



SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DEFINED

Invests in one's relationship with God by studying the Bible in order to better understand both God and self.

*"Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are."
- J.I. Packer*

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DESCRIBED

The Holy Bible. It is the most popular, best-selling book in human history. Therefore, it can be argued that it is the most influential book of all time. It is the best mystery, the best love story, the best drama, the best action and adventure story you can find on the shelves. It includes some strange stuff: angels and demons, a talking donkey, an immaculate conception, people rising from the dead, to name a few.

This book is both highly respected and highly controversial. It has been picked apart and poured over since it came into print. But the most important aspect about this incredible piece of literature is this: It is God's self-revelation to His creation. From cover to cover, God makes Himself known through the 40 or so divinely-inspired authors. Both the Old Testament and New Testament books fit together to form one, beautiful story of redemption. Ultimately, the Bible is His-story.

Because the Bible is God's story and God's very Word breathed out to us (see 2 Timothy 3:16), it's clear that if we want to get to know God, we must read His biography. The incredible result of reading the Bible is that, as we get to know God more, we come to understand our own place in His story- how we were designed to be key players in the narrative of life He is writing.

Unfortunately, we can tend to fall into two different errors when it comes to pursuing God. One error is to neglect the study of Scripture, thinking that it's not necessary to know God's Word to know God. Having emotion without knowledge puts us in danger of worshiping a God we make up rather than worshiping God for who He truly is. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6a). The Bible is not something we can take lightly or ignore. It's meant to be approached holistically. When giving the greatest commandment, Jesus made it clear that we are not only to love God with all our heart and all our soul, but we must love God with all our minds (Matthew 22:36-40).

The second error is to treat knowing God as only an academic exercise; pursuing God with our minds, while not engaging Him with our hearts. Just like with any relationship, knowing facts about God does not mean we have a relationship with Him. Our study of Scripture is meant to help us get to know God, while simultaneously being transformed as we grow in that knowledge. Studying the Bible can be a daunting and overwhelming venture and we will spend our lives mining the beauty and complexity of this Divine Word. Since God, by nature, is infinite and all-knowing, studying Him will not be an equation we can solve. This is why theology (the study of God) is not about mastering the knowledge of God, but humbling ourselves before the complexity of who He is.

Life is hard and full of challenges. Those who carefully consider God's sovereignty, grace, mercy, and providence will be the ones whose roots grow deep so they can withstand life's inevitable storms. The person who neglects these thoughts of God will be dangerously vulnerable when winds blow hard against them (see Ephesians 4:14). Put another way, knowledge of God leads to knowledge of life, and sadly, the flip also is true. When we ignore God, we miss out on the abundant life He will birth in us and through us. To truly relate to God and trust Him, we must know more of who He is and what He is doing. When we lack depth of understanding, we lack depth of conviction and depth of participation in His-story. When we have depth of understanding, we have the depth of conviction that brings about the kind of life for which we were created.

EVIDENCE OF THIS SPIRITUAL OUTCOME IN A PERSON'S LIFE

- Ever-increasing delight in the study of Scripture and growing knowledge of God as a result.
- Knows and can articulate the overarching story of Scripture.
- Can identify ways one's knowledge of Scripture is currently impacting daily life.
- Regularly engages in in-depth study of Scripture and applying truth out of proper observation and interpretation.

GUIDANCE

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

Observations:

Discernment Question: How much is Scripture integrated into your daily life and conversations? How would your daily life look different if you integrated Scripture into it more?

JOSHUA 1:8

Observations:

Discernment Question: How much is your thought life characterized by meditating on Scripture? What good might be possible if you increased this practice in your life?

PSALM 1:1-3

Observations:

Discernment Question: Is studying Scripture a delight for you right now or a chore? If the former, how has that developed? If the latter, what is hindering you from enjoying it? If it's none-existent, what is holding you back?

