



Manuscript Bible Study Method

The manuscript method tries to help you look at the text with as few influences from translators or Bible committees. The original manuscript of the Bible was written in Hebrew or Greek, with no paragraphs, chapter or verse references, subtitles, or footnotes. There is nothing wrong with any of these things (in fact, it is quite helpful in everyday reading!), but it can be quite refreshing to study the text as an original manuscript. Armed with the following guidelines, you will begin to examine the text like a literary or theological scholar would. The goal is for you to soak and immerse yourself in one book of the Bible - so much so that you can help but know it for life. May the words of the Bible seep into your mind and heart.

First, type out the entire book.

- No punctuation (except periods), paragraphs, headings, or divisions.
- Double-space it, with generous 1-inch margins. Page numbers are nice for reference.
- Print it, staple it.
- All of this may take several sittings.
- You must be asking “Can I just go online and print out the whole book?” While this is easier and will save you a LOT of time, there is value in spending the time to type it out. By typing it out, you are exposing yourself to the book and beginning to process it as an original document.

Second, read through the book in entirety in one to three sittings. Repeat this, so you’ve read it two or three times through.

Third, go through the book by chunks with lots of colored pens/pencils/highlighters before moving on to the next chunk. I typically go through one-half to one page at a time.

- Make note of the use of pronouns. distinguish 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person usages (ex: highlight “I/me/we/us” in blue; “you” in pink; and “her, he, them, it” in yellow)
 - Draw arrows to who/what the pronouns refer to, or write over top.
 - FYI: sections and/or subsections typically use the same pronouns. When you sense a shift in pronoun usage (e.g. you notice that many “you’s” change to 3rd person), that may be an indicator of a section break.
- Highlight, underline, or circle all the verbs and commands.
- Make note of any important conjunctions (therefore, because, so that), contrasts and comparisons, and condition statements (if...then, when...).
- Make note of repeated words/phrases. FYI: this may indicate themes of the book.
- Pencil in the margins the themes of the book, the tone of the writer, the purpose of the book,
- and short summaries of sections.
- Make a list of words that are unfamiliar to you. Write out their definitions from a dictionary.
- Underline important verses of book. These may be summary statements of the book.
- Observe the logical flow of the book.
- Observe connections between sentences, between paragraphs, and between larger sections.



Fourth, pencil in section and sub-section divisions within the text with slash marks (/).

- Don't be tempted to look at the subsections in your Bible. Look within the book for your clues to these divisions. Remember, you're a textual scholar!
- Look at any patterns you found: pronoun usage, themes, repeated words/phrases in a section. It's okay if you're "wrong," or disagree with others!

Fifth, make a title for each section/sub-section, using words or phrases from the section when possible.

- You may already notice that your own Bible does the same when it titles a section or chapter.
- Again, don't be tempted to look at your own Bible for their titles!

Throughout the Process:

- Remember the PROAPT method for each section (pray, read, observe, apply, pray, tell)
- Ask yourself these questions:
 - How did the author see this situation that would make him think, feel, or write this way?
 - What is the situation of the recipients of this letter? Who are they?
 - What course of action is the writer encouraging?
 - What Biblical truth is being taught?
- Applying it to your own life:
 - What idea is being taught about God? About man?
 - How will this knowledge make a difference in my living?
 - How will this affect my attitude and relationship with God? With other people?
 - When will I put this into practice? How?
 - Who will I share all this with? Who will keep me accountable?

