



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

HOW TO DO A TOPICAL STUDY

Dewayne Bryant

Topical study is a systematic method of researching a specific subject in the Bible. Topics may include people, customs, occupations, behaviors, key words, and individual doctrines, among others. This type of study offers a complete picture of what the Bible has to say about a particular subject. We will outline seven important steps for successful study using this method.

First, choose a specific topic for study. Identify it clearly and be sure it is sufficiently limited in scope. A topic that seems manageable at first could become unwieldy quickly. If it becomes cumbersome, limit the study to either the Old or New Testament, to one particular biblical character, author, or individual book.

Second, find all the places where the topic is mentioned in Scripture. Dictionaries, concordances, reference Bibles, websites, and Bible software will prove invaluable when finding passages on any given subject. Lexicons will provide information on the nuances of significant terms in the original languages. You should be as thorough as possible. A random selection of a few verses may not give an accurate sense of the subject. Each passage needs to be examined closely. Record any personal observations or insights. During this step, a literal (word-for-word) translation will be far more helpful than free (sense-for-sense) translations or paraphrases.

Third, look up related words and concepts, including both synonyms and antonyms. A study on the tongue might examine both positive and negative aspects, including lying, praising, boasting, blessing, cursing, instruction, reproof, admonishment, and rebuke. Studying anxiety could include worry, but also peace and contentment—in other words, the things of which anxiety robs the believer. Understanding what something *is* will be helped by also understanding what it *is not*. For instance, God is love (1 John 4:8), but it is not an unconditional love that overlooks wrongdoing or reneges on punishments for sin.

Fourth, consider the context of every passage. Con-

text is key for a proper understanding of the Bible's view on any subject. Taking words, phrases, and passages out of context lead to error and misunderstanding. Part of considering the context of each passage is noting whether there are any cultural differences that may impact our understanding of the topic today. For instance, slavery in the Mosaic Covenant was more like indentured servitude than the slavery practiced in the last few centuries in the Western world. Another example is the difference between the modern and biblical understanding of "fool." Understanding the larger context by examining extrabiblical evidence may be helpful for support or background information, but the biblical text should always receive preference.

Fifth, create an outline to organize your research, looking for patterns and recurring ideas. As you look

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Editor

Cody Westbrook



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WORDS OF WISDOM FOR BETTER BIBLE STUDY

Our desire for this Christian Worker issue is to provide an extremely practical guide for effective Bible study. Because our great brotherhood has been blessed with so many capable Bible students, we wanted to select a few to ask for advice on how to be a better Bible student. The three men we selected are Paul Sain, Randall Morris, and Bill Burk. Each of these men are well respected for their work in the Kingdom, and their knowledge of God's word.

We asked each of them three questions:

1. Will you tell us a little about your study habits?
2. What tools, methods, and resources have you found helpful in your study?
3. What is the most important advice you could give to someone who desires to be a better Bible student?

Paul Sain

1. "With each passing year, a greater hunger exists to know every gem of truth, learn more about my Father in heaven, absorb the wealth of instruction in His Holy Word. I find myself eagerly beginning my devotional study time before daylight (when peace and quietness are enjoyed)."
2. "In addition to my physical library, I have developed a 4,000 (approximately) volume digital library which is comprised of searchable, copyable, printable PDF files. I have many of these on my work iPad as well as on an external hard drive. Accordance software is an absolutely powerful tool that is invaluable in my study."
3. Begin a method of study and work that method. Stay with it. Do not grow weary but realize the value of adding one passage, one truth, one golden gem at a time and soon you will realize the result of faithful Bible study. Start a filing system and work the system. Several years ago I developed a 24 category system for the Christian that enables them to file sermon outlines, magazine articles, etc. in these categories that will provide future use of valuable information. The sermons, Bible class lessons etc are "numbered" to match this system. A copy of this FILING SYSTEM

listing is free upon request (pain@sainpublications.com). On a personal note, please include in this filing system a systematic study through the Bible (with notes for future use). Each time you cover that portion of Scripture, add to your own commentary thoughts.

