



HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

Learning the Inductive Bible Study Method

Purpose

My goal in this series of lessons is to teach you how to take a portion of scripture, read the text, make observations about what it says, ask questions about the text, determine what it means, and apply its truth yourself. By teaching you this method, and practicing it together, I hope to give you the tools to feed yourself with the word of God.

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How to Study the Bible, Part 1

Psalm 119:1-8

¹ ALEPH. Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!

² Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!

³ They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.

⁴ You have commanded us
To keep Your precepts diligently.

⁵ Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!

⁶ Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.

⁷ I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.

⁸ I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

Introduction

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” (1 Peter 2:1-3).

What does that scripture say should be the desire of all born again believers?

What benefit does feeding on the word of God have for us?

What do you want to accomplish in this series of lessons?

What portion of scripture are we going to be studying?

Bible Study Step #1 – Prayerfully Read the Text in Context.

What is the primary resource for studying the Bible?

A. Pray Before You Read and As You Read.

Why Prayerfully?

How does the psalmist express his dependence on the Lord in these verses? (Psalm 119:18, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169).

Stop now and humbly pray that God would grant understanding into His word.

B. Pre-read the Text for the Context.

What is pre-reading the text? Why is this important?

What is “Context”?

How do we determine the context?

Psalm 119:1-8

What do you notice about where and how Psalm 119 appears on the page?

Where is Psalm 119 found in the Bible? What do you observe about the book of Psalms as a whole?

How does this information about Psalms help us in reading Psalm 119?

What kind of literature is Psalm 119? (Narrative? Dialogue? Drama? Poetry? Law? Letter? Prophecy?)

What do you notice about this kind of Hebrew literature in the Psalms?

How is Psalm 119 divided into sections? (See Psalm 119:1, 9, 17, 25, ...)

What is the little symbol and Hebrew word above each stanza mean?

Does Psalm 119 indicate anything about the author?

Can we tell when or where Psalm 119 was written?

Does Psalm 119 indicate anything about who it was written for?

Why is it important to ask questions about the passage before and while you read it?

Five Ws and H

Who: Who is the author of the text? Who was this text originally written to?

What: What is the historical background? What type of writing is this—narrative, prophecy, letter, sermon, song, prayer, quotation, etc.? What is the immediate context of the passage? What exactly is being said? What is the theme or purpose of the writing? What does the writing mean?

When: When was this written or when will this promise be fulfilled? Are there any time references in the text such as *before, after, until, then, when, at that time, immediately*, etc.?

Where: Where in the Bible and book does the text lie? Where was this text written? Where is the narrative taking place?

Why: Why was this written? Are there any purpose clauses (these typically begin with *so, because, to, for, so that*, etc.) which help us discern the author's purpose in writing a specific text?

How: How does this passage connect with other teachings in Scripture? How should this passage be applied? How should I pray from this passage?

C. Read the Text.

Psalm 119:1-8

- ¹ ALEPH. Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
- ² Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
- ³ They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.
- ⁴ You have commanded us
To keep Your precepts diligently.
- ⁵ Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
- ⁶ Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
- ⁷ I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
- ⁸ I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

How should we read the text?

Why is it important to read the text more than once?

Bible Study Step #2 – Observe the Text in Detail.**A. Look for what is obvious.**

What is obvious to you from your reading of Psalm 119:1-8?

B. Look for Key Words or Phrases.

Key words or phrases will often answer one or more of the 5 Ws or H questions.

Who is speaking, acting, or central to the passage?

What is the passage about?

When does it take place?

Where is it happening?

How does it communicate its truth?

Questions to draw out key words and phrases:

Is there a purpose statement given?

Is there something unexpected?

Is there something emphasized?

Is there a command?

Is there a warning?

Is there a promise?

What words or phrases are repeated?

Are roles or actions of God mentioned?

Does the passage quote other scriptures?

Read the text again, this time look for key words or phrases that point to the theme or subject of the section. What is this text about?

Where do we find God in Psalm 119:1-8?

What words are repeated in Psalm 119?

What words are used repeatedly as synonyms in the text?

Law (v.1) - *Torah* –

Testimonies (v.2) - *`edah* –

Ways (v.3) – *Derek* –

Precepts (v.4) – *Piquwd* –

Statutes (v.5, 8) – *Choq* –

Commandments (v.6) – *Mitsvah* –

Judgments (v.7) – *Mishpat* –

Which words or phrases in Psalm 119:1-8 do you consider key?

