learn something new about God or myself? Is there any important teaching on which I need to build my faith? Is there truth to understand about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, grace, mercy, sin, forgiveness, hope, eternal life, suffering etc.?

Remember the Gospel: How is this passage good news to me because of Jesus?

2. *What am I to do?* – How does my faith translate into specific action? Is there something I am compelled to do? Is there sin I must confess to God or someone in my life? To confess sin, go below surface actions to the "why" motivation. How does the gospel offer what my sinful motivation does not provide? How does Jesus motivate my faith to obey in specific action?

Remember the Gospel: How did Jesus do all I did not, forgive me, empower me to obey?

3. *Whom can I tell?* - Is there a person who knows Christ who can help me obey? Is there someone (Christian or not) who might be encouraged, challenged, or resonate with this truth? Does this passage create questions or doubts I can investigate with other believers?

Remember the Gospel: How does God's grace to me in Christ spill over to others?