Randall Morris

1. "My study habits have tended along the lines of topical studies using concordances to run references on a Bible topic, word, or name. This allows me to study all that the Bible says on that subject, and draw a valid conclusion about what it teaches."
2. "In recent years I have begun to do more studies in context, even my preaching has been more contextual: Books and chapters of the Bible; Bible verses and characters. I use those contexts to determine the points of the lesson while fleshing them out. I think it is important to develop your own concordance as well as use the well established concordances. As you read through the Bible and become more familiar with it, verses will become a key in your mind to help explain other verses. That becomes your own concordance. I use several websites like Studylight.org which contain several good commentaries and other reference book."
3. "The most important advice that I can give is to be an independent thinker. What this means don't just rely upon someone's commentary to understand the passage of scripture. Most of the time I will study a verse of Scripture on my own, run references on it, and do some critical analysis before I consult with a commentary. The commentary then serves as a means of verification that someone sees in the passage what I saw, or informs me of a possible flaw in my reasoning. It can also add additional information to aid in understand the text and its context."

Bill Burk

1. "I consider my study habits a work in progress. I'm seldom satisfied with where I am in my endeavors. I'm always trying to improve. At the same time, I tend to study all the time. I feel my best when I'm consistent in

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Cody Westbrook ----- Editor

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daily Bible reading and memory work. I find that when I am regular in these two exercises sermon and Bible class preparation become much easier and take on greater depth. While driving I enjoy listening to podcasts that discuss spiritual and cultural matters. Also, always have several books going. When these practices are constant, I tend to have more material to preach than I can use.”

2. “When preparing a sermon or class I begin with the text, my Bible and a journal that I use for writing notes and thoughts. I will then read to familiarize myself with my subject, jotting down insights, brief notes, outlines, etc. that come to mind as I go along. It is only after I have spent time with the text do I read other materials. Finally, using the notes I have gleaned from my studies I type up a detailed outline. Regarding sermons, I type a detailed outline, study it, memorize the main points and then preach extemporaneously. Regarding Bible classes, I keep my note taking to what I can write in the margin of my Bible.”
3. “As it pertains to important advice and Bible study, I have concluded that in order to get the most out of it the student needs to continually keep the big picture in mind. From Genesis to Revelation the story of the Bible is the salvation of man to the glory of God by Christ Jesus. When we see God’s plan regarding Jesus in every book we will put ourselves in the position to truly understand Scripture.”

CW

HOW TO DO A WORD STUDY

Kevin Cauley

Conducting a successful word study is a skill that every serious Bible student should possess. Words have meanings, and those meanings affect one’s understanding of the Bible. The definition of a single word can redirect one’s understanding not only of the immediate context, but of the remote context as well. Conducting word studies helps the Bible student remain vigilant in his understanding of God’s word.

The mechanics of doing a word study are straight forward. One must know the word that he desires to study. Then, it is important to have some research tools available. Dictionaries and lexicons are the primary resources. One may also want a good concordance. Since the Bible was originally written in languages other than English, the student will want some works that address the original languages and their meanings.

After deciding what tools to use in one’s study, it is important to discover where the word occurs and in what contexts. The student will then want to read the word in its context as it was used. This will expose the student to

various different meanings of the word. More often than not, words have more than one meaning, and sometimes opposite meanings. The word “cleave,” for example, can mean to bring together (as in “a husband should cleave to his wife”) or separate (as in “please cleave the meat into two pieces”). The same is true for words in other languages. Studying a word in the Greek or Hebrew languages does not necessarily provide ultimate clarity. The context in which a word is used may be the deciding factor on its meaning. Words may also be used in both literal and figurative ways. Words may have multiple literal meanings and multiple figurative meanings. For example, the Bible talks about literal lions, such as the one that Samson killed, and it talks about figurative lions, as in Satan walking about as a lion. To a certain degree, one will want to study these grammatical devices to understand how words are used. In this regard, one may consult an English, Greek, or Hebrew grammar to understand word usages in its various forms and figures.