Take time to ask the 5 Ws and H about these key words.

Who is saying it?

Who does it relate to?

What does the word mean?

Why is it used here?

Where else is this word used?

When does it apply?

How does it impact the flow of thought?

C. Seek the Subject or Theme of the Passage.

Some questions that might help at this point are:

What does the passage say about God?

What does it say about the human condition?

What does it say about God's people?

Is there a command, example, warning, or promise in this passage?

Is the passage descriptive or prescriptive?
(prescriptive—tells you what to do, a command;
descriptive—tells what someone else did, narrative/story)

Is there a change from before and after the event?

Is there a logical order or progression in the passage?

Does the passage compare or contrast things, people, or ideas?

Does the passage illustrate or explain something?

Is there a cause and effect?

Is there dialogue? If so, who is speaking? To whom?

Are there questions asked? Answers given?

What is the result or conclusion of the passage?

What is the subject of Psalm 119:1-8? (what is it about?)

If you had to put the theme into one sentence what would you say?
(What does it say about the subject?)

D. Examine the Grammar.Questions to Examine the Grammar*Who is the subject of the sentence?**What is the main verb?**Is there a direct object? Indirect object?**What do prepositions indicate?**Is the clause independent or dependent?**What do the adjectives and adverbs modify?**How could I diagram this sentence?**Are there pronouns and who do they refer to?**Are there figures of speech?**Are there conjunctions? What do they do?**Are the articles definite (the) or indefinite (a)?**What does this show?*

Read the text again. This time, notice the verbs (the action words). How are they related to the theme of the text (the law of the Lord)?

Read the text again. This time, look for hinge words (hinge words connect words and phrases).

Relationship	Conjunction or Connecting Word
CAUSE / REASON	Because, For this reason, Since, That, As a result, Consequently
COMPARISON	As, Also, Just as, Like, Likewise, More, More than, So as, So also, Too

CONDITIONAL	If, Since, when, while
CONTINUATION	And, Either, Neither, Nor, Or
CONTRAST	Although, But, Except, Even though, However, Much more, Nevertheless, Only, Otherwise, Whereas, Yet, Rather
EMPHASIS	Indeed, Only, Oh, Behold
EXPLANATION	For, Now, Because
LOCATION / POSITION	At, In, On, Over, Where, Wherever
PURPOSE / RESULT	For this purpose, In order that, So that, That, Then, Therefore, Thus
TIME OR SEQUENCE	After, As, Before, Now, Then, Until, When, While, First, Second, Next, Finally
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	And, Additionally, Also, Furthermore, Moreover, Besides, In addition, As well.

Hinge words in Psalm 119:1-8 are:

What do each of these hinge words do?

Read the text again. This time, notice the pronouns (They, those, His, Him, You, Your, us, I, my, me). What do these pronouns show you about the text?

Read Psalm 119:1-8 again. Look for figures of speech. What purpose do they serve?

How could we investigate these figures of speech more thoroughly to clarify what they mean?

E. Scrutinize What is Unclear.

Gaps We Need to Bridge
Language
Culture
Geography
History

Read Psalm 119:1-8 again. What is unclear?

What do I have questions about?

Bible Study Step #3 – Investigate the Text for Clarity

This step is a bridge between observation and interpretation. Having read and observed the text to the best of our ability, we may still have unanswered questions about the text. How do we investigate to bring clarity to what the text says?

At the end of our last lesson we made a list of question we had about the text. Some of these questions can relate to:

- Meanings of words
- Difficult phrases or sayings
- Historical or cultural background
- Meaning of figures of speech
- How the passage relates to other scriptures

How do we research the answers to our unanswered questions?

A. Compare Bible Translations

What is a Bible translation?

Why do English translations sometimes read differently?

