

5 Steps to Bible Study Breakthrough



Bible Study Blitz
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Introduction: Where Do I Start?

Where Do I Start?



Is this how you look when it's time to study your Bible?

Do you look at other Christians and wonder how they know so much about the Bible? Do you wonder how they see things you don't see in the pages of Scripture? Are you at an impasse be-

cause your church expects you to already know how to study the Bible?

If we're honest, that's most of us; but, we're too embarrassed to admit it. It was definitely me in my younger days.

So let's be real with each other, Bible study is *hard*!

I'm not going to try to convince you that Bible study isn't hard. If I did, I'd be lying to you.

But you know what? Your frustration is a good thing! In this case it means you care. If you didn't want to study God's Word, then it wouldn't even bother you that it's hard & you certainly wouldn't be frustrated. But, here's the good news. If you're reading this book, it means you're ready to do something about that frustration, and that's a good thing.

Now, let me ask you a question: **are you ready for Bible study breakthrough?**

If you are, then this book will help you achieve it in five steps. But these aren't just any five steps. You see, too often people focus on the wrong things when it comes to Bible study. They want to make sure you're reading the right Christian authors, using the right daily devotionals, learning from the approved list of Bible studies, and so on. If you want to grow in your faith and know about the Bible none of those things matter. Instead, in

this book I will help you focus on the things that matter. I will give you the tools you need to get started, make progress, and sustain it for a lifetime.

What to Expect

Here's what you can expect from Bible Study Blitz.

First, **expect the unexpected**. I'm going to throw some curveballs your way. While some of what I say might seem unconventional, each step is tried & true for Bible study success.

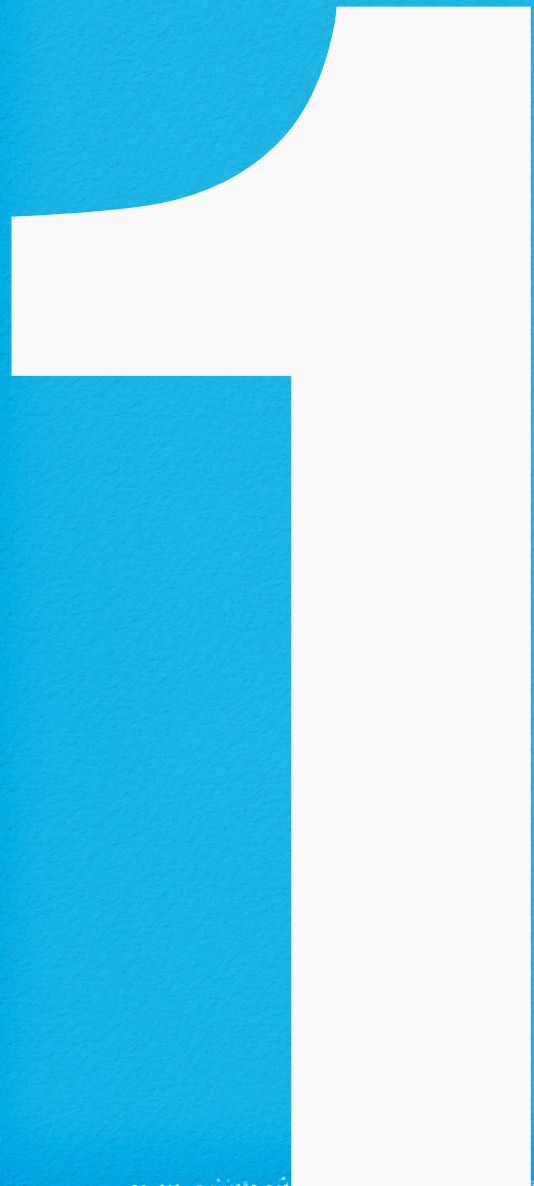
Second, **don't expect to rush through this book**. While it is a short read, be ready to take your time going through the material. To get the most out of this book, implement each step in order. Then, do not move on to the next step until you're confident in your ability to execute the current step.

Next, **expect some setbacks**. You're going to hit some roadblocks and obstacles along the way. The devil doesn't want you to study your Bible, so he'll do whatever he can to distract you. When it happens, simply brush your shoulders off & start again.

Finally, **expect a breakthrough!** Why? Because you want it & you're going to put in the work to achieve it.

