

HOW TO DO THE ABC BIBLE STUDY

"When your words came, I ate them," wrote the Prophet Jeremiah. "They were my joy and my delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15: 16). Today, centuries later, personal Bible study allows us to experience the Joy and delight in God's Word which Jeremiah spoke of.

The ABC Bible Study plan is one of the most basic tools for analytical Bible study, and gives the Holy Spirit opportunity to speak to you directly from the Scriptures. It is best in this basic Bible study format not to refer to commentaries or other reference materials. Learn to glean truth from the Scriptures on your own. You may refer to other reference materials later.

Getting Started

Choose a passage or chapter from the New Testament for your study. Before you do any writing, prayerfully read the chosen study portion at least three times. You may read silently, then aloud, then pausing at the end of each verse to reflect on what you have read.

It is better to do the entire ABC study in rough draft form first. Then organize it neatly under the five following sections, each identified by a letter of the alphabet. The sections need not be done in the order shown.

A. A Title

You may want to write your title after you have finished the rest of your study. In choosing a title, jot down two or three titles that come to mind as you study; then either select the best one from this list or form a new one from a combination of your suggestions. The titles should fit the chapter and be as complete as possible.

Your aim is to look for a title that clearly identifies the passage's content, not for one that's catchy. It should not exceed 11 words and may be just one or two.

B. Best Verse of Basic Passage.

Decide whether you are choosing a Best Verse or a Basic Passage. Write the reference of the verse or verses under the section heading.

The Best Verse is a single reference that seems most outstanding to you as you read through the passage or chapter, even though it may not contain the central theme. The Basic Passage is a verse or a group of verses (no more than three) which includes the central message or is the key to the contents of the passage.

C. Challenge

As you work through the passage this time, ask God to challenge your heart in a personal way from some portion of what you are studying. Your purpose now is to accept this challenge and apply its

truth in a definite way to your life. It may be something that God wants you to do or stop doing, or an attitude to develop. A habit may need to be formed or broken. You may need to incorporate some truth into your thinking.

Under the heading CHALLENGE, begin with the number of the verse or verses from which you are taking your challenge. First state in your own words the truth of the verse. Then tell how this challenge applies to you—what needs it reveals in your life, what shortcomings, transgressions, or neglects it indicates, or what new appreciation or understanding it opens up to you. Since the challenge is personal, use pronouns "I," "me," "my," and "mine" in your writing.

Then state clearly what you plan to do about it. Tell what specific action you will take to correct the weakness, to build the needed quality in your life, or to increase your understanding of this truth. Choose something practical you can do in the following week, instead of a long-term project. Your next Bible study will bring another challenge that you will want to work on.

This action step may be one of many things, such as writing a letter, memorizing a verse of Scripture on the subject, praying about a special need, doing a kindness, making an apology and asking forgiveness, or carrying out a short-term project. Remember to depend on the Holy Spirit, who enables us to truly grow in our Christian life.

D. Difficulties

Consider each verse in your study passage. Does it speak of anything you could not explain to another person? If so, under the heading DIFFICULTIES write down the number of the verse and the question or problem it raises in your mind. Do not merely say, "I don't understand" or "Please explain," but state the specific difficulty it presents to you.

If a difficulty can be answered by a little research (such as looking up a word in a dictionary), do the research and record the answer. Then you can share it with someone in your discussion group who might have a simpler question.

E. Essence

In the last section of your study, you may choose to summarize or outline the passage under the heading ESSENCE. In either case, you should record only what the passage says, not what it means. Rather than interpreting it, simply put in your own words what the Scripture actually says.

The summary is a brief condensation of the passage. You should summarize all parts of the passage equally, not giving too much space to one part and slighting another. One way to do this is to write one sentence in your rough draft for each successive thought in the passage, using your own words instead of the words of the text. Then condense your summary into fewer words, combining your sentences, and making them shorter. You should aim for an average of two to eight words per verse.

An outline divides a passage into its natural paragraphs and gives a brief title or heading to each section. Write down the verses included in each section (see below). List as many subpoints under each of the main headings as you need to define its content. As in the summary, include all parts of the passage in good proportion. An outline may look like this:

1. Main Heading or Title of This Division (1:1-8)
 - A. Subpoint (verses 1-3)
 - B. Subpoint (verses 4-8)
2. Main Heading or Title of This Division (1:9-21)
 - A. Subpoint (verses 9-10)
 - B. Subpoint (verses 11-16)
 1. Sub-subpoint (verses 11-13)
 2. Sub-subpoint (verses 14-16)
 - C. Sub-subpoint (verses 17-21)

A Final Note

Again, your ABC Bible Study should include the following parts:

A TITLE
BEST VERSE or BASIC PASSAGE
CHALLENGE
DIFFICULTIES
ESSENCE

EXAMPLE PAGE

BOOK: Colossians

STUDY PASSAGE: 3:1-11

A. TITLE: The Christian's New Life

B. BEST VERSE: Colossians 3:3

C. CHALLENGE :

VERSE OF-THE CHALLENGE: Colossians 3:2

TRUTH OF THE CHALLENGE: My mind is to be occupied with godly thoughts and desires, not wanting what the world has to offer.

PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE CHALLENGE: It's easy to think I must have certain things or live a certain way in the world's eyes to be happy. The world's propaganda seems to get to me. Then I get anxious when I don't get these things. This verse reminds me I need to set my mind to think God's way with God's values. This happens only as my mind is filled with His Word. I need to develop the habit of meditating on Scripture. This week I'll take one verse I have memorized and concentrate on using it to meditate on all week. I'll use 1 Corinthians 15:58.

D. DIFFICULTIES:

Vs. Difficulties

- 1 How has the Christian been raised with Christ?
What are the "things above" I am to seek?
- 2 How do I "set" my mind?
- 5 How can I "put to death" my earthly nature?
Do I do this actively, or does God bring it about in my life?
- 10 Why is it necessary to have my new nature "renewed in knowledge"?

E. ESSENCE

The New Life (Colossians 3: 1-11)

1. Centered in Christ (1-4)
 - A. Raised with Christ
 1. Seek things above (1)
 2. Set my mind on things above (2)
 - B. Appearing with Christ
 1. I have died—my life is hidden with Christ (4)
 2. I will appear with Christ 4.
2. Contrast of old and new (5-11)
 - A. Old
 1. The old character—put it to death (5-6)
 2. Old practices—put them away (7-9)
 - B. New
 1. The new self in God's image (10)
 2. No partiality in Christ (11)