

If you've felt discouraged when trying to read your Bible, you're not alone. Just like a young horseback rider needs a boost into the saddle, this method gives you a leg up, making Bible study easy so that you can enjoy the ride. Readers learn to cherish God's life-changing Word.

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CHAPTER ONE

E

Enter into the Story

From Ashley

Thirteen years old. That's the age I was when I picked my dusty Bible off the bookshelf and opened it to the first chapter of Genesis. Until that point in my life, I had been a Christian because of my family. They went to church on Sunday, so I went to church on Sunday. But that's about it. I didn't have a deep and abiding personal relationship with Christ yet.

I remember one week in Sunday school when my peers could answer questions about the Bible that I had no clue about. I felt lost and slightly embarrassed that I didn't know much of anything about the Bible. At that moment, my eyes were opened to the wonder of how vast and deep God's Word is. I longed to know what Scripture had to say and immerse myself in it as the other kids in my class seemed to be doing. That day, God started stirring within my heart a desire to know Him through His Word.

I went home determined to start reading the Bible. I created a plan to make it through the whole Bible. I would wake up at the crack of dawn before school and study one chapter a day. Along with reading, I would write a small summary of what I read every day in my spiral notebook.

Even though I wasn't a Bible scholar and didn't know about context or interpretation, I consistently showed up. I read Scripture, and I observed. I entered into the story, put myself in the shoes of the people I read about, and asked questions.

No matter how much biblical knowledge you might or might not have, you can do the same. You can enter into a story too. We all love stories. Most of us had narratives read to us as children. We love hearing funny accounts from our friends and family. We are captivated by movies and TV shows because of their strong and fascinating storylines.

The Bible is a story. It is one **divine and united story** of salvation through Jesus Christ, but it is also **made up of many smaller stories** that all fit into and add to the larger story. These stories are not fictional, nor are they just meant for our entertainment. Scripture encapsulates actual historical events and people. It is God's story for humanity, and it is God's story for you and me.

As a thirteen-year-old girl, I entered into Genesis. I could feel the boom of God's voice as He spoke creation into existence. I could hear the gentle sobs of Hagar alone in the wilderness. I could imagine the veins popping out of Abraham's head as he reluctantly trudged his only son up the mountain to be sacrificed. I discovered that the Bible's stories are full of action, tension, suspense, love, war, and heartbreak. There are epic battles between good and evil, and (spoiler alert) the end of the story is tremendously satisfying, as good ultimately prevails.

Most importantly, the Bible is a story that invited me into it. It answered life's biggest questions like "Who am I?" and "What am I here for?" It does the same for you. So, pick up your Bible, and let's enter into this grand story together.

What You Will Learn

The first step of the EASY Bible Study Method is *Enter into the Story*. In this chapter, you will learn how to do four things.

E – Enter Into the Story

1

How to enter into a Bible story by reading the text slowly and thoughtfully

2

Why context is important in Bible study and how to determine what the context is

3

How to put yourself in the story

4

How to ask good questions

Before Diving In

But before diving into how to study a particular story in the Bible, it is essential to know the story of Scripture as a whole. The biblical story can be divided into four main parts: creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.

The Bible has 4 main turning points:

creation, **fall**, **redemption**, and **new creation**



Creation

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The grand story of the Bible starts with God Himself. He created the earth and the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, to live in paradise with Him. Humans lived in a faultless world, and their relationship with God was perfect. It was how things were supposed to be.

Fall

God gave Adam and Eve the option to choose to trust in His goodness by obeying Him or to turn away from Him in disobedience. After the serpent tempted them, they chose disobedience and ate from the one tree in the garden that God forbade. From that moment on, death entered the world as a consequence of sin. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

Humans were created to be in communion and intimate relationship with God. After the fall, humanity not only experienced the physical consequences of death but also the spiritual consequences of death, such as being separated from a holy and perfect God.

Although humanity turned against God, God did not give up on us. He always had a plan to redeem His people. As the rest of the Bible unfolds, you will read about God’s steps to redeem His people.

Redemption

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God’s plan to redeem His people and restore them to a right relationship with Him was initiated. He chose a people for Himself by calling a man named Abram (later known as Abraham). God promised that through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). God grew Abraham’s descendants into the Israelite nation and called them to be His chosen people. Although God had called Israel into a special

relationship with Himself, they still failed to follow Him wholeheartedly.

Eventually, God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, through Abraham's lineage to save both the Israelites and all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior. Through Jesus Christ, we can enter into a right relationship with God the Father. He redeemed us so that we may have eternal life with Himself. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

New Creation

Although Christ came and redeemed us, we still await the day He will return and make all things right and completely new. Sin still invades our lives, and so does the power of Satan, who has exerted his influence throughout all of humanity's history after the fall. Second Corinthians 4:4 says, "Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God" (NLT).

Although Satan has temporary authority over this world now, Christ will ultimately judge and defeat Satan and all evil. He will reverse the curse of Adam. He will redeem the earth and all those who put their hope in Him. Ultimately, our relationship with God will be perfectly restored, and we will dwell with Him forever.

The grand story of the Bible is one you do not want to miss, and knowing its overall storyline is the first step in becoming serious about Bible study. Understanding it will help you better comprehend and find the meaning of each passage you read so that you can apply it to your life and know God's heart.

Let's begin to learn how to study this grand story and all the minor stories that play a role within the larger narrative. We'll start with learning how to read the text slowly and thoughtfully.

1

Read the text slowly
and thoughtfully

The first thing we need to do when opening our Bibles and entering in is to slow down. Let me say that again . . . s l o w d o w n.

