

Studying the Bible- A Resource Guide

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

- Bible concordance*- sometimes you can find these in your Bible in the back, you can use a concordance to look up themes or characters in the Bible, similar to an index or dictionary.
- Commentaries*- a commentary will focus on a book of the Bible, usually going through it in order by chapter, and will explain from one scholar's perspective what the meaning of the text is. Often other scholars will be included in the notes, giving a few different perspectives.
- Devotional or study books*- you can buy these from many places, and they will walk with you and offer you questions or ideas you may not have thought about to help you learn.

When using an outside resource, ask- who wrote this? What is their perspective? Is it older or newer, and how might that change how they see the Bible? Just like when we examine our own background and biases, we should examine the people we read as well.

GENRE

- Letter*- written from one person to someone/a group- usually answering questions but also like hearing one half of a phone conversation.
- Narrative/History*- gives us a story or stories, filled with characters and drama. Pay close attention to who is speaking or acting, or why they might be doing what they are doing.
- Poetry/Wisdom*- This genre tries to tell the truth, both good and bad, of the world and how we can learn from it.
- Prophecy*- Prophets speak to God's people in times of trial, and we can learn from God's desire for God's people and God's mercy in the prophetic works.
- Gospels*- A special type of genre, the Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life including narratives, miracles, parables, and teaching portions.

IMAGES

The Bible has many images that it uses to convey ideas, and some of them may be lost on us because we are distant from the culture at the time of writing. Here are some examples

- Horn*- means power or rule, like a king.
- Water/Breath*- often a symbol for life OR the Holy Spirit (doves and birds are the same idea)
- Wilderness*- a place of danger or threat, a place to be shaped by God
- Olive branch*- a symbol of peace or promise

IDEAS FOR STUDY METHODS

- Art*- On the page of your Bible, with a colored or regular pencil, use a heart to identify an idea that speaks to your heart, a light bulb to something that was a new idea of thought, a hand beside something you want to take action to do.
- Meditation*- choose a verse or a phrase in a verse. Repeat it to yourself a few times, then speak it outloud, saying it with emphasis on every different word each time. When can you learn from each word present in the verse? What changes if you were to exclude it?

NOTE: Try reading through one or all of the Gospels, or picking a letter or two from Paul in the New Testament. You can also read the Psalms and Proverbs through, or hear the stories of the Judges or Esther.

Bible Book Categories

Story of Israel- Beginning to Moses' death (Pentateuch/Torah)

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

Story of Israel- Three Kings and the Exile

JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 & 2 SAMUEL
1 & 2 KINGS
1 & 2 CHRONICLES
EZRA

NEHEMIAH
ESTHER

Wisdom and Poetry

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON

Prophets- Major (long books)

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL

Prophets- Minor (shorter books)

HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

Gospels- Story of Jesus

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

Story of the Church

ACTS

Letters to the Churches from Paul

ROMANS
1 & 2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 & 2 THESSALONIANS
1 & 2 TIMOTHY

TITUS

PHILEMON

Letters to the Churches from Others

HEBREWS
JAMES
1 & 2 PETER
1 & 2 & 3 JOHN
JUDE

Prophecy- Apocalypse

REVELATION