If you're ready for Bible study breakthrough turn the page & keep reading!

Step One: The Perfect Bible



Find the Perfect Translation (for you)

If you're going to get anywhere in your Bible study, the first thing you need is the right Bible translation. The Bible is hard enough on its own. Don't make it any harder on yourself by using one whose language is difficult to understand. **Picking the right Bible is the first step to Bible study breakthrough!**

Understanding Bible Translation

Before you can pick the right Bible, you first to understand briefly how we got our current Bibles.

To start, the Bible was not written in English. When it was written the English language didn't even exist. Instead, the Bible's authors wrote in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, with a few places penned in Aramaic (like most of Daniel). Whereas, Koine

Greek, the common tongue in the Roman Empire, is the language of the New Testament.

Any Bible you see today is translated from documents written in these ancient languages. As scholars continue to study these languages, their understanding of them continues to improve. This work helps them to translate the Bible more accurately. Not to mention, the English language is constantly changing, so there is a need for modern translations to keep up with our own language. This means there is no one right or perfect Bible translation, unless you're reading the original languages.

You should aim to find a modern translation that you can read & understand, that is also faithful to the original languages.

Bible Translation Categories

With an understanding of Bible translation under your belt, the next step is learning about the different ways it can be translated.

Bible translations are placed on a scale ranging from word-for-word translations of the original languages to complete paraphrases. All Bibles land somewhere on this spectrum, but are

generally broken into three camps: formal equivalence, paraphrase, and dynamic equivalence.

Formal Equivalences

Formal equivalence translations are essentially word-for-word. The idea is to translate every Hebrew or Greek word into English with some equivalent. Because of its focus on being literal, there is less focus on making interpretive decisions in the text. Instead, translators let readers make these decisions for themselves.

Examples of word-for-word translations include: the King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV), Modern English Version (MEV), and the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Paraphrases

Paraphrases reside at the opposite end of the spectrum. Paraphrase translations convey the larger thought of a passage and summarize it in modern language. As a result, these Bibles are easier to read because they are not constrained by the original languages. Yet, this lack of constraint also means some of the finer details & nuances of the language that can be important for understanding a passage get lost in translation, no pun intended.

The most popular paraphrase Bible is The Message.

While great for getting the big picture and casual reading, paraphrase Bibles are not as useful for serious study.

Dynamic Equivalences

Dynamic equivalences (or thought-for-thought) translations offer a happy medium between the literalness of a formal equivalence and the looseness of a paraphrase. The goal of these types of translations is to make the meaning of each passage accessible to modern readers. Unlike formal equivalences, when interpretive issues arise in the text, dynamic equivalences will err on the side of readability & clarity.

Some Bibles in this category make use of both formal and dynamic equivalence in their translations, such as the Christian Standard Bible. Instead of demanding one method over another, Bibles in this category seek to make the text as clear as possible without major sacrifice in translation.

With less of an emphasis on word-for-word translation, dynamic equivalences are easier to read, but are still good for study. Some of the more popular dynamic equivalences include: the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), New International Version (NIV), and the New Living Translation (NLT).

Choosing Your Bible

Now it's time to choose your Bible.

But, there's a catch. I'm not going to tell you which Bible translation to use. That decision is entirely in your hands. You must choose the best Bible for you, not what someone else thinks you should read.

I won't leave you empty-handed though. Follow the steps below and you will find your perfect Bible translation.

Step 1: Consider owning at least two Bibles. One should be a formal equivalence and the other a dynamic equivalence translation. Of the two, which one you use as your everyday Bible is up to you.

The reason you want two Bibles is to see the differences in translation. Sometimes a passage is more difficult to understand in one translation over another. Owning two Bibles will increase your chances of understanding what you're reading.

Step 2: Find out which translation your church or pastor uses. Consider using that translation as one of your Bibles. This makes it easier to follow along at church, and most likely they are using a translation worth owning.

Step 3: Go to Bible.com. Read the same Bible passage in several translations (preferably from the list above). Make note of the translations you find easiest to read and understand.

Step 4: Look at your list of Bibles and rank them based on your observations from Step 3. With that list in place, see where your Bibles fall on the chart on the next page. From that list, pick your top formal equivalence & dynamic equivalence translations. These are now your go to translations.

