

## {Overview}

The workshop audio from when we learned this method is available at [www.rivercitywomen.org](http://www.rivercitywomen.org). You may find it helpful to listen while you look through these materials.

This workbook is generic and may be used to study any book of the Bible. It is important to remember, however, that a book's genre will impact how quickly and easily you will be able to move through Observation → Interpretation → Application. I encourage you to take your time and consult additional resources to help you grow in your understanding of how to study the Bible well.

Some of those additional resources should include other believers who will encourage you and ask you questions about your study. A great format for this study is to do it alongside 3-4 others with whom you can share your insights, questions, and applications. This can easily happen within the Missional Community context by seizing dinnertime conversation as an opportunity to ask intentional questions about your study. If you choose to study the book that aligns with the current preaching series, your MC discussion time will naturally coincide with what you are learning.

### **The format of this study is as follows:**

→ **Part 1** takes you through the process of gathering the background and context of the book you are studying. It gives you the opportunity to read through the entire book, watching for repeated themes and insight into the book's author, audience, and occasion for writing. After you have looked for those things in the text, you will read the introduction in a good study Bible to fill in any context you may be unaware of. There are Introduction Study Questions to answer to document what you've learned in Part 1. Generally, this is the first week of study, but for a larger book you may choose to take longer to complete it.

→ **Part 2** is the Inductive Study Process, walking through the steps of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. It is broken into 5 steps, which could be done with a short passage over the course of a week. You may choose to move at a slower pace, use larger passages at a time, etc. The chart in the back of this workbook is for Steps 3-5, though you may find you prefer to use a notebook or another method.

This workbook is only meant to give you a format for getting started. Over time, you will find which parts you find particularly helpful and which you find unnecessary. I challenge you to try them all before deciding to cut something. Learning happens when we live in the tension of the unknown, even when it's uncomfortable. And although it may feel at times like we're not learning anything, we can trust that God's Word is alive and active, and it will accomplish what He intends for it.

# {Part 1} Introduction: Background & Context

Our first goal is to begin to become familiar with the overall structure and feel of the book. This is to set our sights on our key purpose in studying: “To behold the reign and rule of God as revealed in his Word, thereby understanding our own place in the Big Story” (from *Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin, p.59). To do this well, we need to gain a proper perspective, placing “any given text within its original historical and cultural context” (73).

Please note: this week’s assignment includes reading through the entire book 3 times. Depending on the book you have chosen to study and the length of time you’ve allowed for this section, you may have to adjust this accordingly. However, do not let this amount of reading discourage you or keep you from completing the lesson (you are human!). Read the book as many times as you are able, even if it’s only once. After this first week, set a goal to read through the whole book as often as you can to maintain the big picture perspective of the book’s structure and themes. Listening to it on audio while walking or driving is a tangible way to accomplish this.

## Step 1

Read through the entire book. Aim to get a general feel for it.

## Step 2

Read through the entire book again. This time, watch for background information revealed in the book. Does the author identify himself? Does he identify the audience? Does he describe the circumstances surrounding his writing? Fill in any answers you find to the Introduction study questions.

## Step 3

Read through the entire book again. Write down any recurring themes you’ve begun to notice (question #5). These are just a list of ideas that will help you see the continuity of the book as you study it.

## Step 4

Read the introduction to the book in a study Bible. Using your notes and any additional information gleaned from the study Bible, fill in any remaining gaps in the Introduction study questions.

## Step 5

Spend some time in prayer for your study, perhaps choosing a passage from the book to meditate on and/or pray.

## {Part 2} Inductive Bible Study Method

This process walks you through the steps of Comprehension, Interpretation, and Application. The goal is to internalize the text, trying to understand what it says, what it meant for the original audience, and what it means for us today. It won't always be easy, but please resist the urge to look to outside scholarship for help until after you have discussed your questions and insights with peers. Prayerfully and patiently engage with the process, depending on the Spirit's help, knowing that the investment to study the Bible is fruitful even when it results in more questions than answers.

