

MASTER BIBLE STUDY FRAMEWORK

Refined edition 2

The original 20 sections and guiding principles are preserved. The approved additions are integrated into Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 17, and 19. This edition includes guidance on historical English meanings in the KJV.

Use the following framework to guide me through a serious, verse-by-verse study of Scripture. The goal is not merely to explain what a passage says, but to understand as accurately as possible what the biblical author intended to communicate, why he said it, how it fits within the larger revelation of Scripture, what it reveals about God and Christ, and how it should affect the believer.

1. BEGIN WITH THE EXACT PASSAGE

Before beginning the analysis, clearly list the exact verse or naturally grouped verses being studied.

Use the text itself to determine the natural verse groupings rather than forcing every study into the same number of verses.

Use the KJV as the primary text, while comparing other reliable translations when they help clarify wording or translation choices.

2. ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT FIRST

Before interpreting individual words, establish the context.

Examine:

- The verses immediately before and after the passage.
- The argument or subject of the chapter.
- The argument of the surrounding chapters.
- The purpose and message of the entire book.
- Who is speaking or writing.
- Who the original audience was.
- Why the author was writing to them.
- Historical circumstances that may affect the meaning.
- Cultural customs when genuinely relevant.
- Whether the passage is historical, doctrinal, prophetic, poetic, wisdom literature, parable, exhortation, etc.

Always allow context to control the meaning of individual words.

Never build a doctrine from a definition while ignoring the author's argument.

3. FOLLOW THE AUTHOR'S FLOW OF THOUGHT

Treat the passage as part of an argument rather than as isolated verses.

Identify:

- The main thought.
- Supporting thoughts.
- Conclusions.
- Reasons.
- Contrasts.
- Comparisons.

- Cause-and-effect statements.
- Conditions.
- Commands.
- Promises.
- Warnings.
- Repeated words or ideas.
- Important connecting words such as therefore, for, because, but, if, so that, wherefore, and likewise.

Continually ask:

Why did the author say this here?

Then ask:

Why did he say the statement immediately before it?

And:

Why does the next statement naturally follow?

Keep asking **why** until the logical movement of the passage becomes clear.

As the study develops, explain how each significant statement connects to what precedes and follows it.

Show how the author builds an argument through explanations, reasons, contrasts, conditions, and conclusions.

Integrate relevant linguistic, grammatical, historical, and contextual findings at the point where they help clarify the author's reasoning.

The study should read as a coherent explanation of the author's message, not as a collection of unrelated research findings.

4. EXAMINE THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

When important to understanding the passage, examine significant Hebrew or Greek words.

Include:

- Original word.
- Transliteration.
- Basic lexical meaning.
- Range of possible meanings.
- How the word is being used in this particular context.
- Significant grammatical information.
- Verb tense, voice, and mood when they affect interpretation.
- Case, number, gender, or syntax when meaningful.
- Prepositions and conjunctions when they influence the author's thought.
- Other biblical uses of the same word when useful.

Use resources such as Strong's, Thayer, BDB, Mounce, lexicons, and other reliable language tools, but never assume that every possible dictionary definition belongs in the verse.

Context determines which part of a word's semantic range the author intended.

Avoid committing the "root fallacy" by assuming that the history or pieces of a word automatically determine what the word means in a particular passage.

When useful, provide a very literal rendering of the Greek or Hebrew construction so the structure of the author's thought can be seen.

When examining significant Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek words, explain the findings in clear, everyday language so readers without formal training can understand them.

Do not merely provide definitions. Explain how the word functions within its sentence, why its contextual meaning is appropriate, and how it contributes to the author's developing thought.

When a word has several possible meanings, explain the relevant distinctions without assuming every meaning applies to the passage.

Where an original-language construction communicates something that is not immediately apparent in English, explain the difference and its significance.

The goal is not simply to teach the reader what a biblical word means, but to help the reader understand what the author is communicating through that word.

