



Study Scripture:  
A *Living the*  
*Way* Guide

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*Bible study is the process of discovering life-changing realities about God's Kingdom through observation, interpretation, and application of Scripture.*

**This guide will teach participants to ...**

- Study books of the Bible in their entirety
- Learn an inductive method to understand the meaning of a passage
  - Look at characters from the Bible to learn from their lives

*“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)*

**Resources you will need ...**

LTW Study Scripture Guide  
The Bible, any translation  
[startlivingtheway.com](http://startlivingtheway.com)

## Session One | Book Overview



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. What is something recent that is bringing you joy?  
What is something recent that is causing you stress?

1. What experience do you have, if any, reading and studying the Bible?
2. Have you ever studied a book of the Bible in its entirety? Share your experience.
3. Share any excitements or worries you have as you launch this guide.

## Session One | Study a Book

### Why Study the Bible?

Welcome to the first session of this guide! You are in for some serious truth, beauty, and fun when you dive into the Scriptures God has given to us. Let's get right to it. What is Bible study? It's a way of reading God's Word that helps us understand the meaning in its original context and then integrate it into our lives. We will talk about four dynamic methods in this guide. Each one is life-giving in its own way. Study will require you devote some time and effort, but it'll be well worth it.

That's what Bible study is. Now, why is it so good for us to do? Let's start with what the Bible says:

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)*

*"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)*

1. What do we learn from the Bible itself about why its words are so important?

2. Pick one of the purposes of Scripture given in 2 Timothy 3:16 (i.e., teaching, rebuking, correcting, or training). When has this aspect of Scripture been especially relevant in your life?

In short, we study the Bible because it transforms us from a place of meaninglessness into a realm of light and life. It's that crucial. We can live without it, sure, but when we do, we miss out on the very best things God has for us. Sometimes we'll be encouraged. Other times we'll find discipline. But it's all good and it's all life-giving. The words of the Bible are the most powerful ever given to humanity. So, it's crucial that we treat them with the utmost respect and that we diligently learn their meaning.

Let's turn to one of four ways we will cover in this guide that help us to do just that. In this session, we will talk about what it means to study a book of the Bible as an entire unit.

### Study a Book

One great way to study the Bible is to look at a book in its entirety. When we do so, we hope to gain insight into the concerns, problems, and themes that the author develops. It's wonderful to look at individual verses. We gain much knowledge and insight when we do. But we sometimes miss the overall point without paying attention to the context of the whole book. That's why book study is so important. It helps us to absorb the big ideas God desires for us to encounter.

Over the next couple pages, you'll find a guide for studying the book of Philippians. It begins with some basic information about the Apostle Paul, the author of the book. After that, though, you'll dig in and discover the themes yourself!



## Session One | Study a Book

### Background of Philippians

The author of Philippians identifies himself at the very beginning. It's Paul, the man God chose to spread the gospel to the non-Jewish world (including us!). He writes this letter to Christians living in a Roman colony called Philippi. The year is 62 A.D. The people are living in a pagan culture, replete with Roman architecture and gods. Nevertheless, they are faithful supporters of Paul's ministry, both in prayer and financial support. Paul writes to update and thank them.

The book, you'll notice, is permeated by a sense of joy. The crazy part is that Paul is writing from prison, of all places. **Joy even in prison.** He's likely on house arrest somewhere in Rome itself. Even while there, Paul is concerned for the Philippians. He desires to see them grow in the way of Jesus and explains to them what this kind of spiritual formation looks like.

That's a brief sketch. While you may want to consult more resources later (we'll suggest some), it's enough for now. The purpose of study is to learn to unearth treasure from the Bible yourself. It's powerful stuff and it's going to be a lot fun!

### Prayer for Illumination

Here's a simple prayer as you begin your journey into the text—and all that God has for you in it. Don't skip over this step too quickly. It's crucial that we invite God into our study and ask Him to illuminate His words to us.