Beyond the mechanical aspects of word studies, there are spiritual concerns also. Many desire to do word studies in order to prove a specific point. This is the wrong way to approach studying the Bible regardless of what kind of study one is doing. Instead, we must let the Bible speak to us, including allowing the definitions of words that the Bible uses to sway our thoughts. Approaching a word study with a prejudicial desire to prove oneself right is dishonest. It is not allowing the Holy Spirit to speak, and we must “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Approaching a word study with a prejudicial point of view will skew one’s perspective in many areas. For example, the translators of the New International Version chose to translate the Greek word “flesh” as “sinful nature” in some places. This is placing one’s theological prejudice into the text of the Bible instead of letting the Bible’s text influence one’s theology. Honesty in word studies is paramount.

Finally, one must conduct word studies independent of one’s social circumstances. The evidence for the meaning of a word must speak for itself, and one must have the courage to accept that meaning regardless what others believe. “Others” could be scholars, colleges, schools of preaching, preachers, elders, congregations, or immediate associations. Societies can place great pressure upon the Bible student to conform to their beliefs. The Pharisees were guilty of changing the meaning of words in order to advance their agenda. For example, they changed the meaning of the word, “Honor” in “Honor your father and mother,” to not include supporting elderly parents (Matthew 15:1-9). The Pharisees excused folks from obeying this commandment because of their party affiliation. Jesus, however, would not excuse them.

While there are many mechanical things that may be done to conduct word studies, the most important aspects

are spiritual in nature. If we have wrong motives and attitudes regarding the Bible, our word studies will not be profitable. We must have honesty of character and a spiritual attitude to really glean from these studies what God desires us to know. May God bless us in such endeavors.

CW

HOW TO STUDY A BOOK OF THE BIBLE

Richard Rutledge

Each year there are many who resolve to spend more time reading and studying the Word of God. Many, who make such a declaration, have the desire but not the discipline or skills to accomplish this worthy goal. They are more likely to skim the top of the milk of the word than to engage in a systematic study of the meat provided by God.

Our God has blessed us greatly with His will revealed to man which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Word which He has blessed us with is something that can be understood by man (Eph. 3:2-40). Although there are some things that take more effort than others, it is worth the effort (2 Pet. 3:16).

The Word can sanctify, save the soul, give inheritance among the sanctified, allow us to be born again, and will be our standard for judgment (John 17:17, Jas. 1:21, Acts 20:30, 1 Pet. 2:21, John 12:48-50). Therefore we must make great effort to “present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The task before this article is not to develop a greater desire for the Bible, but to suggest a practical, systematic and useful guide for those who desire a more meaningful study as they approach a study of any book of the Bible. In order to provide such tools, let us consider the following suggestions.

First prepare for a productive study

The first step of any productive study is to first prepare yourself through prayer (Ezra 7:10, Jas. 1:5). Next, we will benefit greatly when our area is conducive for prolonged studying such as a table or desk with comfortable seating and good lighting. Next prepare your tools for study; writing pad, pens highlighters, an exhaustive concordance, and a Bible dictionary. It is at this time that you also must resist the urge to consult commentaries prior to and during the early stages of your study. Remember the Bible can be understood.

Second approach the text

Now we are ready to approach the text before us. I submit

that we begin with three questions: What, So What, and Now What

WHAT: examination of the text

During this phase of study we are attempting to ascertain as much information provided to us about the book as we can. One tool that is helpful are the five W’s—Who, What, Where, When and Why. We must always begin with the biblical context, so first read the text to glean the facts revealed. As we read the content (what) we will find the penman and recipient (who), the location (where), the date (when), and the purpose (why). We must also consider the cross reference of events from different books (i.e. Acts 16:12-40, 2 Cor. 8:1-5, Phil. 1-4) in order to gain a totality of biblical information revealed.

After a thorough examination of the biblical context, it is here that we consider the historical context. Is there some insight that can be gained by considering the historical significance of the region, the date, the people or events in our book of study? For example, would knowing that Philippi was a Roman colony during the New Testament help us to better understand the term “citizenship” in Philippians 3:20?

SO WHAT: explanation of the text

Many students of the Bible do a great job of phase one of the study; gathering all the facts, but fall short after that. The Bible is more than a textbook for men to acquire knowledge of God’s will for man (Jas. 1:22). There are two questions we should continually ask ourselves as we engage in diligent study: What does the text mean? What does God expect man to learn from it?

