

Rediscovering the Joy of Being with God and his People

Bible Study

Studying the Bible should be a **transformational** undertaking—we study God’s word not just to be informed or even to be reformed, but to be transformed! In order for that to take place, our **mind needs to understand the content**, our **heart needs to be engaged** with the message, and our **will needs to be submitted** to God so that we can grow and change through our study.

- To **understand the content** we use Bible “helps”—dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, maps, different translations, study Bibles, etc to help us understand the genre, context, culture, audience, themes, as well as the meanings of individual words and phrases.

- To **engage our hearts** we invite the Holy Spirit’s transformative presence as we read and study.

- To **submit our will** to God’s word, we call on the Holy Spirit’s transformative power to enable us to change.

If you want to dip your toe in the discipline of Bible study, here’s a familiar passage full of treasures with a simple study to follow.

Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1. Read the passage aloud several times, slowly and carefully.
2. Notice words or that are repeated and underline or circle them.
3. Think about the effect of these words in the passage: “always”, “all”, “every”—why do you think Paul uses these and what’s effect of this?
4. Try to define the phrase “rejoice in the Lord” your own words.
5. Cross reference the word “rejoice” with some other verses where it occurs elsewhere in the Bible, like Ps.13:5, Ps. 105:3.
6. Skim through the book of Philippians to see if joy is a theme that occurs elsewhere.
7. Ask God why rejoicing in him is so important for us to do.
8. Follow the same process (questions 4-7) with as many of the following words you have time for: “anxious”, “thanksgiving”, “peace”, and the final phrase “guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”.
9. Reflect on Paul’s exhortation to be joyful, gentle, at peace, prayerful and grateful. Let your soul absorb this message and notice any places in your life where you struggle with these virtues, and ask for the Holy Spirit to equip you to change.
10. Give thanks to God for his faithfulness in carrying on the good work of transforming your heart.

We are praying for you this week as you uncover the treasures in God’s Word and allow them to transform your soul!