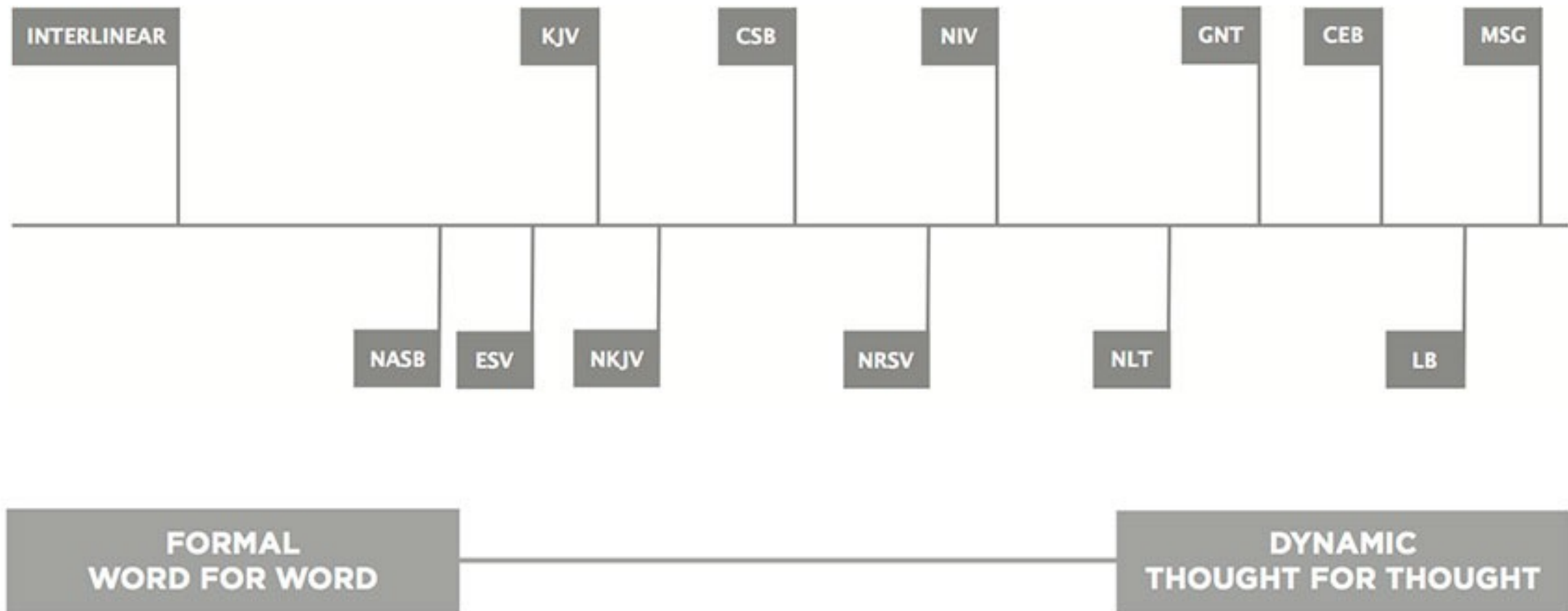
Step 5: Purchase a copy of both translations, or download them in your Bible app.

The Best Bible Translation

The best Bible translation is the one you use. This is why it's so important to take time to find the one you can read & understand.

Now that you have the perfect Bible translation, you're ready to move to the second step.

BIBLE TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



Bible translations shown in the top half of the chart are original translations directly from ancient languages to English. Versions shown below the line began with the English text of another Bible translation.

Step Two: Bible Study Method

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A Simple Bible Study Method

If you're going to get the most out of your time in God's Word you cannot approach it without a plan. Some people have a Bible reading plan, which is great; but, Bible study is more than checking off boxes and merely reading words on a page. No, the purpose of Bible study is a transformed life and to become a better disciple of Jesus Christ. So, once you have the perfect Bible in hand, the next thing you need is a method for studying it.

What you need is something simple, memorable, and repeatable. That's exactly what [Replicate Ministries](#)' H.E.A.R. Bible journaling method provides. The goal of this method is to facilitate both understanding and application, which are essentials to Bible study breakthrough. **This Bible study method is your second step to Bible study breakthrough.**

H.E.A.R. Journaling

H.E.A.R. stands for **H**ighlight, **E**xplain, **A**pply, and **R**espond. Each step in the process allows you to digest what you've read while letting God speak directly to your spirit. The H.E.A.R. method helps you hear from God the right way.