PSALM 119:9-11

Observations:

Discernment Question: What does it look like to seek God with all your heart in your current place in life? What areas have grown cold and need to be filled and warmed by God's Word? What areas are you facing temptation that knowing Scripture better might guard you against?

PROVERBS 2:1-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: When was the last time you sought the Lord for His wisdom in your life? What impact did that have both externally and internally?

ROMANS 12:2

Observations:

Discernment Question: What most shapes your mind? In your current season, is the world "conforming" you or is God's Word transforming you? What changes in your life would enable your mind to be transformed by Scripture rather than be conformed by the world?

EPHESIANS 4:11-15

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are you easily swayed from one doctrine to another, or are you grounded in God's Word so that you are secure in the Truth? What beliefs do you have that you have yet to ask Scripture about? What might keep you from exploring the truth in this area?

1 TIMOTHY 4:16

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do doctrines and biblical teaching have the ultimate say in your life or are they just some among several options? How does your answer vary from one area of your life to another? If the Bible is not the ultimate authority in your life, who or what is and are you ok with that?

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-5

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are you caught up in peripheral teachings or arguments that promote disunity rather than unity around the essentials of the faith? If yes, what is important about that idea for you and how can you let Scripture better instruct you so that you handle it rightly?

NEXT STEPS

What are practical next steps you will do based on what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture about studying God? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life, as well.

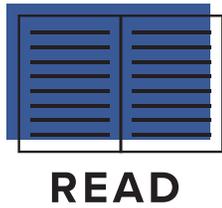
2 Timothy 3:14, NIV

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Hebrews 4:12, NIV

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

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LOVE GOD STUDY GOD

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

We come to better know God by studying Him. The Observation-Interpretation-Application is a three-part investigative study of Scripture to help gain a broad, holistic understanding of the Bible.

OBSERVATION (TEXT — WHAT DOES IT SAY?)

This is the part where we get curious about the passage. This step involves more than just seeing what is written, but taking notice of what's there without jumping to what we think it means.

Part 1: Begin with Prayer

Ask the Spirit to guide you in your study, to help you rightly understand it, to love it more and apply it to your life.

Part 2: Read

Read the entire passage several times. Feel free to use different translations to compare with.

Part 2: Uncover the Context

Has anyone ever taken something you said out of context? How did that feel? You probably felt misrepresented and misunderstood. It probably hurt, too. When it comes to studying Scripture, we have to remember that every book in the Bible was written at a specific time, by a specific person for a specific purpose. So, when we read Scripture out of context, we are in danger of misunderstanding the Bible, and therefore, God Himself. We don't want to give Scripture meaning, we want to find it. This step of studying the context, or background, helps us on our way to discovering the meaning of what we're reading. Use these questions to make observations about context. This is a great link for Bible study resources. Check it out for commentaries that provide information on the historical-cultural context: www.blueletterbible.org.

1. WHO is writing/speaking and to whom? What is their relationship?
2. WHAT type of writing is it? Is it narrative? Letter? Poetry? Etc.
3. WHERE does the event/communication take place?
4. WHEN does this take place relative to other significant events?
5. HOW does this passage fit into the context? (e.g. What comes before and after?)

Part 3: Mark up the passage

In whatever method you choose, take a printed out copy of the passage and make note of the following by circling, underlining, or color-coding the following:

- WORDS OF COMPARISON: **and, like, as, as, just as, also, so also, even so**
- WORDS OF CONTRAST: **but, rather, yet, however**
- WORDS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT: **because, since, for, therefore, for this reason**
- REPEATED WORDS OR PHRASES
- ANYTHING THAT CAN BE PUT IN A LIST
- PRONOUNS AND PROPER NOUNS
- KEY WORDS OR PHRASES: **including important theological or thematic concepts**
- FIGURES OF SPEECH

Part 4: Questions

Making observations should bring up many questions about the passage. Write those questions down as you go. (Why does the author use this word instead of another? Why does he shift from first-person language to second-person language? Why does he repeat this word? Why does he refer to God as "Father" so much? Etc.)

