

6 Bible Study Steps

The PRAISE Method of Bible Study

1. Pray that God will help you understand what he wants from this book.

Before beginning to study a book of God, what better way to start than to ask God to be with you and guide you to know and live by his will from the book you're reading? Prayer and Praise are the right and natural place to start and end when it comes to seeking God in his word.

2. Read the whole book, preferably several times.

The purpose of this step is to get a big-picture view/understanding of the content and story of the book. We are here building the "book-level" context, which is made up of both the *historical context* (what was going on that caused the book to be written) and the *literary context* (what was written—the words and ideas of the text). Once you've read through the book a time or two, highlighting key words and phrases is a great tool for beginning to identify the most important themes and how they relate to one another.

3. Analyze how the book is designed or "put together" (= Discover the structure or "shape" of the text).

In this step, we're looking to understand what are the major sections of the book—how it's put together—and how they relate to each other. We can do this in 2 "sub-steps": (1) by finding the Introduction and Conclusion (which reveals the basic 3-part shape) and then (2) by dividing the Middle into its major sections. As part of this process, it's important to consider how the sections relate to and interact with each other: what role or function they play in the book as a whole.

4. Interpret the verses as part of the book-level context.

We're now ready to read through the book again (maybe several times) and "interpret" the verses as part of sections of material and in their relationship to the book as a whole (the bigger picture). In other words, we want to book-level focus the verses. (If you've participated in one of our online studies, this is basically the step used in the Audio Guides.) At this point, it's good to make a map of the book (= create an outline), summarizing the content and purpose of each section.

5. Summarize the main points of the book.

Summarize the key points of the book, starting perhaps with the "givens"—what things the writer takes for granted that the readers understand and are important for the messages of the book. Then focus on what the writer is actively trying to accomplish through the book: what are the most important points and the main purposes of the book. Creating a title for the book can help to congeal and summarize these points.

6. Exercise the priorities of God into your life (= Apply the word).

They won't get there by accident, and usually it takes work and training. The final goal of all Bible study is to draw closer to God and to become more Christ-like by "exercising" the spiritual muscles

called forth by the book. Or, in other words, we want to apply the text: we want to live out the teaching of the Bible so that we may live worthy of the kingdom of God into which he has called us.

This is the PRAISE method of Bible reading. The goal is to quit turning verses into inkblots and learn to read the Bible as it was given to us by God: as the books of God from the Library of God.

Pray **Read** **Analyze** **Interpret** **Summarize** **Exercise**