### Daily

Read the passage you're studying repetitively throughout the week. Review what surrounds the passage for context. Continue reading/listening to the whole book as much as you can.

### Step 1 (Comprehension: What does the passage say?)

Annotate your copy of the text (Make a key for yourself so you can be consistent throughout):

- Are certain words, phrases, or ideas repeated? Use your colored pencils to mark them distinctly on your printed copy.
- Is a particular attribute of God illustrated or celebrated? Write it in the margin.
- Does the text make several points in a row? Number each point as it is introduced in the text.
- Are there words you don't understand? Mark them with a question mark so you can look up a definition for them.
- Are there key transition words, such as *if/then, therefore/then/so that, likewise, but, for/since/because, or in the same way*? Draw an arrow to connect a concluding thought to its beginning argument.
- Is an idea confusing? Write your question in the margin to address at a later time.<sup>1</sup>
- Which central themes from the book are in this passage? Note them in the margin and review where else in the book they occur.

### Step 2 (Comprehension: What does the passage say?)

Look up unfamiliar words in an English dictionary.

Read the passage in at least two other translations. (ESV, NIV, HCSB are some options. The Bible Gateway website is a great resource for looking at different versions. Paraphrases (i.e. The Message) should not be used at this point but could be referenced as commentary later.)

Look up cross-references. (The ESV Bible website/app is helpful here.)

Make notes regarding any insights from these steps.

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<sup>1</sup> This list is quoted from *Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin.

### Step 3 (Comprehension: What does the passage say?)

Taking one or two verses at a time, write a sentence that restates what the verse(s) is/are saying. Imagine someone is asking you, “**What does the passage say?**” Include facts only, trying to condense the passage.

Once you have summarized/paraphrased the passage, mark the logical divisions of the text. Watch for changes in subject or obvious breaks in thought. Write a header or one sentence summary for each division.

Write a subject sentence for the passage. This should still only reflect the facts of the passage, not your interpretation of it. If you just read your subject sentence, you would want it to take you to this specific passage of Scripture. It should be as concise as possible (try to get it down to 10 words!). (In the case of many divisions, more than one subject sentence may be appropriate. Use your best judgment, grouping divisions together as makes sense.)

At this point, you could use your subject and division sentences to make an outline for the book. (This is an extra step that some will find helpful and others will find unnecessary. You can determine what is best for you.)

Note: There is an example chart using Philippians 1:1-11 to help you start to see how this process of breaking down the passage works. This takes practice!

### Step 4 (Interpretation: Why does the author say it?)

Review your annotations, definitions, notes, and outline. Write down any lingering questions you have about the text’s meaning.

First, consider the overarching theme of this section. What did the author intend the original audience to take from this passage? How did he want them to respond? Complete the sentence for the author’s “Aim”: **Cause the audience to** \_\_\_\_\_. Use verbs if possible. “To believe” and “to worship” are viable options.

Next, answer this question for each of the divisions you identified on Day 3: **What are the main truths or principles the author is trying to convey in this passage?** These could be truths about God or man, attitudes a believer should possess, a call to repent of a particular sin, etc. Be careful to consider what this passage would have meant to its original audience. The main truths or principles would be true for them *and* for us. They are doctrinal statements that supercede time and culture.

## Step 5 (Application: How should it change me?)

Write at least one application question for each of your divisions. These will be drawn from your main truths and principles, helping you to connect the content of the passage to its implications for how you should live. Application is aimed at the heart, seeking to answer the question, **“How should the truths of this passage change me?”**

Here are some questions to help guide you towards application:

If this is true, what are the implications? What does it tell us about God, Jesus, humanity, history? What light does it cast on the culture around us? What idolatrous desires and idols are exposed? What misplaced hopes, ideas, expectations and allegiances are exposed? Why do we not want to hear this? How might we mishear this?