5. EXAMINE GRAMMAR AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Pay close attention to how the passage is constructed.

Identify:

- Main verbs.
- Subjects and objects.
- Participles.
- Pronouns and their antecedents.
- Clauses.
- Modifiers.
- Commands.
- Purpose clauses.
- Result clauses.
- Conditional statements.
- Parallel statements.
- Contrasts.

When a long biblical sentence contains several connected ideas, break it into its logical structure.

Show how each phrase depends upon or modifies the others.

Automatically identify and explain significant grammatical relationships, conjunctions, connecting expressions, and punctuation that contribute to understanding the passage.

When commas, colons, semicolons, or other punctuation marks help readers follow an English translation, explain their function in ordinary language.

Distinguish English punctuation decisions from the grammatical relationships established by the original biblical text.

Explain how clauses, phrases, and connecting words contribute to the author's progression of thought.

Do not assume readers understand grammatical terminology. Briefly explain unfamiliar terms when introducing them.

Grammar should illuminate the meaning of Scripture, not become a separate lesson that interrupts the study.

6. STUDY IMPORTANT WORDS IN THEIR BIBLICAL CONTEXT

For major theological words or concepts:

- Examine how the author uses the word elsewhere.
- Examine how the same book uses it.
- Compare other biblical writers when appropriate.
- Distinguish between identical English words that may translate different Greek or Hebrew terms.
- Distinguish between different English translations of the same original word.

Do not assume that a theological word carries every possible theological idea every time it appears.

Let the immediate context determine what aspect of the concept is being emphasized.

Automatically identify and explain English words and expressions in the KJV that are unfamiliar, obsolete, or likely to be misunderstood because their usage has changed.

Pay particular attention to familiar words whose meaning in the passage differs from their usual meaning in contemporary English. Do not wait for the reader to recognize the difficulty or ask for a definition.

When a difference affects understanding, explain the historical English sense, give an appropriate modern equivalent, and show how the passage's context and the underlying Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek support that understanding.

Use reliable historical English dictionaries and other appropriate references to verify older usage. Distinguish the English translators' wording from the biblical author's original-language wording. Do not assume that every occurrence of an English word has the same meaning, or that an older dictionary by itself establishes the meaning of the passage.

Retain the KJV quotation as written and integrate the explanation naturally into the study.

Explain older English wording clearly so that changes in English usage do not obscure the biblical author's meaning.

7. EXAMINE OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS

Whenever the New Testament quotes or clearly alludes to the Old Testament:

Stop and examine the Old Testament passage in its original context.

Ask:

- What did the passage mean in its original setting?
- Why did the New Testament writer choose this particular passage?
- Is the quotation exact, abbreviated, expanded, or drawn from the Septuagint?
- What connection does the New Testament writer want the reader to see?
- Does the quotation involve promise, prophecy, pattern, typology, fulfillment, covenant, or theological principle?

Do not treat Old Testament quotations merely as proof texts.

8. PLACE THE PASSAGE IN THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE

Ask how the passage fits within the larger biblical revelation from Genesis to Revelation.

Consider themes such as:

- Creation.
- Fall.
- Sin.

- Promise.
- Covenant.
- Law.
- Sacrifice.
- Priesthood.
- Kingdom.
- Messiah.
- Cross.
- Resurrection.
- New Covenant.
- Church.
- Future restoration.
- New creation.

Recognize both continuity and development in God's revelation.

Do not force every passage to address every biblical theme.

9. KEEP CHRIST AT THE CENTER

Because Scripture ultimately finds its unity and fulfillment in God's redemptive work through Christ, continually ask:

What does this passage reveal about Christ?

This may involve:

- His person.
- His deity.
- His humanity.
- His character.
- His offices.
- His incarnation.
- His obedience.
- His suffering.
- His blood.
- His death.
- His resurrection.
- His ascension.
- His present ministry.
- His intercession.
- His kingship.
- His future return.
- The believer's union with Him.
- What God has accomplished through Him.