*Lord, I want to express my gratitude for your Word. Thank you for revealing truth and hope to us. Thank you that these words point the way to Jesus. I ask you to make their meaning clear to me. I ask you to convict me of what it is that I need to change. I ask you to give me the strength to integrate your words into my life in order that I might find real life. Amen.*

### First Reading

It's time to dig in. All you need is a Bible, paper, and a pen. You'll read through Philippians in its entirety three times, identifying different aspects of the text along the way. In your first reading, you'll want to get a big picture understanding of the book. Use the questions below as a guide.

1. What is the overall mood of Philippians? Is it meant to be uplifting? Encouraging? Frightening? Give an example of a verse or two that express this mood.

2. What are the main themes that Paul wants to communicate to his readers in Philippians?

3. Can you identify a main verse that best expresses the heart of Paul's message in the book?



## Session One | Study a Book

### Second Reading

Well done! You're officially digging into a book of the Bible at a deeper level. Don't forget that God's Word is active and alive. Make sure and give yourself time to soak in the beautiful realities you're uncovering. In your second reading, you want to further explore the themes you've identified.

1. Review the themes you identified in your first reading. As you read a second time, how do you see Paul developing those themes?

2. What can you learn about Paul's audience? What were their struggles or concerns? How do they seem to be like ours today?

### Third Reading

The final reading is all about making connections between the ancient text and our lives today. Given what you've learned from two careful readings of the text, answer the following.

1. How do the themes of the book apply to our lives today? What did you uncover that you especially needed to hear from God?

2. Is there a verse or passage that you will especially carry with you after this exercise? Consider creating a visual of this verse or passage in your home, car, or workspace.

### Exercises for Session Two

1. Complete the discussion questions for session two. Come ready to discuss!

2. We never want the study of Scripture to become tedious or commonplace. We are, after all, learning the most important truths from the Creator of all there is. Make some time to pray before your next session thanking God for His Word and asking Him to continue to grow your heart, mind, and soul through it.



## Session Two | Study a Character



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. Is there anything causing you anxiety, worry, or fear in the past weeks? Pray for one another about these things.

1. What did God reveal to you this week as you continued to study His Word?
2. Did the themes you discovered in Philippians apply to your life in specific ways this week?
3. Who is your favorite character in the Bible? Why?

## Session Two | Study a Character

### Study a Character

The Bible features some of the most interesting characters of all time. Their behavior ranges from faithful to obedient to confounding to just plain odd—and everywhere in between. That’s because they were like us. They shared the same promise of triumph and potential for ruin that we do. They found power only through knowing God and they perished when they strayed from Him. Just like us. God gives us the biblical characters not because they are superhuman, but because they are so relatable. **The Bible’s characters show us a portrait of ourselves.**

That’s why looking at a character is another great way to study the Bible. In this session, we will learn the skills of character study by examining the life of a man named Elijah. Get ready. If you haven’t heard of Elijah, get ready for a wild ride. It’s amazing what God did through this man. But it’s key to bear in mind that God was the one at work. Elijah was a human, just like us. We will learn some amazing truths from his life about God’s heart for us.

### Introducing Elijah

We meet Elijah in the book of 1 Kings. He’s introduced as a prophet, i.e., a spokesperson for God. Prophets delivered God’s messages to the people, which often included moral commands and calls to repentance. Elijah arrived at a time of corrupt leadership and disobedience to God in Israel. This moral failing centered on the King, Ahab, and his wife, Jezebel. God used Elijah to speak life-giving truth to those in power. One thing you’ll notice quickly is that Elijah was a man of passion. He disdained idolatry and corruption and loved God and His people. God used Elijah’s human abilities (just like ours!) to accomplish divine feats. Let’s dig in.

### Opposing Baal Worship

We’ll start in **1 Kings 17:1-6**. In this passage, Elijah directly opposes the worship of Baal, the false god of the Canaanites. Ahab and Jezebel introduced this idolatry to the people. The real God will have none of it. So, he sends his servant Elijah to draw the people back to Himself. Read the passage contemplatively several times. Take your time with each question. And have fun!