Note: Some genres lend themselves more readily to tangible application points than others. Everything we read and study in Scripture is fruitful for deepening our faith as we come to know God more and see His faithfulness in carrying out His plan of redemption. Every passage may not result in a tangible takeaway, but rather a more broad opportunity to praise God for who He is and for what we know He is up to even if it is not yet clear in our study. We should strive to apply what we are learning from the Scriptures, but also should not be discouraged that we're “not getting anything out of it,” when the application is to worship God for who He is.

A few things to consider:

- Application is not always individual. It may be corporate.
- Application is not always about what we should *do*; it should affect our hearts, minds, and wills.
- Repentance, praise, and belief are legitimate applications!
  - Should I repent of a wrong attitude or action?
  - Should I change something by God's power?
  - Should I praise God for an aspect of His character or for work He has accomplished?
- Try to avoid yes/no questions.

**Write out your application questions and answer them.**

## Group Discussion & Outside Commentary

At this point in the process, share what you learned and what your lingering questions are with others. After these steps, you are welcome (and encouraged!) to consult additional commentaries. (If you are participating in BSF, commentaries should not be referenced until after lecture.)

## Sources

*Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin  
Porterbrook module, “Understanding God's Story”  
BSF Homiletics resource  
Simeon Trust course on Bible Exposition

# Introduction

## Study Questions

1. Who wrote this book?
2. When was it written? Where does this book fit in the storyline of the Bible? (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration)
3. To whom was it written?
4. What genre is it? In what style/tone was it written?
5. What are the central themes of the book?
6. How are you similar to the original audience? How are you different? How does this affect your perspective as you study?

## Passage: Phil. 1:1-11 (Example)

Aim: Cause the audience to **receive and respond** to this letter as a Word from Christ; **view themselves** in relation to Christ.

Comprehension			Interpretation	Application
Paraphrase	Divisions (Summary Sentence)	Subject Sentence	Main Truths or Principles	Application Questions
V. 1-2: Paul (with Timothy), Christ's servant, greets the Philippian church and its leaders with grace & peace from God.	Greeting.	Paul identifies himself and greets the church.	Scripture is written by servants of Christ, with His authority.	How do I view myself in relation to Christ?  How do I submit to the authority of Scripture?

Aim: Cause the audience to **rejoice** in fellowship with other believers & **grow** in holiness.

Comprehension			Interpretation	Application
Paraphrase	Divisions (Summary Sentence)	Subject Sentence	Main Truths or Principles	Application Questions
V. 3-5: Every time I think of you, I pray for you with thankfulness & joy because of our fellowship in the Gospel.	Paul rejoices to have fellowship in the Gospel with the church.	Paul rejoices in Gospel fellowship and prays for spiritual growth.	The Gospel is at the heart of relationships among believers and the basis for our hope in maturing.  God is faithful to finish the work that He's started.	What is the basis for my fellowship with other believers?  How can I express my joy in God's provision of these relationships?  Do I hope in God's work in myself and others?  Do I believe He'll finish what He started?
V. 6: I'm sure that Christ will finish the work He began in you.				
V. 7-8: It's right that I love you so deeply because we share in grace, both in my chains and in defending the Gospel.				
V. 9-11: I pray that your love for each other would grow, along with knowledge & discernment, that Christ's righteousness will fill you and make you holy to the glory of God.	Paul prays for the church to grow in holiness.		We ought to pray and strive for growth in love and discernment.  Our hope for spiritual growth is rooted in the hope that Christ's righteousness will bear fruit in his people.  The ultimate goal in all of life is the glory and praise of God.	What is the content of my prayers for myself/others?  Do I view growth as the result of my work or God's work in me?  Which things in my life do I not orient around the purpose of God's praise and glory?

Passage:

Aim: Cause the audience to:

Comprehension			Interpretation	Application
Paraphrase	Divisions (Summary Sentence)	Subject Sentence	Main Truths or Principles	Application Questions