

Learning How to Study an Epistle with the Book of Philippians

Welcome to our Faith Group study of the book of Philippians. The aim of this study will not only be the same as our normal goal (growing in our bible knowledge as we spur on each other to apply what we have learned in the context of community), but we are going to seek this semester to learn *how to study the Bible*. To say it another way, we are not just going to bring you fish, but teach you how to fish.

What to Expect

You should plan to set aside at least one hour to complete each study. Each lesson will be a combination of instruction and study. Studying the Bible can be scary, but with the right tools, training, and the Holy Spirit; you can confidently study God's word without fear. By the end of this study you should feel that you have the tools and training to study any book of the Bible, especially the New Testament epistles.

So let's get right to it....

Step One: Laying Out a Plan

Laying out your study plan is incredibly important. Jumping right into a study can lead to being bewildered, overwhelmed, and possibly even poor results. So the first thing you should always do is lay out what it is you plan to study and when you plan to study. A great time to lay out your study plans is in January. Doing it early in the year will allow for your reading to work in conjunction with your personal improvement plan that you have laid out for yourself and your family. Laying down a plan is more than just dates of when you are going to study. You also want to include which resources you want to read and what specific tasks (such as background study) that you will want to accomplish.

Step Two: Getting Some Tools

Once you have your plan the next thing to do is make sure you have some tools that you will need. While some might believe that having the Bible is going to be enough, the truth is sometimes there are issues in scripture with which we need help. There is no shame in standing on the shoulders of others and getting help from people who have dedicated their lives to studying these topics. When you get help from resources outside of your Bible, they may piece together things that you never knew were there. Using other tools is essential to good Bible study.

Below is just a brief survey of a few tools that you should have. As we continue to study, more tools will be introduced, but these below form the most important tools you will need.

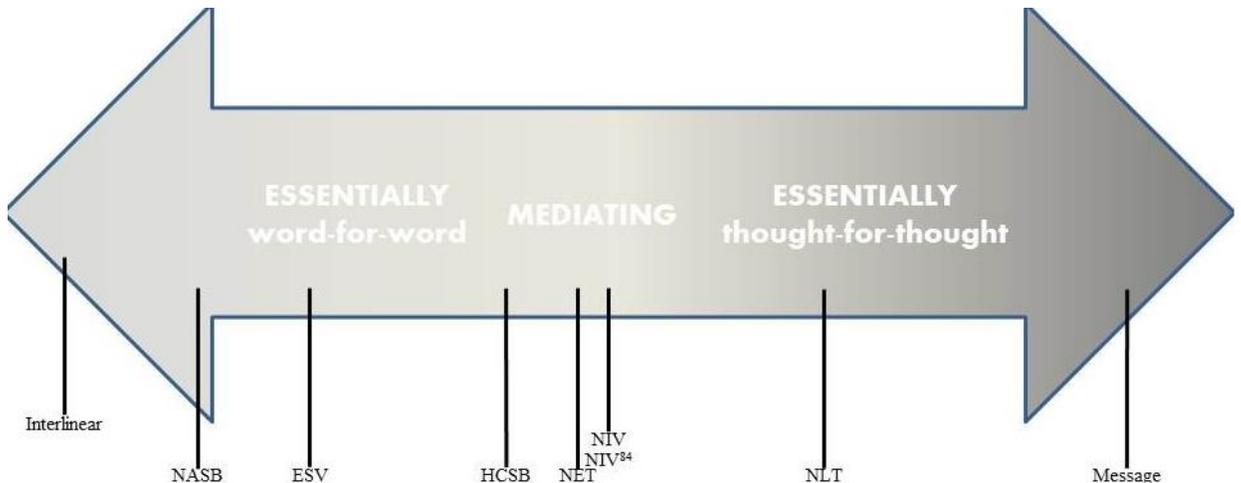
- 1.) Everyone should have a good study Bible (and multiple translations of the Bible either in print or reading them online). A study Bible will provide you with some basic notes on verses throughout the Bible as well as important background information and themes that will make studying the Bible

helpful. Here are some of the more common and better written ones. All of them have an electronic version that also have other tools that will help you study.