Here is a comparison of the literalness of some popular translations¹:

FORMAL EQUIVALENCE More Literal (Less interpretive, more word for word)				FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE More Dynamic (More interpretive, balance between literal and paraphrase)			PARAPHRASED (Highly interpretive, more concept by concept)			
Young's Literal	NASB ASV LSB	Amp ESV RSV	KJV NKJV CSB	NRSV NET	NIV NJB	NCV NLT ICB	Phillips	GNT CEV	TLB	Msg

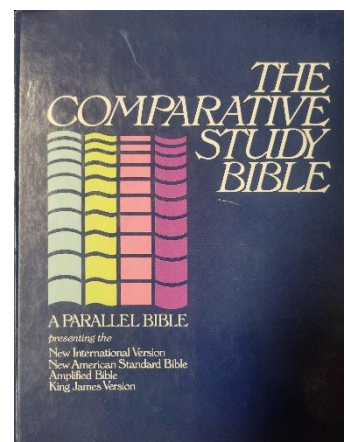
NASB = New American Standard ASV = Authorized Standard Version 1901 LSB = Legacy Standard Bible Amp = Amplified Version ESV = English Standard Version RSV = Revised Standard Version KJV = King James Version NKJV = New King James Version CSB = Christian Standard Bible	NRSV = New Revised Std Version NET = New English Translation NJB = New Jerusalem Bible NIV = New International Version NLT = New Living Translation NCV = New Century Version ICB = International Children's Bible	Phillips = J B Phillips Paraphrase GNT = Good News Translation CEV = Contemporary English Version TLB = The Living Bible Msg = The Message
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Where does the Bible you use fall in this spectrum?

What is the advantage of reading from other translations or paraphrases?

What are the hazards of using some translations or paraphrases?

Tool: Parallel Bible



Several online Bible websites have parallel bible tools. One example is Parallel Plus on <https://thebible.org>.

Compare and Contrast different translations of Psalm 119:1-3:

Screen shot of Parallel Plus on thebible.org:

Parallel Plus® by TheBible.org Psalm 119 GoTo/SearchFor <input type="text"/> Go ◀ ▶ ◀ ▶ Richard▼ Topics Donate Help ⚙					
NKJV▼ KJV	ESV▼	NASB▼ LSB	NLT▼	CSB▼	NIV▼
Meditations on the Excellencies of the Word of God κ ALEPH 1v Blessed are the undefiled in the way, *Who walk in the law of the LORD!	Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet Aleph 1v 1 Blessed are those whose k way is blameless, who l walk in the law of the LORD!	Meditations and Prayers Relating to the Law of God. Aleph 1v Blessed are those whose way is 1 a blameless, Who b walk in the Law of the LORD.	Aleph 1v Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD.	Psalm 119 Delight in God's Word κ Aleph 1v How * happy are those whose way is blameless, * who walk according to the LORD's instruction! *	κ Aleph 1v 1 Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.
2v Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the * whole heart!	2v Blessed are those who m keep his n testimonies, who o seek him with their whole heart,	2v Blessed are those who a comply with His 1 testimonies, And seek b Him with c all their heart.	2v Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.	2v Happy are those who keep his decrees * and seek him with all their heart. *	2v 1 Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—
3v * They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.	3v who also p do no wrong, but walk in his ways!	3v They also a do no injustice; They walk in His ways.	3v They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only	3v They do nothing wrong; * they walk in his ways.	3v 1 they do no wrong but follow his ways.

What similarities and differences do you notice in Psalm 119:1?

What similarities and differences do you notice in Psalm 119:2 & 3?

Tool: *Amplified Bible*.

¹ ALEPH. How blessed and favored by God are those whose way is blameless [those with personal integrity, the upright, the guileless], Who walk in the law [and who are guided by the precepts and revealed will] of the LORD.

² Blessed and favored by God are those who keep His testimonies, And who [consistently] seek Him and long for Him with all their heart.

³ They do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways.
(Psalm 119:1-3 AMP).

What do you notice about the character and design of this translation?

Do you find it helpful? Why?

This leads us to the next area of investigation:

B. Word Studies

Why is it important to study the meaning of words in the Bible?

How does the context change the meaning of a word?

Example: Consider the sentence, *Jim is green*. What does green mean? It could mean a number of things. Context alone will tell. *What does green mean in these cases?*

- 1) Jim is green. He spilled the paint all over himself.
- 2) Jim is green. He's been bitten by the green-eyed monster of jealousy.
- 3) Jim is a green. He has no clue what he is doing because he's never worked this kind of job before.
- 4) Jim is green. He's had an upset stomach all week.
- 5) Jim is green. He recycles everything and promotes renewable energy.

How do we determine the meaning when a has such diverse meanings?