Once you've read your Bible passage follow the steps below in the H.E.A.R. Method to get the most out of your Bible study.

Highlight

The first step in the process involves writing down three things:

1. The book and passage you read
2. A verse or two that stood out during your reading
3. A title for the passage you read that will help you remember it

That's all there is to highlighting the passage in your journal.

Explain

The next step requires some work and diligent digging. It is here that you want to answer questions like:

- Who wrote the passage?
- Who is the audience?

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- Why was this book written?
 - How does this passage fit with the rest of the book and the Bible as a whole?
 - What's happening in this passage?

The goal of this step is to help you understand the meaning of the text and how its original hearers would have understood it. This step moves you closer to making application from the text.

This is the perfect opportunity to make use of Bible study tools like study Bibles, commentaries, dictionaries, and the like. Not every passage is straightforward, and these tools will help you figure out what it means.

Apply

Once you understand the meaning of the passage, the next step is to apply it to your life. This involves asking questions like:

- What does this passage mean today?
- What does this verse look like in my life?
- Is there anything in this passage God wants me to do (or not do)?

- How can it help me?
- How does this passage help me relate to those around me?

As you answer these questions you should be able to write down a few sentences about how God is speaking to you through the passage.

Respond

The last step in the H.E.A.R. journaling method is to put some action behind what you've read. This can be either a clear action step you need to take after reading a passage, or it can be a prayer to God. No matter what the action is, you should respond to the passage in some way.

H.E.A.R.ing God's Word

Every time you read God's Word, you should also H.E.A.R. it in your journal. Joined with a plan to read God's Word, this simple Bible study method will take you far. I use it every morning in my own studies because it's that good.

If you don't know where to get started reading, I have some ideas for you at the end of this book.

You now have two-fifths of what you need for Bible study breakthrough.

Step Three: Cross-References

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Learn to Use Cross-References

Have you ever wondered what those verse references are that appear to the side or beneath your Bible text? Those Bible verses are called cross-references. They help you find passages related to the one you're currently studying.

If you let them, cross-references can be your best friend in Bible study, and they are the third step to Bible study breakthrough.

What is a Cross-Reference?

At its simplest, a cross-reference is a marker in the text pointing to related content. When speaking of the Bible, cross-references point to passages containing related words and themes.

Why Cross-References?

Though there are many ways to study the Bible, interpretation is best when we let the context of passages speak for themselves. Some refer to this as “using Scripture to interpret Scripture.” This is done through the use of cross-references.

Cross-references help you define and contextualize what you're reading. For example, when studying a difficult passage, utilizing a cross-reference resource will point you to associated passages—many times relating to the topic you are presently reading about, and sometimes similar situations across the Biblical timeline. These related passages will make it easier to make sense of what's happening in the more difficult passage.

Cross-references should always be the first tool you consult when studying Scripture. When you let Scripture speak for itself it does a remarkable job. Joined together with the H.E.A.R. method, this is the perfect way to understand a passage and dig deeper into God's Word.

Types of Cross-References

Not all cross-references are made the same. So, if you're going to make use of them in your study, you need to know about the different types and how to use each. These vary from translation to translation, and even from Bible to Bible; therefore, it is best to consult your Bible's front matter to learn how it makes use of cross-references.

How to Use Cross-References

While it might seem like a complicated system at first glance, in practice using cross-references is straightforward. Here are the steps to follow when studying a passage.

1. **Read the Passage.** Focus only on the text at hand. Read and re-read the passage. Let the passage unravel itself without any outside help. As you go, write any observations you find in a notebook.
2. **Look Up Cross-References.** Before you consult a Study Bible or commentary, first turn to your cross-references. Look up each reference one-by-one, reading its full context when

necessary. Note the cross-references that stood out or were helpful in explaining the passage. These may be passages you want to explore further.

3. **Look Up Your Cross-References' Cross-References.** This is where the real fun begins. Because cross-references are all over the Bible, the verses you looked up will have their own cross-references. The next step is to look up their cross-references. Continue this process as time allows or until you're satisfied with your understanding of the original passage or theme.
4. **Consult Your Other Tools.** Finally, once you've exhausted your cross-references, turn to your other tools (such as your Study Bible notes or commentary) when you need further assistance. You can also use these tools to make sure you correctly understood the passage once you've completed your cross-reference work.