- A.) ESV Study Bible (<http://esvstudybible.org/>)
- B.) NLT Study Bible (<http://www.nltstudybible.com/>)
- C.) NET Study Bible (<http://net.bible.org/>)
- D.) John MacArthur Study Bible (there are multiple translations that his study Bible)

It is important to know the translation philosophy of the primary Bible you are going to use to study. For example, the NASB that Faith Church uses will translate sections of scripture much more different than the NLT. Each person will have to decide which style works best for them. Each person will find certain translations more helpful than others. The important thing is to know how your Bible is translated.

Below is a visual representation of the translation philosophy of the major English translations. *Word-for-word* means that the translator try to keep the essential form of the Greek and Hebrew text preserved in the English translation, even at the sake of certain sentences being clearer in the English language. *Thought-for-thought* does not seek to hold on to the original form as much as ensure that each sentence is easy to understand and read in the English language. Every translation has to make decisions on how to translate passages, and so no one way is “better” than another.



- 2.) A good evangelical commentary on that book the book of the Bible chosen to study will be helpful to you . You can find a good commentary by asking your pastor or by going to <http://bestcommentaries.com/>. This site is dedicated to ranking the commentaries and books that are written on topics and books in the Bible from an evangelical and conservative perspective. They are organized into three general categories: (A) Technical—which means that these will focus heavily on the original languages. These are helpful, but persons new to studying the Bible should not venture here yet. (B2) Pastoral—which means these commentaries will focus more on how pastors can help shepherd and teach the word to their flock in the modern age. These are good for new and intermediate studiers. (C) Devotional—which means that these are a great place to start if you are new to studying the Bible and will focus on personal application of the Bible. Finally, there is a “score” that ranks the commentaries. Obviously the higher the score, the “better” the

commentary is. But remember, just because a book received the best rating, that doesn't mean you should buy it. If you are new to studying the Bible, you may want to make sure that you don't buy the best commentary, but the best one that has a *Devotional* tag.

- 3.) Another helpful tool is sermon archives. Today most churches will post their sermons online and even include the pastor's notes. Finding a preacher isn't hard with the internet, but it is important to make sure you know the preachers theology before you place yourself under his teaching. Sermons will help you as you see how trained men organize and dissect the scripture into practical and meaningful action points that will encourage you to grow to be like Christ. It will also help you if you are struggling to understand a passage and need help. Some good preachers to listen to are John Piper, Matt Chandler, John MacArthur and Tim Keller. A helpful sermon archive can also be found on the Gospel Coalition's website under its resource page.
- 4.) There are general types of books that will be helpful for you study, such as Bible dictionaries, surveys, biblical theology, and systematic theology books. You can find these as well at <http://bestcommentaries.com>.

Step Three: Read

Now that you have the right tools that you will need to study the Bible, you can dive in and start reading.

- Read through the entire book of Philippians in one entire sitting. As you are reading, be looking for the answer to some of the questions below. If you are not able to answer them, try using a commentary or Study Bible to help you with them.
- You can find the study resources on the website if you would like help with answering the questions below and do not own any of the study resources mentioned above.
- Share your answers in your Faith Group. It is OK if someone else gets different answers. Many times in Bible Study you can have two equally valid answers for the same question. Even if you get an answer that is "wrong," remember that you are here to learn how to study and growth will take time 😊

1.) Write out briefly answers to the 5 W's questions based on your reading.

A.) **WHO** wrote the book? **WHO** is its audience? **WHO** are the major characters?

B.) **WHAT** are the main events? **WHAT** is the author talking about the most?

C.) **WHEN** was the book written? **WHEN** did events take place?

D.) **WHERE** was this written? **WHERE** did certain events take place? **WHERE** will things happen?

E.) **WHY** was this written? **WHY** was so much or little about this subject included? **WHY** should they do what they are being instructed to do?

2.) What are some of the most repeated key words, phrases, and ideas? Record them below.

3.) Where are the major transitions, turning points, heights, or climaxes in the book?

4.) Identify the main theme that best summarizes the book. Write it out below in 1-2 sentences.

5.) Do you have any questions that you would like to ask the group after reading Philippians? What sections were challenging or difficult for you to understand after reading Philippians? Write them below and come prepared to share with your Faith Group.