

# Methods And Techniques For Bible Study

A practical guide to understanding any passage or topic of the Scriptures

Developed By Bill Fortenberry

- I The Materials
  - A The Bible to be used
    - 1 Easy to read – no fine print
    - 2 Suitable to amount of space available – not too large
    - 3 Must be able to stay open to passage
    - 4 Many cross references – saves time
  - B Paper and pens
    - 1 Spiral bound one subject notebook
    - 2 5 ½ x 8 ½ college ruled – most conducive to writing
    - 3 Non-perforated – never throw anything away
    - 4 Pens not pencils – never erase or white out
    - 5 Multicolor ink – black, blue, and red are best
    - 6 Pen must be well balanced with comfortable grip
  - C Concordances
    - 1 Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance
    - 2 Young’s Analytical Concordance
    - 3 Computer software – must have easy access to concordances and cross references
  - D Lexical aids
    - 1 Webster’s Second Collegiate Dictionary – don’t use anything simpler
    - 2 Rodgett’s or Webster’s Thesaurus
    - 3 Etymological books – The Word Hunter
    - 4 Interlinear Bible of computer program
    - 5 Complete Word Study of the Old and New Testaments Zodhiates
    - 6 Liddell and Scott Greek/English Lexicon
    - 7 Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
    - 8 Arndt and Gingrich Greek/ English Lexicon
  - E Supplementary study aids
    - 1 Encyclopedias
    - 2 Archeological studies
    - 3 Cultural studies
    - 4 Maps and charts
  - F No commentaries!
    - 1 We are seeking to study the Bible not the ideas of men
    - 2 Most commentators only study other commentaries
- II The Textual Method
  - A Read, Read, Read!
    - 1 Read verses to be studied at least five times
    - 2 Read entire chapter at least three times
    - 3 Read entire book at least twice

- B Determine context and purpose
  - 1 Find immediate context and write it down
  - 2 Find general context and write it down
  - 3 Determine purpose of the book and write it down
  - 4 Determine purpose of general context and write it down
  - 5 Determine purpose of immediate context and write it down
  - 6 Determine of text itself and write it down
- C Define main words and phrases
  - 1 Obtain an English definition
    - a) Look up word in a good dictionary
      - i) Webster's Second Collegiate
      - ii) 1828 Webster's is too simple
    - b) First definition should be primary definition, but read all of them
    - c) Additional definitions always build on the first – they are not distinct, optional definitions
    - d) Determine how definition could apply to current usage
    - e) Note root words, prefixes and suffixes
      - i) Look up each root word (use same method as with original word)
      - ii) Look up each prefix and suffix
    - f) Do an etymological study of the word
      - i) Collegiate dictionaries often include etymologies
      - ii) Other etymological tools are available on-line
      - iii) Learning another language helps with etymologies
    - g) Look up synonyms and antonyms
      - i) True synonyms and antonyms seldom exists
      - ii) Determine common denominator of all synonyms and antonyms
      - iii) Determine synonym which best fits in current usage
    - h) Compile data for accurate definition
  - 2 Obtaining a Greek definition
    - a) Look up word in interlinear Bible – make sure to get the actual word not just the root word
    - b) Follow steps of obtaining an English definition
      - i) Use secular sources first
      - ii) Use religious sources afterwards
      - iii) Compare conclusions with context
  - 3 Obtaining a Hebrew definition
- D Cross reference
  - 1 Search for all main words in concordance or computer
    - a) Write a list of all other verses containing at least one of these words
    - b) Write down reference and brief quote or summary for each verse
  - 2 Search for other verses with similar applications using topical tools
    - a) Thompson Chain Topics
    - b) Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
    - c) Everyday Sermon Topics
    - d) Personal memory fo other verses
  - 3 Search for other verses containing main Greek or Hebrew main words

- a) Look for actual word first
    - b) Look for root word
    - c) Look for Greek or Hebrew synonyms
  - 4 Cross reference each verse found so far – It is best to cross reference three verses deep
- E Supplementary studies
  - 1 Look up coinciding maps and charts
  - 2 Read coinciding history books
    - a) Be careful of “Biblical” histories – usually written by theologians not historians
    - b) Use broad range of publication dates
  - 3 Read coinciding cultural studies – again, be careful of “Biblical” cultural studies
- F Outline
  - 1 Determine grammatical structure of verse
    - a) Use phrase diagram first
    - b) Use word diagram
  - 2 Determine main parallel phrases of the passage
  - 3 Outline how the author meets the purpose of the passage
    - a) Does each main phrase build on the previous
    - b) Are the phrases synonymous, comparative, contrasting, etc.
    - c) Each main phrase should be a main point
    - d) Each supporting phrase should be a sub-point
  - 4 Label cross references according to this outline – Place corresponding outline point (I,A,3, etc.) next to each reference
  - 5 Organize outline listing main points, sub-points, and supporting Scriptures according to standard format
  - 6 Insert contextual studies under appropriate points of outline
  - 7 Insert definitions under appropriate points of outline
  - 8 Insert supplementary studies under appropriate points
- G Write out your study and your conclusions

### III The Topical Method

- A Look up all occurrences of topic in the Bible
  - 1 Look up in English first
  - 2 Look up in Greek and Hebrew
  - 3 Write down reference and brief quote or summary of each verse found
- B Determine context and purpose of each verse
- C Define the topic
  - 1 Obtain an English definition
  - 2 Obtain a Greek definition
  - 3 Obtain a Hebrew definition
  - 4 Write down best definition for each occurrence of the topic
  - 5 Write down best synonym and antonym for each occurrence
  - 6 Compile all data to find a single definition which can be applied to every occurrence

- D Cross reference each verse
  - 1 Cross reference all verses of first layer only
  - 2 Select verses of second layer which are apropos to topic
  - 3 Cross reference selected verses
- E Perform supplementary studies as needed
- F Outline
  - 1 Group occurrences of topic according to usage
    - a) Overlapping cross references indicate common usage
    - b) Similar wording or direct quotes indicate common usage
    - c) Common definitions, synonyms, and antonyms indicate common usage
  - 2 Determine appropriate heading for each usage type
  - 3 Condense or expand groups as needed
  - 4 Determine best arrangement of headings
    - a) Chronological order
    - b) Cause and effect
    - c) Logical order
    - d) Processional order
    - e) Alphabetical or numerical order
  - 5 Create sub-points by repeating 1-4 within each group of verses
  - 6 Organize outline according to standard format
  - 7 Insert contextual studies under appropriate points
  - 8 Insert definitions where needed
  - 9 Insert supplementary studies where needed
- G Write out your study and conclusions

#### IV The Controversy Method

- A Read, Read, Read!
  - 1 Red all verses initially presented in controversy
  - 2 Form hypothesis of your position
  - 3 Read all material presented against your hypothesis
  - 4 Read all material presented in agreement with your hypothesis
- B Determine context and purpose of all verses presented
- C Define main words and phrases
- D Cross reference
- E Supplementary studies
- F Outline (Combine method for textual and topical)
- G Review material for and against your hypothesis
  - 1 Outline basic arguments of both positions
  - 2 Compare verse usage with your study
  - 3 Write down correlations and disagreements between your outline and the arguments presented
  - 4 Merge review with outline for final outline
- H Write out your study and conclusions