This is how I read my Bible most mornings. I sit at my desk with nothing more than my Bible and a notebook. I'll read the passage, follow the steps above, and then write down my findings and any application from that day's reading.

Keep your study simple. Only use other tools when necessary.

Bonus Steps

As we wrap up this third step for Bible study breakthrough, here are a couple bonus tips for you.

The more you read the Bible, the more familiar it becomes. When this happens, sometimes you will read a passage and another will come to mind that's related. Most times, when you glance at your cross-references it'll be there. If it is, fantastic, your Bible knowledge is growing! But, sometimes it won't be listed. In these moments, **grab your pen and write it in the margin**. Just make sure the passage fits the context & the reference is correct before writing it down.

Finally, if you want to dig even deeper, add a resource like the [*New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*](#) to your library. It's an in-exhaustive collection of cross-references. This resource is like putting your cross-references on steroids. Adding it to your library will blow the roof off your Bible study breakthrough.

Ahead of the Game

If you've incorporated these first three steps into your Bible study, then you're ahead of the game. Most people never get that far in studying God's Word. These three steps alone will take you far. But, you want a breakthrough. Well, that's what you'll get in the next two steps!

Step Four: Study Triggers

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Create Study Triggers

When I talk to people about their struggles in Bible study, there are a few responses I hear a lot. Of those responses, one of them is they have difficulty making time or getting into a rhythm. If that's you, **get ready to blitz through the time & motivation barriers with step 4: creating study triggers.**

If you're going to get things done and be consistent in your Bible study, triggers are the key. You need reminders that trigger the subconscious that subsequently put your body and mind in motion. That's exactly what study triggers do. Triggers help you by creating consistency and an ease of mental flow.

The Purpose of Triggers

Triggers are everywhere, many of which we are not even aware of. The realm of triggers is vast because they can be engaged by any of our five senses. Certain smells can instantly bring back memories of home & mom's cooking. Hearing an old song can bring back memories of an old love. And so on. The idea be-

hind triggers is that physical senses can be associated with memories.

For as much as triggers can bring back distant memories, they are also used to invoke response and action. This is most commonly seen in athletes. Picture it. Athletes put on their headphones before a game so they can block out the world and focus on the competition at hand. Over time this routine becomes ritual for the athlete and they cannot warm up without it.

Athletes create triggers with an end in mind. The trigger of music helps their mind block out the world and get in a state of mental preparedness. Of course, they can get there without the music, but music gets them there faster and with a greater level of focus. Like an athlete, you can use triggers to your advantage in Bible study, you just need to learn how.

Bible Study Triggers

When it comes to creating triggers for Bible study, there are any number of things you can do. Just as an athlete's routine is individual and specific to them, triggers are no different. Here are a few triggers you can use to begin setting a mental flow for Bible study.

Set a Time

The first, and probably most important, trigger is setting a consistent time. When you have a set time for Bible study, it's easier for your mind to focus. As you study at the same time day after day, your brain begins to anticipate the action, making it easier to get started and be productive. When you have a routine, you no longer need to worry about the mental gymnastics of working yourself up to study because your subconscious will have already gotten you where you need to be.

I would also suggest doing this at a peak time in the day. Figure out when your mind is the most sharp & try to fit Bible study into that time. It's easier to study when our mind is not fatigued. Because while it is a spiritual activity, it is also quite the rigorous mental sport.

Create Your Environment

Create a space where you can study the Bible. The location doesn't matter; it can be a desk or your dining room table. The goal is to find a repeatable location so your brain knows it's time to work when you arrive at this location. For me, this is my desk, where I keep my Bible, notebooks, and pens. When I sit down, I know I'm there to spend time with God.

Much like setting a consistent time, having a routine location removes the mental hurdles we subconsciously jump over to get into a state of mental flow.

Music

When I work I like to play music. I even have it playing as I write this section. Personally, music helps me ignore distractions and focus on my work.

The same can be true for your Bible study. Music can help you block out your surroundings and focus on the text of the Word of God. It eases the mind, drowns out the outside world, and leaves you with nothing but focused energy. The style of music doesn't matter so much, but I would recommend instrumentals, as vocals can prove distracting.

You should be getting the idea by now. The goal is removing mental obstacles that come from working sporadically.