NOW WHAT: application of the text

While we may consider that many fall short of phase two, even more do so here. After becoming familiar with the text and understanding God’s message to mankind the difficult task begins. What changes are necessary in my life to make application and conform to heaven’s will? It is with this ultimate goal in mind that every Bible student endeavors to achieve. Our God has blessed us with His revelation and our ability to logically reason, so let these two combine to make us better students of the Word. **CW**

HOW TO DO A CHARACTER STUDY

Randy Robinson

In embarking on a study of God’s Word, perhaps one of the undervalued and underappreciated aspects of such a study is the characters portrayed in the Scriptures. There is much to be learned from an in-depth study of Bible characters. We can learn a great deal from those of whom God approved as well as from those of whom He disapproved. Furthermore, we may also learn from those

whose roles in the Scriptures are seemingly innocuous. While we want to gain as much as we can from the Biblical text itself, it may also benefit us to consult secular sources to give us additional insight, yet always bearing in mind that these sources are not inspired.

Perhaps the very first thing to examine in a study of Bible characters is the name of the individual. Many people were given certain names to signify certain things. Jesus Himself was named *Jesus*, because according to the angel, “he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). Sometimes over the course of a person’s life, their name would be changed due to changing circumstances. Abram (exalted father) became Abraham (father of a multitude) in accordance with the promises of God (Gen. 12:1-3). Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28), which means “prince of God,” and it was that name under which God’s people would be known.

Then we should ascertain if they are an Old Testament or New Testament character. Under which dispensation did they live? In the Old Testament, they lived in either the Patriarchal or Mosaic Age. Although the Mosaic age began at Mount Sinai in 1500 B.C., some God-fearing people, who were not Israelites/Jews, continued to worship God under the Patriarchal system. The Christian Age began on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus returned to Heaven (Acts 2). The time in which they lived could perhaps have great significance in conjunction with world events occurring at the same time.

The next thing we may want to consider is the nature of the individual’s relationship with God and/or Christ. Does God consider this person righteous or evil? In some cases, it may be both. The individual may have at one time been evil, but became righteous (Luke 19:8), or vice versa (2 Tim. 4:10). Some Old Testament characters had a particularly close relationship with God (Enoch, Abraham, Moses), while some New Testament characters had a particularly close relationship with the Lord Jesus (Peter, James, and John). What was it about these individuals that made them particularly close to either the Father or the Son? Also, what can we learn from those whom the Bible describes as evil?

Where was this character born? Where did they live? Where did they die? Did they travel from place to place? Is there any special significance about any of these places? The names of places, as in the case of the names of individuals, often had a significant meaning in the overall revelation of God’s will.

Is there anything particularly intriguing about their family? Noah and his family were the only righteous people on earth that escaped the flood (Gen. 7:7). In Genesis 12:1-3, God commanded Abram to leave his home and his family in order to receive God’s blessings. However, it is not until we

read Joshua 24:2 that we are informed that Abram’s father, Terah, was an idolater.

Many Bible characters were called for a particular purpose. God chose Jeremiah before he was even born (Jer. 1:5). For what purpose were they called? Was that purpose limited to the time in which they lived or would there be lasting ramifications as a result of their calling?

Studying Bible characters can indeed be a profitable examination. The Bible gives us a great deal of insight into many of these individuals recorded in Holy Writ. We may glean far more than we ever expected as we delve into the lives of these individuals. Almost every Bible character provides an example to either emulate or reject. As we study these characters we will hopefully acquire and maintain a greater appreciation of them and of Bible study in general.

CW

HOW TO STUDY APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Sam Dilbeck

As the United States of America approaches election season, predictions of the world’s demise escalate. As thoughts of the possibility of conflict rise, many people look to the Bible trying to decipher the signs of the times. Some read the visions found in the apocalyptic and prophetic literature of the Bible and offer theories of their meaning. Often their conjecturing is wild and confusing, and clashing with the rest of God’s word. Much of the misperception comes from an improper reading of apocalyptic and prophetic literature.

To properly interpret a text, we must take into account what genre of literature it is. A history book reads differently than a love letter which in turn reads differently than a sports column. Knowing the genre allows the reader to begin with certain understandings, ideas, and expectations, and aids in interpretation.

