**Bible Basics to Thrive**

*Before You Study the Bible*

1. **Pick a Bible** - Get a Bible translation you like. Try different translations and read them side by side for deeper comprehension. Select one that makes sense to you, however.
2. **Make a time and place** – Ellen White said that “As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God….As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves.” Start each day with the One who will give you the wisdom you need for that given day.
3. **Pray** – In James, it says that if we lack wisdom we may ask for it and God will give it. Before consulting any man, consult God.

*As You Study the Bible*

1. **Use your Bible’s resources ­**– Utilize your Bible’s resources. Locating towns on a map give logistics to a story; references connect verses and stories together; the concordance gives a jump start to key word investigations. Look to see if that shekel has been converted to a monetary amount you’re familiar with. Often, there are many resources to use. (Matt. 18:21-35)
2. **Look for patterns, repetition, and contrast** - This may sound like a waste of time, but important themes are often repeated, or emphasized through patterns and contrasts that we may miss. (pattern: “lamb” in Rev.) (repetition: Jn. 15:1-10 )(contrast: Jer. 4:22)
3. **Remember the context** -

I. *Read the literary context -* To understand the ideas of the Bible more fully, *never* read just oneverse, *always* read the surrounding verses. We’re not into starting cults. (Phil. 4:13 is part of 4:10-13)

II. *Remember the historical-cultural context -* Some books of the Bible were written almost 4,000 years ago! The lives of people were very different from us in many ways. Look in your Bible, the SDA commentary set, or online for resources. (Jonah 1:1-3)

1. **Use reading comprehension strategies** – Using comprehension strategies such as creating Venn diagrams, searching for cause-effect, or comparing characters is not just for the classroom, it’s also for Bible study. (Venn diagram: Peter and Judas)
2. **Ask questions** - Sometimes asking obvious questions will yield surprising study results. Start with who, what, when, where, why, how, and go from there. (Genesis 2:4-3:7)
3. **Look for the gospel throughout the Bible** – The gospel is tucked away here and there throughout the entire Bible. Look for aspects of it in both testaments. (Leviticus 20:8)
4. **Utilize imagination** - Imagine the landscape, people, food, smells, dangers, and anything else you can from the passage you read. This helps the truths of the Bible become *real*. (Genesis 1:21)
5. **Make it your own** – Ellen White suggests reading the Bible in this way: “We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know ‘what saith the Lord.’” (John 3:16)
6. **Follow in the footsteps of others** – Many great men and women have grown spiritually through Bible study and prayer. Follow in their footsteps with discretion and you may find a spiritual awakening in your own life. This also adds variety to your study time.

*H. M. S. Richards* once recommended reading a book 100 times to have a breakthrough in Bible study. (1 & 2 Peter)

*Mark Finley* suggests praying through a passage. Prayer is talking with God. Reading His word is listening. (Psalm 118)

*Roger Mourneau* read the crucifixion story every day of his life after conversion. (Matthew 27:22-54)

1. **Just read** – When in doubt, just read the Bible. Don’t let all the study “methods” bog you down. Whatever you do, just read! Be willing to highlight and underline as you go along, too. (Proverbs 25)

*After You Study the Bible*

1. **Apply** - When you learn something new from the Bible, it’s important to *apply* it to your life. We can read that lying hurts other people, but until we *stop* lying it’s just a lesson.
2. **Connect everything to the Bible** – Connect life’s events to stories you’ve read in the Bible – it is a powerful orientation to have.
3. **Listen to others share about the Bible** – Sharpen your understanding of the Bible by listening to others whom you trust. Listen to pastors, teachers, and others in Sabbath school. A valuable habit is to listen to recorded sermons while driving or cleaning.
4. **Record your results in a journal** – No decent scientist would spend hours on research without recording their findings. Record your studies and prayers in a journal. It can be as complex or simple as you want, but do it. Millions of others have, and found it valuable.
5. **Memorize** – We ask our students to memorize Bible verses but fail to do it ourselves. It is not a task to burden us, but an investment in ourselves. Purchase flash cards and put them on a ring. Write a verse on each card. It is a very useful method for memorization.

**Suggested Resources**

*-Grasping God’s Word,* Duvall and Hays (more scholarly)

-Tracking God Through the Bible at [www.trackinggod.org](http://www.trackinggod.org) by Robert Van Ornam

-*Conflict of Ages Series*, Ellen White (companion to the Bible from one of the great Bible students)

-www.biblegateway.com (multiple translations)

-www.biblestudytools.com (interlinear Bible – look it up in Greek and Hebrew!)

-SDA Bible Commentary set (historical context)

-www.gycweb.org (free sermons)

-www.audioverse.org (free sermons)

-www.hopevideo.com (free sermons)

**Quotes to Stir the Soul**

"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from The Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book."

-Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th U.S. President

“We receive Christ through His word, and the Holy Spirit is given to open the word of God to our understanding, and bring home its truths to our hearts. We are to pray day by day that as we read His word, God will send His Spirit to reveal to us the truth that will strengthen our souls for the day’s need.”

-Ellen White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pg. 127-128

“Whoever will prayerfully study the Bible, desiring to know the truth, that he may obey it, will receive divine enlightenment. He will understand the Scriptures. ‘If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching.’ John 7:17, R.V.”

-Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pg. 459

“As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God’s word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another’s mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know ‘what saith the Lord.’”

-Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pg. 390

“In His promises and warnings, Jesus means me. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *I* by believing in Him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. The experiences related in God’s word are to be *my* experiences. Prayer and promise, precept and warning, are mine….As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character….God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people….As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus.”

-Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pg. 391

“To get the full flavor of an herb, it must be pressed between the fingers, so it is the same with the Scriptures; the more familiar they become, the more they reveal their hidden treasures and yield their indescribable riches.”

-John Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407

“The Bible was designed to be a guide to all who wish to become acquainted with the will of their Maker….Those important matters that concern our salvation were not left involved in mystery. They were not revealed in such a way as to perplex and mislead the honest seeker after truth….The word of God is plain to all who study it with a prayerful heart. Every truly honest soul will come to the light of truth. “Light is sown for the righteous.” Psalm 97:11. And no church can advance in holiness unless its members are earnestly seeking for truth as for hid treasure.”

-Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, pg. 521