1. Whom does Elijah say that he serves? What impact do you think his words had on King Ahab?
2. What does God lead Elijah to do after confronting Ahab? How does God provide for him?
3. In what ways is God calling you to the same radical trust in your life that Elijah displays here?
4. Why do you think God leads Elijah to a place of solitude? Do you need more solitude (i.e., aloneness with God) to deal with life’s challenges?





## Session Two | Study a Character

### Encountering the Miraculous

Elijah's life continues to reveal the themes of trust and provision. Let's move on to **1 Kings 17:7-24** and see what else God has for us to learn. In this passage, Elijah is sent to an area called Zarephath. This is significant because it is a territory ruled by Jezebel's father. It is the very place from which worship of Baal spread to Israel. God sends Elijah right into the heart of it all. Notice, too, that Elijah presumably has almost no possessions and no way to sustain himself.

1. Why do you think God chooses the widow and her son to provide for Elijah's needs?
2. What do you learn from Elijah and the widow about submission to God? Are there areas of your life that you need to submit to God?
3. God hears to Elijah and the widow's lament and acts on their behalf. Have you ever shared a lament with God? If so, how did He respond?

### Doing the Impossible

Again, Elijah's life was a wild ride. It gets even crazier—and better. In **1 Kings 18:16-46**, Elijah encounters the prophets of Baal face-to-face. It turns into a showdown, not between Elijah and Baal's prophets, but between God and Baal. Let's see how it turns out, and what we can learn.

1. Pause for a reflective moment. How would you have felt in Elijah's position?
2. Think back to the past couple scenes (1 Kings 17:1-24). How did God prepare Elijah mentally and spiritually for this dramatic encounter?
3. How does God's victory at Mount Carmel inspire you to awe and obedience?



## Session Two | Study a Character

### Fleeing the Scene

Despite God's breathtaking display of power, the next thing we see is Elijah running away! Why? Jezebel has learned of Baal's defeat and threatened Elijah's life. Turn to **1 Kings 19:1-13** and we will see Elijah's raw humanity and God's gracious pursuit.

1. Why do you think Elijah runs, especially after all he has seen God accomplish?
2. Do you see yourself in Elijah in this scene in any ways?
3. Why is it significant that God's communicated to Elijah in a still small voice?
4. Do you regularly make time to hear from God? What do you need to do to make more space in your life to hear God speak?

There's more to Elijah's life, which you can check out in 2 Kings 2:1-12. It's worth taking a look at those verses. In fact, he's taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Not a bad way to end. Hopefully, this session has given a taste of the fruit of studying one of the characters in this unparalleled book we call the Bible. Elijah's life is just a start. Some other character you might study include Noah, Moses, Elisha, David, Solomon, Mary, Peter, Paul, and many more.

### Exercises for Session Three

1. Complete the discussion questions for session three. Come ready to discuss!
2. Make time to thank God for what you learned from the life of Elijah. Remember, Elijah was a human, just like you. He had the same desire, fears, and hopes. God's given us an account of his life so we can learn and thrive.



## Session Three | Study a Topic



- Begin by catching up on one another's lives. What is one thing that made you laugh this past week? What is something you are hopeful about in the coming weeks?
1. Did you study any other Bible characters this past week? Share what you learned.
  2. Do you have a favorite topic to study in the Bible?
  3. What is one topic in the Bible you'd like to explore?

## Session Three | Study a Topic

The Bible speaks to numerous topics that relate to our daily lives, including love, hope, peace, disappointment, anxiety, fear, and many more. It is relevant for all of life. A great way to study the Bible, then, is by looking at what it says about a topic. Whenever someone asks, “What does the Bible say about giving?” or “What does the Bible say about politics?” or “What does the Bible say about fear?” they are asking topical questions. In this session, we will learn how to study a topic in the Bible by asking what the it says about **worry**.