Candles

Some people respond well to smell triggers. Just like the smell of apple pie can take your mind places, why not associate another smell with Bible study? When it's time to study, light a candle or burn some incense. Like any other trigger, the more you do this, your brain associates the smell with the activity. Why not have smells that bring your mind to focus on God?

Create Your Own Triggers

Do you currently have triggers you use to focus your attention on Bible study? If not, use some of the suggestions above, or create your own. While they might seem meaningless at first, over time your triggers will work their magic. Just be patient and give them time to stick.

When you put Bible study triggers in place, you will have removed some of the biggest hurdles to Bible study: consistency & motivation. Now the sky's the limit for your spiritual growth!

Step Five: Bible Journaling

5

Bible Journaling

As children, one hard lesson we each had to learn is that, no matter how hard we try, we do not grow overnight. We can eat all the right foods, exercise, and get plenty of sleep, but we're not going to grow several inches in a day or two. Yet, what we find is our growth comes gradually over the years and we usually don't realize it when we do. One day we happen to notice we're taller so we stand against the doorframe & measure ourselves. Lo & behold, we've grown! And that doorframe (along with smaller clothes) is the reminder of how much we've grown.

Spiritual growth is the same way. It can happen in spurts, but it's not going to happen overnight. Instead, it's a steady process that happens over months and years of time in the Word and living out its truths. But, how are you to look back over that time to see how you've grown? **The answer is our fifth and final step toward Bible study breakthrough: the spiritual discipline of Bible journaling!**

What is Bible Journaling?

In his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney defines journaling in the following way:

A journal (a word usually synonymous with diary) is a place (tangible or digital) in which a person records information important to him or her personally for preservation or consideration. As a Christian, your journal is a place to document the works and ways of God in your life. Your journal also can include an account of daily events, a record of personal relationships, a notebook of insights into Scripture, and/or a list of prayer requests. Spontaneous devotional thoughts or lengthy theological musings can be preserved there. A journal is one of the best places for charting your progress in the other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself accountable to your goals.

For me, journaling is an ever evolving art that I'm learning. Right now it consists of maintaining a Bullet Journal where I keep my thoughts, tasks, gratitude logs, prayer requests, sermon notes, and the like. At the moment, I also keep a separate journal for my daily time in the Word. I'm still working it all out, but I'm doing what works for me, however it morphs over time.

What to Journal

What goes into a journal is as individual as the person writing it. The choice is yours. Don't feel like you need to copy how I or someone else does it. Make it your own so it works for you.

That said, when it comes to Bible journaling, there are some items you should consider tracking. You can have any, all, or none of these in your journal, but they are all worth considering.

Memory Verses

Memorizing Scripture is a vital discipline for spiritual growth. One of the ways you can keep track of the verses you're learning is with a journal. Your journal can serve as a storehouse that lists all the verses you've learned and are currently memorizing. It can also serve as the place where you practice writing the verse from memory.

Prayers

The longer you're a Christian, the easier it is to forget where the Lord has brought you from. Consider the children of Israel in the wilderness and how quickly they forgot all the miracles God did in their sight. If you don't want to end up like them, you should make a habit of tracking your prayers. Keep a written record of what you've prayed for and when, the date the Lord an-

swered it, and the manner in which he answered. Prayers & their answers are not forgotten when they're written down.

Not only can you keep track of prayers, but you can write out prayers in your journal as well.

Application & Understanding

As you study the Bible each day, you should strive to understand what you're reading and make appropriate application. Journaling is a good way to do this.

There have been times when I've looked at my old notes, only to shake my head in shame at how I interpreted a passage. I wasn't completely wrong in how I understood it, but I often missed the main point and could have done better. Yet, being able to spot the error now shows how much I've grown.

Much like prayer, writing out your thoughts on a passage helps you see how you've spiritually matured over the years. It also serves as a reminder of how much more you can learn.

Sermon Notes

One way to stay focused during the sermon is to take notes. Taking notes and reviewing them mimics the behavior of the Bereans in Acts 17:11. These individuals listened to Paul's preaching & then went back to Scripture to verify if what he said was

true. You should do the same; don't just take your pastor's word for it.

Sermon notes also are beneficial if your church has small groups. Your notes help you recall what was taught so you can be more active in the discussion.