The book of Revelation presents unique challenges since it is composed of multiple genres. Beasley-Murray observed that Revelation identifies itself by three genres in its opening verses: apocalypse (1:1), prophecy (1:3), and epistle (1:4).¹ Generally speaking, it’s the apocalyptic portions that cause modern confusion.

According to Bruce Waltke, the key features of apocalyptic literature are (1) its focus on the end of the ages; (2) its dynamic method of revelation; (3) its frequent dualisms; (4) its oppressed and persecuted audience; (5) its

1 G.R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), 12.

bizarre images; and (6) its call to repentance.²

In the Apocalypse of John, an angelic tour guide leads the apostle through a dramatic series of visions. These visions were intended to provide persecuted saints an insider's view of their ultimate victory. Like other apocalyptic writings, Revelation uses curious imagery to convey its message.

Knowing apocalyptic and prophetic literature are written in decidedly different style compels readers to approach it differently than an epistle or narrative. Here are six things to keep in mind while reading and studying this genre.

1. *Begin with an open heart.* Confusion comes when people approach the text with a determined point of view. In the book's obscurity these readers find latitude for their false theories. Instead of drawing the meaning out of the text, they read their doctrines into the text. The humble heart may be confident in its understanding, but is willing to consider other ideas when the biblical evidence warrants it.
2. *Seek how the original readers understood the message, then make application to modern circumstance.* Dispensationalists see "signs" in modern times, then go to Revelation to decipher them. The first century saint would not have understood a 21st century reference. What did John want the seven churches of Asia, to whom the book was first addressed, to know? Answering that question allows readers to identify similarities between the original readers and modern readers, and make contemporary applications without making the book irrelevant to the original readers.
3. *Focus on the big picture.* Error often comes when readers get lost in the forest of details and lose sight of the main idea. A grasp of the main idea helps give meaning to the details.
4. *Read the unknown in light of the known.* Because of its fantastic imagery people like to start their New Testament journey in Revelation or some other obscure text. We should allow the truths revealed in the rest of Scripture to inform our interpretation of apocalyptic literature.
5. *Know the Old Testament.* Keener says Revelation contains more Old Testament references than any other New Testament book. He estimates roughly 70 percent of the verses in Revelation contain an allusion to the Old Testament.³ Ignorance of the Old Testament turns Revelation into a thousand piece puzzle with seven hundred pieces missing!

6. *Assume a reference is symbolic unless the context demands it is literal.* Usually biblical texts should be taken as literal unless it becomes absurd to do so. When it comes to Revelation, Gregg cautions, "Though this is a good rule when dealing with literature written in a literal genre, it is the exact opposite in the case of apocalyptic literature, where symbolism is the rule, and literalism the exception."⁴

God's word is challenging, not confusing (1 Cor. 14:33). No doubt apocalyptic literature will always present an interpretive challenge. But by beginning with some basic understanding and guidelines readers will be better equipped to receive the message God intended them to have. **CW**

4 Steven Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Approach*, ed. Steven Gregg, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997), 11.

TERMS AND TOOLS

John Haffner

To say that the Bible is a literary masterpiece would be an understatement. God's inspired word contains a wonderful compilation of literary genres of every kind: history, poetry, drama, and more. Because of the variety of writing styles contained within God's word, it is helpful to know something about the different literary devices that are found within it. The following is a concise list of various literary devices employed in scripture, and also of some helpful resources that may be consulted to help in Bible study.

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Part One: Terms & Concepts

Allegory

Definition: a symbolic application of historical fact. Basically, it is an extended metaphor. It is similar to a parable but instead of dealing with theoretical history, as a parable does, it deals with real facts. Example: Galatians 4:21-31.

Anthropomorphism

Definition: the act of ascribing a human quality to God. Example: Isaiah 59:1-2

Hyperbole

Definition: a literary device wherein the author uses specific words and phrases that exaggerate and overemphasize the basic crux of the statement in order to produce a grander, more noticeable effect. Example: Matthew 5:29-30.

Irony

Definition: when the speaker says one thing, but means another. Often irony is used to suggest the stark contrast of the literal meaning being put forth. Example: Job 12:2

2 Bruce Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 550.

3 Craig S. Keener, *Revelation, NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 33.

Metaphor

Definition: when the subject is said to be something else in order to draw a comparison between them. Example: Matthew 26:26-28.