### Topical Study Tools

You’ll need two study tools besides a Bible. Fortunately, these are easily accessible online. **First**, you’ll need what’s called a *concordance*. A concordance lists all the occurrences of a word in the Bible. You can find one at [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org). You’ll see it prominently in the upper right hand of the landing page, marked “Search the Bible.” We recommend you change the translation from the KJV to the NIV before you search.

**Second**, you’ll need to cross-reference the verses you study. A cross-reference is simply a verse that is related to the one you are reading. Using a cross-reference tool helps ensure you’ve considered everything the Bible has to say about your topic. You can find one online at [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com). Type your verse into the field at the top of the landing page and it will give you a list of cross references in the lower left hand of your results. That’s it. We’re ready to launch!

### Brainstorm Related Topics

We want to learn what the Bible has to say about worry. But we won’t get a full understanding if we don’t also consider closely related topics. These might include concepts that are synonymous, like **anxiety**, as well as antonyms, like **peace**. Take your time with this step. Use the space below to brainstorm topics that are related to worry.

1. What are some topics that are related to worry because they are so similar?

2. What are some topics that are related to worry because they are its opposite?

3. Pick a few of these related topics that you think are most relevant for a biblical understanding of worry. Write them below. You’ll use these topics in the following steps.



## Session Three | Study a Topic

### Gather Bible Verses

Now it's time to use those study tools. Enter the word 'worry' into the concordance. You'll get a list of Bible verses that use that exact word. Write use reference (though not necessarily the entire text) down below. Do the same for the related topics you identified in the last step. In addition, use the cross-reference tool to list other verses that seem relevant in your estimation.

1. List all the verses that contain the word 'worry.'
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List all the verses that contain the topics you identified as relevant to worry.

### Note Your Observations

This step is key—and a lot of fun. Work your way through the verses listed above. Look up each and read the verse in its context. Make notes on your observations, questions, and anything else that strikes you. You'll want to have this written down for reference in the next step. Also, know that not all verses will be relevant to your topic, sometimes even if they contain the word 'worry.' That's OK. Just note that verse as not relevant to your topic and move on.

1. Use the space below for notes on the topic of worry.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Use the space below for notes on topics related to worry.



## Session Three | Study a Topic

### Bring It All Together

Now it's time to summarize your discoveries. You'll want to look through your observations and note themes and similarities that emerge. Aim to identify 3–5 lessons you learned about worry from studying the verses in the last step. List those lessons below and then draft a paragraph on worry in the Bible that brings those lessons together.

1. List 3–5 lessons learned about worry from your study of the Bible verses.
2. Write a paragraph that incorporates the lessons you learned.

### Apply It

Congratulations! You just discovered the heart of what the Bible has to say about the worry that so often plagues our lives. You'll want to hang on to those lessons and your summary paragraph. The last step is to list a few ways these truths apply to your life.

1. How do the lessons you learned challenge the way you've lived in the past?
2. How will they change the way you live and anticipate the future?
3. How will these changes impact the people around you for the better?

### Exercises for Session Four

1. Complete the discussion questions for session four. Come ready to discuss!
2. Don't forget that it's best to go on this sacred journey alongside others. Make some time to get together and deepen your relationships. Grab coffee just to chat. Go to a baseball game. Gather your families for a movie night. Do something that simply celebrates the joys of being human and knowing others. This is good for its own sake but will also help you grow as you complete the final session.



## Session Four | Study a Passage



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. Share a high and a low from this past week.

1. Did the topical study of worry help you in any particular moments in your life this week?
2. Do you have a favorite passage of the Bible? Share with one another.

## Session Four | Study a Passage

Each book of the Bible is made up of passages. These are units of thought that convey a message to us about God and His creation, including us. Passages are often (though not always) marked in your Bible by paragraph headings. In this session, we will cover a basic method for studying passages. It's an invaluable skill. In fact, it's difficult to encounter the Bible in its full richness and depth without it. Study of a passage is especially powerful when combined with study of a book.