INTERPRETATION (MESSAGE — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

In this step you will flesh out the questions that arose in your observation of Scripture. Helpful tools for this step: Study Bibles, www.blueletterbible.org, faith life study bible (free app), and the Bible Project videos.

Tips:

1. Try to avoid filling in gaps of understanding with your own point of view from your own context. We can easily twist Scripture to mean something it doesn't when we color it with our own interpretation, or what we want it to be.
2. Take the text at face-value. Stick with the simplest meaning of the passage first. Allow the Bible to say what it says and try not to look for hidden meaning.
3. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Before searching elsewhere, try to look for the answers to your questions within and around the passage.
4. Remember that whatever passage you are studying, it plays a role in the larger narrative of Scripture. Ask yourself, how does this fit in God's overall story of redemption?
5. When doing word studies, be careful not to base your full understanding of a word on the English definition, remembering that the text was originally written in Greek(NT) and Hebrew(OT). Also, remember that a word can have a variety of meanings depending on the context, as well as what people understood the word to mean in the time it was written.

1. Develop principles

Write down 5 or so principles that arose from your study.

(Possible questions to help you determine these principles: Why is it important to understand this? What does the writer mean to convey in each verse? How did this relate to the original audience? What is the opposite of this truth? When should this be applied?)

2. Theme

Write a summary sentence about the main idea or point you think the author is trying to get across.

APPLICATION (MY LIFE — HOW DOES THIS IMPACT MY LIFE?)

We don't just study the Bible to gain knowledge; it is living and active, therefore it is meant to impact us in such a way that we live differently and know God more deeply as a result. Ask the following questions of the passage to help you determine the best way to apply it:

A. Teaching-Is there a command to obey? Example to follow? Promise to claim? Teaching to learn?
(How does this truth apply to my life?)

B. Reproof-Is there a sin to confess? A challenge to heed? Error to avoid?
(Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short?)

C. Correction-Is there an attitude to change? Repentance needed? A relationship I need to work on?
(What will I do about it? What will I change?)

D. Training in righteousness- Is there something or someone I need to pray about? Something to worship and thank God for?
(What specific things can I do to make this principle a habit in my life? Who can I ask to help me with this?)

THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU TRY IT OUT:

- When you read “Therefore” – look to see what was said previously to find out what the “therefore” is there for.
- Prescription vs. Description – just because we read a story of _____ (description) doesn't mean that we are commanded (prescription) to _____ .
- Commands (imperatives) are often very clear to be commands.
- Online tools – check out different translations, commentaries, etc..
- Use Commentaries – Written by Biblical theologians and scholars, commentaries assist in the study of Scripture through providing explanations and interpretation of Scripture. Before turning to a commentary, first do the reading and your own process of observation yourself.



LOVE GOD STUDY GOD

TRY IT OUT

Based on what you read and learned through the Read portion of Study God, try out this method of Observation, Interpretation, and Application for **Philippians chapter 1**.

OBSERVATION:

Take note of 4-5 observations from the chapter.

INTERPRETATION:

Take note of 3-4 interpretations from the chapter.

APPLICATION:

Take note of 1-2 ways this chapter applies to your life.

Do the observe, interpret, and apply for Philippians 2.

OBSERVATION:

Take note of 4-5 observations from the chapter.

INTERPRETATION:

Take note of 3-4 interpretations from the chapter.

APPLICATION:

Take note of 1-2 ways this chapter applies to your life.

Do the observe, interpret, and apply for Philippians 3.

OBSERVATION:

Take note of 4-5 observations from the chapter.

INTERPRETATION:

Take note of 3-4 interpretations from the chapter.

APPLICATION:

Take note of 1-2 ways this chapter applies to your life.

Do the observe, interpret, and apply for Philippians 4.

OBSERVATION:

Take note of 4-5 observations from the chapter.

INTERPRETATION:

Take note of 3-4 interpretations from the chapter.

APPLICATION:

Take note of 1-2 ways this chapter applies to your life.