Metonymy

Definition: metonymy in literature is the practice of substituting a name or noun with a word that is closely linked to it. Example: Ephesians 4:20.

Parable

Definition: parables are one of the most commonly used figures of speech in the Bible. The word comes from two Greek terms that mean “to place alongside.” A parable is a story of comparison in which something real is used to illustrate a moral truth. Thayer famously called it “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Example: 2 Samuel 12:1-4; Matthew 13:3-9.

Personification

Definition: the practice of ascribing human characteristics to inanimate objects, or non-human, beings. Example: Numbers 16:31-32.

Prolepsis

Definition: a figure in which objects are spoken of in anticipation. Example: Deuteronomy 34:1-5.

Proverb

Definition: a short, concise sentence that contains a complete and valuable thought. Example: 2 Peter 2:22; The book of Proverbs.

Simile

Definition: a comparison between two different objects using “like” or “as.” (Similes are one of the most commonly used literary devices.) Example: Acts 2:1-4.

Synecdoche

Definition: a literary device that uses a part of something to refer to the whole or vice versa. Example: Acts 19:27; Acts 20:7.

Part Two: Study Tools & Resources

(Mention of a book is not an endorsement of all of its contents)

Commentary

A commentary is a series of comments, explanations, or annotations on scripture. Good commentaries are very valuable in helping us to understand passages of scripture but, because they contain man's explanation of scripture, they should always be used with caution. There are a wide variety of good commentaries by sound brethren available, such as R.L. Whiteside's commentary on Romans, Wayne Jackson's commentary on the New Testament, and the Gospel Advocate New Testament commentary set.

Concordance

A concordance is an alphabetical index of the words of the Bible with a reference to each passage in which the words occur. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is without doubt the most well-known commentary on the market.

Dictionary

Bible dictionaries are a combination of definitions and proper names for Biblical words with verse references, which allow users to discover the meaning of words and study them in context to the specific verse or passage. Many word searches also include the original Greek and Hebrew word with meaning. There are a variety of Bible dictionaries available such as *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*,

the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*.

Bible Atlas

A Bible atlas is a book of maps relevant to the time and events of the Bible. An atlas helps to provide a visualization of the geographic regions of the Bible lands that will provide more depth and understanding to our study. *The American Bible Society Maps* or *Baker's Bible Atlas* are just two of many that are available.

Hermeneutics

It is impossible to study the Bible effectively without understanding how to properly interpret it, so a book about proper hermeneutics is very valuable. D.R. Dungan's book *Hermeneutics* is a classic text that provides solid instruction in properly interpreting scripture.

Bible Introduction

There are a number of books available that provide introductory and background information on each Bible book. These volumes provide information about the author, date, audience, historical setting, etc. on each book of the Bible. Henry C. Thiessen's *Introduction to the New Testament* and Norman Geisler and William Nix's *General Introduction to the Bible* are both very valuable resources. Also Frank Dunn's *Know Your Bible* is very good.

Topical Bible

The topical Bible is a compilation of Bible subjects organized by category and scripture reference. It allows you to look up topics like love, grace, or mercy and find various passages and sub-topics related to the theme. *Nave's Topical Bible* and *The Thompson Topical Bible* are both very useful.

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over the list of items related to the topic being studied, appropriate divisions and subgroups will begin to emerge. It will also allow you to see whether the topic undergoes development throughout the Bible. For example, the Hebrew word for covenant (*berith*) means a formal legal agreement between two parties in the Old Testament, but the Greek term (*diatheke*) often means something like “last will and testament” in the New.

Sixth, summarize your findings and formulate your conclusions. Asking a number of questions will help in doing this. How frequently does the topic appear in the Bible? Does it build upon antecedents in Scripture? Do later biblical authors broaden, deepen, or otherwise expand our understanding of the topic being considered?

Finally, apply what you have learned. After ensuring that you have researched the topic thoroughly, ask, “What does this mean to me?” Determine how what you have learned may be applied to yourself in your relationship with God and other people, your needs, or your desires.

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