

# Twelve Guides To The Effective Study Of The Christian Bible

## 1. Pray before any studying

**John 16:13** [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

Unless the Holy Spirit is actively at work in our lives our true understanding of scriptures will be lacking.

**Ephesians 4:30-32** [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

The Holy Spirit will **not** work where there is in our lives these negative attitudes.

**1 Thessalonians 5:19** [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

The presence of the Holy Spirit will make us excited about the study of God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** [NIV] *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”*

How can we ensure that the Holy Spirit is active in our lives?

**Isaiah 59:2** [NIV] *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

Sin will block the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

**1 John 1:8-10** [NIV] *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

Confess these sins and God the Father will cleanse us of their penalty, and blocking power to our access to His Holy Spirit.

**Luke 11:13** [NIV] *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Psalms 51:1-13** [NIV] *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in*

*me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. **Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.** Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”*

This prayer of King David can be personalised and used to seek contact with our Creator God.

## **2. Ask to be corrected by what we are about to study.**

The purpose of scriptural study is to grow nearer to the very character of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This process can **only** take place if we seek course correction in our lives.

**Isaiah 66:1-2** [NIV] *“This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. **“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”**”*

This must be our approach to God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

**Jeremiah 10:23-24** [NIV] *“**I know, O LORD, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps. Correct me, LORD, but only with justice, not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing.**”*

Accept that we need God’s guidance in our lives.

**Hebrews 12:4-11** [NIV] *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: **“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

Accept that God’s Word, the Christian Bible, will discipline us in a way that at the time may be mentally painful.

**Hebrews 4:12-13** [NIV] *“For the word of God is living 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. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is going to be very revealing as to what we really are, just how God looks on us.

## **3. Approach God’s Word in a positive attitude.**

**John 17:17** [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.**”*

Accept that all recorded in the Christian Bible is true, even if at this moment we do not fully understand what it is telling us.

**Acts 17:11** [NIV] *“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day **to see if what Paul said was true.**”*

Do **not** try to disprove God's Word, the Christian Bible, but by applying it to our lives prove how true it is.

**1 Thessalonians 5:20-22** [NIV] *“do not treat prophecies with contempt. **Test everything. Hold on to the good.** Avoid every kind of evil.”*

Test the scriptures that point towards what is good.

**1 Corinthians 10:1-11** [NIV] *“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did, and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel. **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.**”*

**Use the scriptures that describe what is evil, as what we should avoid.**

Physical Israel as a whole did **not** have the power of God's Holy Spirit working in their lives.

Their example is for us to learn how dependent we are on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The rituals and the physical correction by God are to illustrate how evil sin is and how God hates all that is sin.

The physical sacrifices point towards how we can avoid the penalty of sin and God's wrath because of sin, by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a substitute for our deserved punishment and death.

#### **4. The Christian Bible never contradicts itself.**

If we think we see contradictions we are reading what is said incorrectly, **not** knowing the circumstance in which it was said and to whom it was directed.

Or we are misreading the words because of a change in the meaning of words over a period of time, or there **not** being a clear translation of the original text.

For example where the word “*conversation*” is used in the King James translation at the time it did mean “*conduct*” as we find in more recent translations.

Another example:-

**Romans 5:5** [NIV] *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love **into** our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

The Greek preposition translated “*in*” or “*into*” is “*en*” which can also be translated “*through*.”

When we consider how the Holy Spirit works as referred to in **John 7:38-39** “*en*” being translated as “*through*” seems to be a more correct translation.

**What is recorded in the Christian Bible is the word of the Creator God that never changes.**

**Malachi 3:6** [NIV] *“I the Lord change not...”*

**Hebrews 13:8** [NIV] *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.”*

Jesus Christ as the Word of God has and will never change.

**5. Seek to read the Christian Bible as it was originally written.**

This may involve digging into the original usage of the words in any scripture we are reading. We can be helped to do this by using such grammatical studies as Strongs or Youngs Concordances, and Vines Dictionary of New Testament words.

**6. Check the context of each scripture.**

**Never** take one verse or statement by itself, always read the verses before and after it, for this will often make its true meaning clear.

**7. Always read all the scriptures that relate to the subject you are studying.**

For example, what was actually written on the sign above Jesus Christ’s head on the cross!

To know the answer we have to read – **Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38 and John 19:19** for each scripture tells us only part of the whole.

**8. Let the Christian Bible interpret itself.**

For example:

**Revelation 1:12** [NIV] *“I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,”*

What do these seven candlesticks represent?

**Revelation 1:20** [NIV] *“The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**”*

The answer is the seven churches we read about a little later in the same book.

**9. Never establish a doctrine on a vague or difficult scripture.**

For example:

**Matthew 9:12** [NIV] *“On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”*

Is **not** talking about sending for a doctor when we are physically sick.

**John 14:1-3** [NIV] *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

Is **not** proof that we go to heaven when we die.

**John 3:13** [NIV] *“No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man.”*

Puts a big question mark over any doctrine about heaven founded on **Matthew 14:1-3** [NIV].

## **10. Use several translations.**

Some of the more recent translations use a language that makes general reading to be easier, we can then grasp the larger picture that is being presented more clearly.

This helps with historical passages, psalms, proverbs and the parables.

## **11. Never establish a doctrine based on “*Bible helps*”.**

Such books written on the Christian Bible can often be the writer over-emphasising his own personal beliefs rather than keeping strictly to scripture.

**Those books who give us historical or grammatical facts can be very useful.**

**Naves Topical Bible** – this can quickly bring together all scriptures on the same subject.

**Strongs Concordance** – this brings us the original use of the Greek and Hebrew words but is only linked to the King James translation.

**Youngs Concordance** – this lists where the same Hebrew or Greek words are used even when the translators use different English words.

**Bible Dictionary** – this gives us historical background on people mentioned in scripture, also towns, tools, practices, animals, plants, etc.

**Hebrew – Chaldee Lexicon** – gives us a deeper use and history of Hebrew linked to the word numbers in Strongs Concordance.

**Vines Dictionary of New Testament Words** – this expands on the use of Greek words, most expanding into the use of same subject as an adjective, pronoun, adverb, preposition and verb.

**Thompson Chain Reference Bible** – marginal notes and numbers refer to extensive subject indexes, meaning of Biblical characters’ names, analysis of books, illustrated map, journeys of Israel, Jesus and the apostle Paul, also a supplement on archaeological finds, with a short concordance of words and a scriptural atlas.

## **12. Mark your Bible.**

Cross references and colour guides to key phrases in each chapter will help us find the scriptures we are seeking.

Your Christian Bible is **not** a holy, icon-like object but a textbook for living a life that will be acceptable to our Creator God.