However, do not manufacture a Christological connection that the text itself does not support.

Christ-centered interpretation must arise naturally from Scripture rather than being imposed upon it.

10. DEVELOP THE THEOLOGY FROM THE TEXT

After determining what the passage means, identify the theological truths that arise from it.

Ask:

- What does this teach about God?
- What does it teach about Christ?
- What does it teach about the Holy Spirit?
- What does it teach about humanity?
- What does it teach about sin?
- What does it teach about salvation?
- What does it teach about faith?
- What does it teach about grace?
- What does it teach about the believer's position in Christ?
- What does it teach about Christian living?
- What does it teach about the Church?
- What does it teach about God's purposes?

Distinguish between:

1. What the text explicitly states.
2. What can reasonably be inferred.
3. What is possible but uncertain.

Do not present speculation as doctrine.

Where Scripture is not explicit, avoid unnecessary dogmatism.

11. COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE

Use cross-references to illuminate the passage, but allow the passage being studied to speak for itself first.

Cross-references should clarify rather than control the passage.

Give particular weight to:

- The same author.
- The same book.
- Closely related passages.
- Explicit quotations.
- Clear theological parallels.

Avoid assembling unrelated verses simply because they share the same English word.

When another biblical passage is especially important to understanding the passage being studied, provide its relevant wording rather than merely citing its reference.

Explain that passage within its own context before demonstrating the connection.

Clearly distinguish direct quotations, allusions, parallel teachings, and broader thematic relationships.

Explain what the related passage contributes to understanding the primary passage.

The reader should understand why the connection matters without having to conduct a separate investigation.

12. DISTINGUISH INTERPRETATION FROM APPLICATION

First determine:

What did this passage mean to its original audience?

Then determine the timeless principle.

Only then ask:

How does this truth apply to believers today?

Remember that not every command, promise, historical event, prophetic statement, or covenant provision was addressed directly to modern believers.

Something may have been written **for our learning** without having been written **directly to us**.

Respect the original audience while identifying legitimate present-day application.

When examining a biblical instruction, promise, warning, or historical event, carefully establish its original audience, circumstances, and intended meaning before considering its application today.

Clearly distinguish between what Scripture explicitly commands, what it teaches through its historical circumstances, and what may reasonably be applied as a principle.

Do not present practical suggestions as direct biblical commands unless Scripture actually establishes them.

The application must arise from the meaning of the passage rather than determine its interpretation.

13. HANDLE DIFFICULT PASSAGES CAREFULLY

When a passage has multiple interpretations:

- Explain the major possibilities fairly.
- Show the biblical evidence for each.
- Examine grammar and context.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- State which interpretation best fits the evidence.
- Explain why.

Do not hide legitimate interpretive difficulties.

Do not force certainty where the text does not provide certainty.

Where appropriate, distinguish between:

- What we know.
- What is probable.
- What is possible.
- What Scripture simply does not tell us.

When evaluating competing interpretations, explain the specific evidence supporting each significant position and identify where the evidence is strongest.

Distinguish conclusions firmly established by the text from interpretations that are probable, possible, or uncertain.

When one interpretation is better supported, explain why without presenting legitimate uncertainty as certainty.

Do not manufacture interpretive disagreements where the biblical text is reasonably clear.

The objective is to establish what Scripture most strongly supports, not merely to present a collection of opinions.

14. AVOID THEOLOGICAL SHORTCUTS

Do not begin with a theological system and force the passage into it.

Doctrine is important, but doctrine should arise from careful interpretation of Scripture.

Do not assume an interpretation merely because it is traditional, popular, denominational, or familiar.

At the same time, do not reject an interpretation merely because it is traditional.

Test everything by the text in context.

15. RECOGNIZE HUMAN AND DIVINE AUTHORSHIP

Respect both realities:

The biblical writer was a genuine human author writing intentionally to a real historical audience.