Bible Studies & Christian Books

If you're going through a Bible study or reading a Christian book, a journal is a great place to track this information for future reminders. I cannot tell you the number of times I have made note of something I read in a book only to come back to my notes at a future date. Often my notes were just what I needed to read in that moment.

Too often we read books & never pick them up again. Keeping notes in a journal is a great way to remind yourself of the highlights of a book without the need to reread it. It's your own personal CliffsNotes.

Why Journal?

We do not journal for the sake of journaling. That would be meaningless. No, we journal as a means of spiritual growth. As such, it plays an important role in several areas of our spiritual life. Donald Whitney lists several benefits to journaling in his book:

- Aide in self-understanding and evaluation
- Help in meditation
- Expressing thoughts and feelings to the Lord
- Remembering of the Lord's works
- Creating and preserving a spiritual heritage
- Clarifying and articulating insights
- Monitoring goals and priorities
- Maintaining other spiritual disciplines

Tips for Bible Journaling

When it comes to tools for journaling, there is no right or wrong way to do it. The mantra is to do what works for you. If you're the kind of person, like me, who wants to write in a physical notebook using pen or pencil, then go for it. Do you prefer digital? That's fine too. Even if you want to use fancy typography and colorful illustrations, then do that.

There are no rules to keeping a journal other than the rules you create for yourself. To quote Donald Whitney again, "the method you find most edifying and useful in your pursuit of godliness is the way you should keep a journal. This goes for content, format, length, and frequency."

The key to journaling is simply getting started. Don't let anyone tell you you're doing it wrong. Be free. Experiment. Try different things. Keep what works for you.

Likewise, don't give up. Stick with it. Before you can experience any value from journaling you have to spend time doing it. It can be a struggle at first and you will inevitably fall off the wagon, but hop back on and persist. When you keep at it, you will reap the rewards, I promise.

Start Journaling Today

If you're going to have Bible study breakthrough, you need to keep a record of your growth. Bible journaling is the method of recording that growth. It might seem trivial at first, but your future self will thank you. Such a record of your faith will serve you well.

Pick your medium of choice and incorporate the habit of journaling into your Bible study today. Try it for a few weeks and see if it doesn't improve your retention and Bible study time.

Finally, let me leave you with this quote from Donald Whitney's book:

The Discipline of journaling is not a burden from God to document your entire life; rather it is meant to bless you and be a means to joy and godliness.

* All quotes from: Donald S. Whitney. "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life." iBooks.

Conclusion: Next Steps?

Next Steps?

Congrats!

Congratulations on reaching the end of this book.

If you've taken your time and implemented each of the five steps in this book, you are well on your way to Bible study breakthrough!

Here's what you've learned to do over the course of your Bible Study Blitz:

1. You've learned to pick the perfect Bible translation for reading and study. You know that the most important step in Bible study breakthrough is having a Bible you can read & understand.
2. You're now using a simple Bible study method that helps you H.E.A.R. God speak to you through his Word.

3. You learned the importance of cross-references and how to let scripture interpret scripture before using additional Bible study tools.
4. You've setup some triggers in your life that put you in a state of flow when it's time to study God's Word. Now, whenever it's time for Bible study your mind is geared up and ready to learn.
5. Finally, you learned the importance of Bible journaling to spiritual growth. You now have a place to keep all your notes and a record of your journey to revisit in the future.

What's Next?

Now that you're on your way to Bible study breakthrough, the logical question is what's next? Well, I'm glad you asked. Here's a list of next steps:

1. Keep using what you've already learned. These are lessons for a lifetime of learning.
2. Check Bible Study Tips each week for a new tip to add to your toolbox. With a new tip every week, your studies will never grow stale.
3. Start building your Bible study library. Visit [BibleStudy.Tips/NextSteps](https://www.biblestudytips.com/nextsteps) for another free ebook that

teaches you how to build a simple Bible study you can be proud of for less than \$100.

4. While you're building your library, check Bible Study Tips' Recommended Resources page for a list of some of our favorite tools & books.
5. Finally, find a good Bible reading plan. It's important to read the Bible with a plan. For a solid overview of the Bible, I recommend using the Foundations 260 (F-260) plan. You can find out more on the Bible Study Tips website.



**See you on the other side
of the brick wall!**

If you enjoyed this ebook or have any questions, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at LaRosa@BibleStudy.Tips.

Grace & peace!