When you approach a passage that's in a book you've studied, you have important background about the setting, author, and themes already in your mind. With that in mind, let's study a passage in the book of Philippians, one that's at the heart of the book's meaning.

### Philippians 2:1-11

*<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The first step in studying a passage is to learn some background about the book in which it is found. Take a few moments to look back over your notes from the book study of Philippians. Remind yourself especially of the key themes you identified.

### What might Philippians 2:5-11 have to do with the big themes of the book?

Next, we will cover four steps you can use with any passage whatsoever to help discern its meaning. These steps will help you note details, identify the main points, and apply God's Word to your life.

#### Observation

The first step is observation. Observe what's in the text in front of you. Take your time with this. In many ways, the rest of your study of the passage depends on it. You want to make sure you've carefully made note of key words, themes, sentence structure, and how the background of the passage relates. Use the questions to guide your observations about Philippians 2:5-11.

1. What are the key words or phrases that help to understand the passage as a whole? What is interesting or noteworthy about them?

2. What specifically is being communicated about God? Jesus? Us?





## Session Four | Study a Passage

3. Does the passage develop the themes of the book in any ways?
4. Note any other observations you have about the passage.

### Interpretation

You'll put those observations to use right away. Look back over them. Pray that God would illuminate what He has for you in the text. Now, begin to ask questions. Any many questions as come to mind. Put on your curiosity cap and explore this beautiful text. Do your best to see this exercise for what it is—not a task to be done, but a journey into a landscape of wonders. Use the following prompts as a guide.

1. What questions do you have about the key words and phrases you identified?
2. What questions do you have about the themes presented in the passage?
3. What questions do you have about how the passage relates to the theme of the book?

Now, begin to search for answers to your questions. Don't forget. The goal is not to get lost in lots of detail, but to understand what it is God wants to communicate to us. You can better understand answers to your interpretive questions in several ways.

**First**, consider the context of the passage. What comes before it? What comes after? How does the theme of the entire book (or even the entire Bible) teach about the meaning of the passage? The context is the most important interpretive tool.

**Second**, us the tools from session three, i.e., the concordance and cross-referencing. They will help you understand key words and phrases. You can also consult what's called a theological dictionary at <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/>.



## Session Four | Study a Passage

**Third**, you can consult a study tool called a commentary. A commentary provides an author's insights on a book of the Bible based on his or her extensive research. They can provide invaluable information, but it's best to read one only after doing your best to understand the passage. You'll find commentaries online at <https://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/>.

### Paraphrase

Well done! You've discovered life-changing realities in this transformative book we call the Bible. Now, try putting the passage into your own words in about 3–4 sentences. Do your best to incorporate your findings about the meaning of the text from the interpretation step. This is where you bring together and summarize the previous two steps. Use the space below to craft your paraphrase.

### Application

Here's where it all comes home. The Bible meant something in its original setting, and you've done the hard work of understanding that meaning. God also means something through the text for the here-and-now. Your life. Our lives. Remember, this isn't just an ancient text. It's active and alive and just as relevant today as ever. So, this last step is application. It's where you ask, What does this mean for my life in my setting in my daily experience?

1. What does the passage teach about God, us, and our world that is timeless?
2. How does the passage challenge my daily living? What does it ask me to change?
3. Write down any other applications of the text that you discovered.

### Reflections on Study Scripture

You've now encountered an essential practice God has given to build us in the way of Jesus. Take some time to reflect and celebrate what He has done. We invite you to continue your journey by digging into one of the other LTW guides offered at [startlivingtheway.com](http://startlivingtheway.com)!

How did you grow because of this practice? What was especially meaningful? What was challenging? How do you plan to integrate Bible study as part of your regular spiritual life? How do you plan to celebrate the good things God has done over these past weeks?