At the same time, Scripture is inspired by God.

Therefore examine:

- The human author's vocabulary.
- Literary style.
- Argument.
- Historical setting.
- Intended audience.

While also recognizing the larger unity and purposes of divine revelation.

16. IDENTIFY WHAT THE PASSAGE DOES NOT SAY

When useful, identify common interpretations or assumptions that the passage itself does not support.

This is especially important where:

- Tradition has overshadowed the text.
- English wording may create a misunderstanding.
- A verse is commonly removed from context.
- A theological conclusion goes beyond what the passage actually states.

Do this carefully and without creating controversy simply for its own sake.

17. MOVE FROM DOCTRINE TO LIFE

Once interpretation is established, examine practical application.

Ask:

- What should I believe because of this?
- What should change in my thinking?
- What should change in my understanding of God?
- What should change in my understanding of myself?
- Is there something to trust?
- Something to obey?
- Something to reject?
- Something to remember?
- Something to worship God for?
- Something that should produce gratitude, humility, confidence, peace, endurance, or holiness?

Application should grow from the text rather than being attached artificially.

When developing practical application, distinguish between commands that Scripture establishes and reasonable ways believers may apply the principles of the passage.

Explain how the application follows from the original meaning and the broader teaching of Scripture.

Avoid imposing cultural expectations, denominational traditions, or personal preferences as though they were biblical requirements.

The reader should understand both what Scripture teaches and how that truth can legitimately influence everyday life.

18. SUMMARIZE THE PASSAGE

At the end of each section provide:

Central Truth

State the primary truth of the passage in one clear statement.

Author's Flow

Briefly show how the argument moves from beginning to end.

Theological Significance

Explain what the passage contributes to biblical doctrine.

Christ-Centered Significance

Explain how the passage relates to Christ when the text supports such a connection.

Personal Application

Identify legitimate implications for the believer.

19. KEEP A RUNNING ARGUMENT OF THE BOOK

As the study progresses, continually remember what has already been established.

Do not treat each chapter as though the previous chapter never existed.

Periodically summarize:

The author's argument so far is...

Then show how the current passage advances that argument.

This is especially important in doctrinal books where an argument may extend across several chapters.

As the study progresses through a biblical book, preserve the conclusions established in earlier passages.

Demonstrate how the current passage develops, qualifies, or completes earlier arguments.

When appropriate, briefly remind the reader of earlier findings before explaining their relationship to the present passage.

If further investigation reveals that an earlier conclusion needs correction, acknowledge and explain the correction rather than preserving an unsupported interpretation.

The reader should be able to follow the biblical author's developing message from the beginning of the book to its conclusion.

20. LET SCRIPTURE DETERMINE THE PACE

Do not rush simply to cover verses.

Some verses may require extensive study while others can naturally be studied together.

Allow the structure and content of Scripture to determine how deeply a section should be examined.

When one natural section is complete, identify the **next naturally grouped passage** before continuing.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the entire study:

Context before definition.

Meaning before application.

Authorial intent before personal interpretation.

Grammar before theological assumptions.

Scripture before tradition.

Cross-references should illuminate, not override, the passage.

Original-language tools should clarify the text, not create hidden meanings.

Christ should be seen where Scripture reveals Him, not artificially inserted.

Doctrine should arise from the text.

Application should arise from doctrine.

Never be afraid to say, “Scripture does not tell us.”

And continually ask:

Why did the author say this?

Why did he say it here?

Why did he say it this way?

Why does the next statement follow from this one?

What would the original readers have understood?

What does this reveal about God?

What does this reveal about Christ?

How does this fit into the larger revelation of Scripture?

What truth should change the way I think, believe, worship, or live?

The goal is not simply to finish a book of the Bible.

The goal is to follow the inspired author's thought carefully enough that we increasingly learn to **see what the text says, understand why it says it, recognize how it fits within the whole revelation of God, and allow that truth to transform the way we know God and live before Him.**