Consider several factorsⁱⁱ. Ask questions like:

- (1) Does the author give his own definition of the word in the context? (cf. Heb. 5:14; 2 Tim. 3:17).
- (2) Is the word defined by a qualifying phrase or editorial comment? (cf. John 2:19, 21; 7:37-39; Eph. 1:7).
- (3) Does the grammatical context shed light on the meaning? (cf. *moraino*, μωραίνω, [g3471](#) in Matthew 5:13 vs. Romans 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:20).
- (4) Does the subject matter require a certain meaning? (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1 "house" [*oikía*, οἰκία [g3614](#); Romans 8:5-8 "flesh").
- (5) Is there structural parallelism that helps? (cf. Psalm 119:2).
- (6) How is it is used elsewhere (same chapter, book, author, etc.)?
- (7) Are there cross references that give insight? (cf. "Blessed" in Psalm 119:1,2 [cross references](#) to Psalm 1:1-3).

Let's do a word study from Psalm 119.

What words in Psalm 119:1-8 did we have questions about from our observations? (see Bible Study Step #2.E, pick one)

Examples:

What does it mean by “blessed”? (Ps. 119:1)

What is “undefiled”? (Ps. 119:2)

Is the difference between the synonyms for “law” important? (Psalm 119)

What is iniquity? (Ps. 119:3)

What is meant by the term “the undefiled” (Psalm 119:1)?

From the context:

From Parallel translations:

From the concordance:

BLUE LETTER BIBLE

Lexicon :: Strong's H8549 - tāmim

תָּמִים

Transliteration	Pronunciation	Word / Phrase / Strong's Search
tāmim	taw-meem'	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> « Previous Strong's H8548 Next Strong's H8549 » </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <input style="width: 80px;" type="text" value="H8549"/> <input style="width: 40px;" type="button" value="NKJV"/> <input style="width: 40px;" type="button" value="Search"/> </div>
Part of Speech	Root Word (Etymology)	Concordance Results Shown Using the NKJV
adjective	From תָּמִם (H8552)	<p>Strong's Number H8549 matches the Hebrew תָּמִים (tāmim), which occurs 91 times in 85 verses in the WLC Hebrew.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1 / 2 (Gen 6:9–2Sa 22:24)</p>
Dictionary Aids		
TWOT Reference: 2522d		
KJV Translation Count — Total: 91x		
<p>The KJV translates Strong's H8549 in the following manner: without blemish (44x), perfect (18x), upright (8x), without spot (6x), uprightly (4x), whole (4x), sincerely (2x), complete (1x), full (1x), miscellaneous (3x).</p>		<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> TOOLS Gen 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> TOOLS Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I <i>am</i> Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. </div>

Does the concordance give definitions or meanings of the word?

KJV Translation Count — Total: 91x

The KJV translates Strong's H8549 in the following manner: *without blemish* (44x), *perfect* (18x), *upright* (8x), *without spot* (6x), *uprightly* (4x), *whole* (4x), *sincerely* (2x), *complete* (1x), *full* (1x), *miscellaneous* (3x).

Outline of Biblical Usage [?]

- I. complete, whole, entire, sound
 1. complete, whole, entire
 2. whole, sound, healthful
 3. complete, entire (of time)
 4. sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity
 5. what is complete or entirely in accord with truth and fact (neuter adj/subst)

Where else is this word used in Psalms?

Psalms 119:80

Psalms 15:2

Psalms 19:7

PPS & TOOLS MINISTRIES ABOUT DONATE

NKJV
CLICK TO CHANGE RETURN TO TOP SHARE FOLLOW PRINT

OPTIONS STRONG'S RED LETTER

TOOLS **Psa 15:2** He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;

TOOLS **Psa 18:23** I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.

TOOLS **Psa 18:25** With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;
With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

TOOLS **Psa 18:30** As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

TOOLS **Psa 119:1** ALEPH
Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!

TOOLS **Psa 119:80** Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes,
That I may not be ashamed.

Where is it used elsewhere in the Old Testament?

Genesis 6:9
 Genesis 17:1
 Exodus 12:5
 Deuteronomy 18:13



- Gen 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.
- Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.
- Exo 12:5 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.
- Deu 18:13 "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.
- Deu 32:4 *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*

Advanced tools:

Lexicon – (cf. [BDB](#)).ⁱⁱⁱ

Bible Dictionary or
 Theological Dictionary
 – (cf. [Vines](#), [TWOT](#) or
[TDOT](#)).^{iv}

Strong's Definitions [?]