The biggest foe of our Bible study time is our fast-paced culture and the craziness of life that comes with it. We must intentionally make room for reading Scripture by scheduling it on our calendar. Make a plan by picking a time in your day to go to your room, the library, or any quiet space to study. It could mean waking up half an hour earlier or getting off your phone thirty minutes before bed. Slow down. Take a deep breath. Quiet your heart and mind by saying a prayer.

Your prayer can be as simple as Psalm 119:18. It says:

Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.

Sometimes, I pray, “Lord, open my eyes to Your Word. Help me slow down. Help me to become more like You as we study Your Word today.” Part of slowing down is humbling our hearts and asking God for help.

Along with slowing down our lifestyle and making time to study, we also need to slow down our reading speed as we get into the text. Have you ever skimmed a book mindlessly? If so, you may have retained 5 percent of the book. Skimming is the opposite

Mentor Mama Ellen Note

Pray and ask God to move in your heart, give you a thirst to know Him more, and help you to free space in your schedule to make Him a priority. Also, be kind to yourself and realistic that during different seasons in your life, you will have more time than others, and that’s okay. What God cares about is your heart’s desire to seek Him above all else.

of what we need to do when we read the Bible. It's essential to slow down and thoughtfully take in every word.

There are a few ways you can read a text slowly and thoughtfully.

Read It Out Loud

Reading Scripture out loud will help you stay focused on what's written. Read slowly and think about every word.

Listen to the Text

Listen to the Bible with your eyes closed and your attention focused solely on the audio. You may be surprised to learn that Scripture's original audience did not read the Bible text themselves. Instead, they listened to Scripture being read to them. It wasn't until after the printing press and Martin Luther's reform that most individuals had personal access to the Word and studied it for themselves. Christians had been listening to the Bible for hundreds of years before reading it for themselves. Therefore, it is good for us not only to read the Word but also to hear it being read to us over and over again.

If you find that your mind wanders while listening to the text, we encourage you to **read and listen** at the same time. This will help your mind stay focused while listening to the audio.

You can find audio readings of Scripture online or on smartphone apps. For our recommendations, scan the QR code included here.

Resources



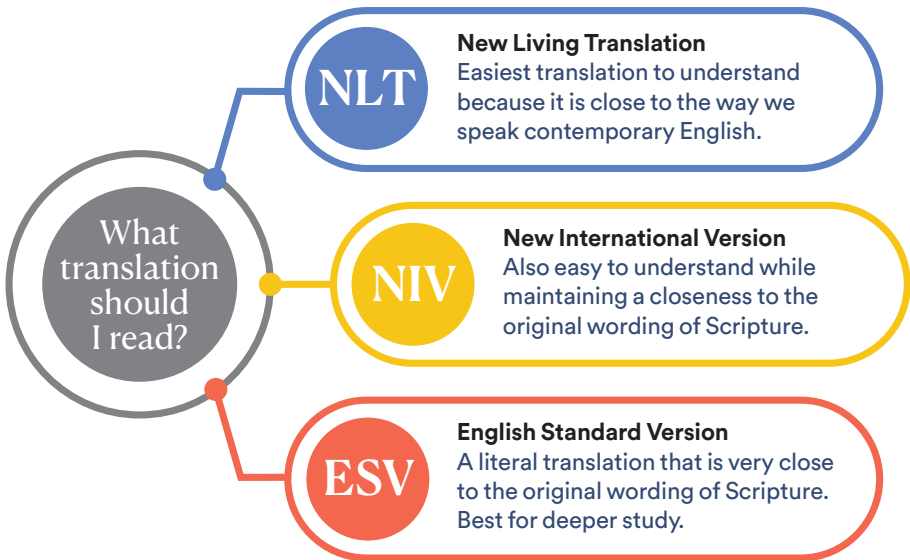
Scan for a downloadable PDF
of *The EASY Bible Study*
Method resource links or go to:

coffeeandbibletime.com/easy-bible-study-method-links/

What Translation to Read

There are so many Bible translations available that it can feel overwhelming to choose one. If you are new to studying the Bible, we suggest selecting the New Living Translation (NLT) or the New International Version (NIV). These translations are simple to understand because they reflect our modern-day language.

If you are looking for a word-for-word translation (meaning it is the closest translation to the Bible's original text), I use the English Standard Version (ESV). I use this version when I am studying the biblical text in depth.



DIG DEEPER

If you have the time and want to dig deeper into the text, here are two more ways to read Scripture slowly and thoughtfully.

Read the Text Multiple Times in Different Versions

If you want to take your Bible study further, we suggest reading the text in multiple translations. Sometimes, you can read a passage and not fully understand it if you only read one version. It is good to read different translations to

give us a fuller idea of what the text is saying.

We talked about translations and recommended you choose NLT, NIV, or ESV. You could pick two of the translations we mentioned to read, or other excellent translations are the New King James Version (NKJV), New Century Version (NCV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and *The Message* (MSG). You can find different versions of the Bible for free in apps and online. Check out our online list of resources for Bible apps and websites we recommend.

Get Interested in the Subject

Sometimes, it is hard to read a text because you may not be interested in the subject of what you are reading, such as genealogies or laws. Take some steps to get interested in the text by researching the history of the passage or listening to an online sermon or video teaching about the text you are reading. Knowing some background information can be highly beneficial in helping you enter into a text. Our resource list includes recommendations to help you dig deeper into different subjects.

TAKE ACTION

Read John 6:1–15 about Jesus feeding the 5,000. This passage is included in the back of this book.

Follow these steps:

1. Quiet your heart and say a prayer to start your Bible study time.
2. Read the text once out loud.
3. Listen to the text once with your eyes closed.
4. Listen to the text and read it at the same time.
5. Dig Deeper: Read the passage in different translations.

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