(Strong's Definitions Legend)

תָּמִים *tâmîym*, taw-meem'; from [H8552](#); entire (literally, figuratively or morally); also (as noun) integrity, truth:—without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sincerely (-ity), sound, without spot, undefiled, upright(-ly), whole.

Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon [?]

(Jump to Scripture Index)

STRONGS H8549:

Abbreviations

COLLAPSE

תָּמִים ⁹¹ **adjective complete, sound**; — **תָּ** Genesis 6:9 +; feminine **תְּמִימָה** Leviticus 3:9 +; construct **תְּמִים** Job 36:4; Job 37:16; plural **תְּמִימִים** Ezekiel 43:25 +; **תְּמִימַת** Leviticus 23:15; construct **תְּמִימִי** Psalm 119:1; Proverbs 11:20; —

- †1. *complete, whole, entire*, Job 36:4 **תְּמִים דְּעוֹת**, Job 37:16.
2. *whole, sound, healthy*, of men Proverbs 1:12 (|| **תָּיִם**); vine Ezekiel 15:5; usually of sacrificial P, P; Exodus 12:5 + 40 times, so Ezekiel 43:22 + 10 times
- †3. *complete, entire*, of time: day Joshua 10:13; year Leviticus 25:30;

C. Study Phrases

Online Bibles are helpful in studying phrases.

Example: Psalm 119:7 “uprightness of heart”

Are there any other verses in the Bible with the phrase “uprightness of heart”?

WORD SEARCH:

NKJV
▶

Adv. Options

"uprightness" AND "of" AND "heart"

occurs 20 times in 5 verses in the NKJV, including 2 exact phrases shown first.

Below are the exact phrase matches.

TOOLS

📖 **1Ki 3:6**

And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in **uprightness of heart** with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.

TOOLS

📖 **Psa 119:7**

I will praise You with **uprightness of heart**,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.

We also see that it gives three verses that have the same words, just not the exact phrase:

Here are the remaining matches.

TOOLS

📖 **Deu 9:5**

*“It is not because **of** your righteousness or the **uprightness of** your **heart** that you go in to possess their land, but because **of** the wickedness **of** these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

TOOLS

📖 **1Ki 9:4**

“Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity **of heart** and in **uprightness**, to do according to all that I have commanded you, *and* if you keep My statutes and My judgments,

TOOLS

📖 **1Ch 29:17**

I know also, my God, that You test the **heart** and have pleasure in **uprightness**. As for me, in the **uprightness of** my **heart** I have willingly offered all these *things*; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You.

What do we learn about “uprightness of heart from these verses?

Try searching for the phrase “upright in heart”. What does it show?

D. Cross References

Many study Bibles have cross references to the verse or to phrases within verses. These are other places in the scripture that might say something similar or something that relates to the subject of the verse or passage.

ⁱ For an explanation and comparison of different translations, see Jacob Edson, *Complete Guide to Bible Versions: Comparison, History, and Philosophy of Top Bible Translations [Updated 2025]*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/bible-101/bible-versions-guide/>.

ⁱⁱ Sam Storms, *How to do a Word Study*, <https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/how-to-do-a-word-study>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The most used Hebrew Lexicon is the Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon. Blue Letter Bible (BLB) has this tool online: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/resources/lexical/bdb.cfm>. For the New Testament, BLB also has Thayer's Greek Lexicon online: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/resources/lexical/thayers.cfm>.

^{iv} More comprehensive treatments of Hebrew words are found in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) and *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT, 17 volumes). These tools can be found at TWOT: https://archive.org/details/theologicalwordb0000unse_v6z7; TDOT: <https://archive.org/details/theological-dictionary-of-the-old-testament/Theological%20Dictionary%20of%20the%20Old%20Testament%20-%20001/>. For the New Testament, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words* offers a deeper study of biblical words used in the English language. English entries are mapped to each applicable Greek root according to the Strong's reference numbers, and include biblical usage, main occurrences in the Bible, English transliteration, and definitions. Find it incorporated in BLB: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/resources/lexical/vines.cfm>.