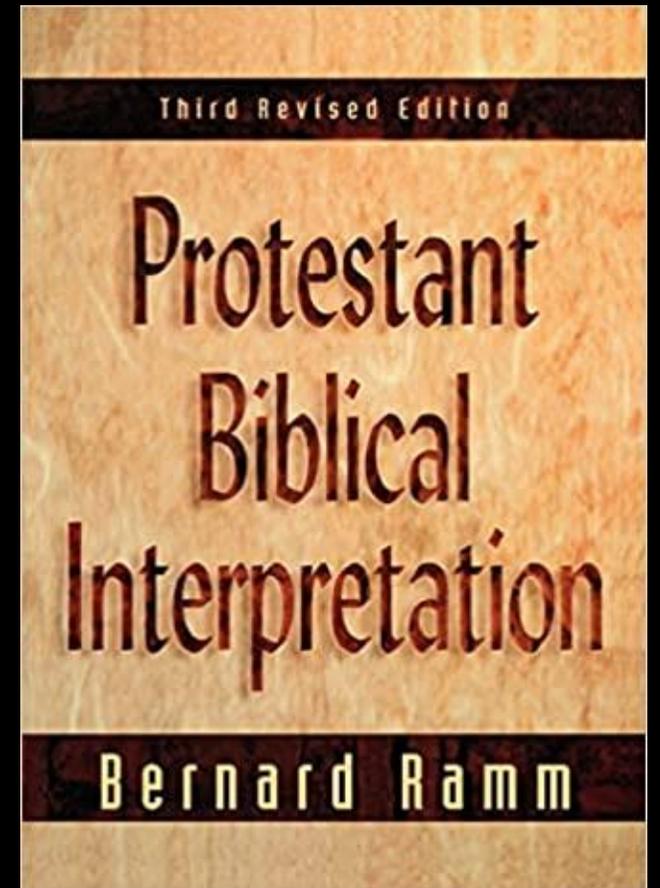


Why is accurate Bible study necessary?

“To determine what God has said is a high and holy task. With fear and trembling each should be ever so careful of that which he has adopted as his method of Biblical interpretation. Upon the correct interpretation of the Bible rests our doctrine of salvation, of sanctification, of eschatology, and of Christian living. It is our solemn responsibility to know what God has said with reference to each of these. This can be done only if we have carefully, thoroughly, and systematically formulated that system of Biblical interpretation which will yield most readily the native meaning of the Bible. . . .

“Further, we need to know the correct method of Biblical interpretation so that we do not confuse the voice of God with the voice of man. In every one of those places where our interpretation is at fault, we have made substitution of the voice of man for the voice of God. We need to know hermeneutics thoroughly if for no other reason than to preserve us from the folly and errors of faulty principles of understanding.”

—Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 2



“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

—2 Timothy 2:15

“Let not many *of you* become teachers,
my brethren, knowing that as such we
will incur a stricter judgment.”

—James 3:1

1. Acknowledge your need for truth.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture flows out of a deep conviction that one needs God's Word.

- “Halfhearted Bible study is a bore. If you come to the Scriptures legalistically, ritualistically, or because you are intimidated by your peers or your pastor, you won't get much out of it. What you need is a hunger in your heart, a passion for knowing God through His Word” (MacArthur, *How to Get the Most from God's Word*, 153–54).
- “Get a will behind the eye, and the eye becomes a searchlight, the familiar is made to disclose undreamed treasure” (Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 32).

“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”

—Deuteronomy 8:3 (cf. Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4)

“I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”

—Psalm 119:131

“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,
so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

—1 Peter 2:2

2. Pray for divine assistance.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture is possible only by the enablement of God.

- Prayer directly acknowledges our dependency upon the ultimate Author of the text.
- “No Christian should ever look down at the Word without first looking up at the very Source of the Word and asking for guidance. To engage in Bible study without prayer is presumption, if not sacrilege” (MacArthur, *How to Get the Most From God’s Word*, 155).



“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

“Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.”

“Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.”

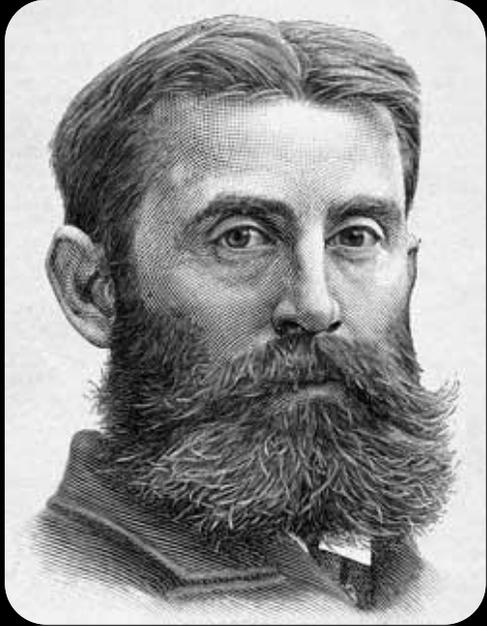
“Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word.”

—Psalm 119:18, 34, 73, 169

“Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books.

“What!” is the appropriate response, “than ten hours over your books, on your knees?” Why should you turn from God when you turn to your books, or feel that you must turn from your books in order to turn to God? If learning and devotion are as antagonistic as that, then the intellectual life is in itself accursed, and there can be no question of a religious life for a student, even of theology.”

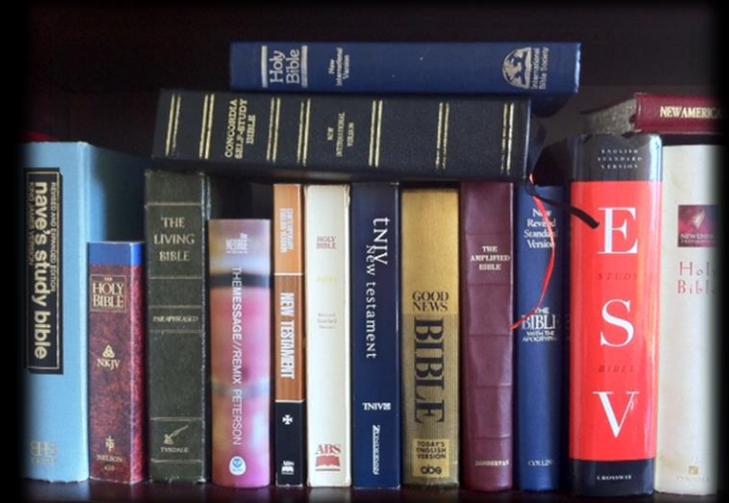
—B. B. Warfield, “The Religious Life of Theological Students”

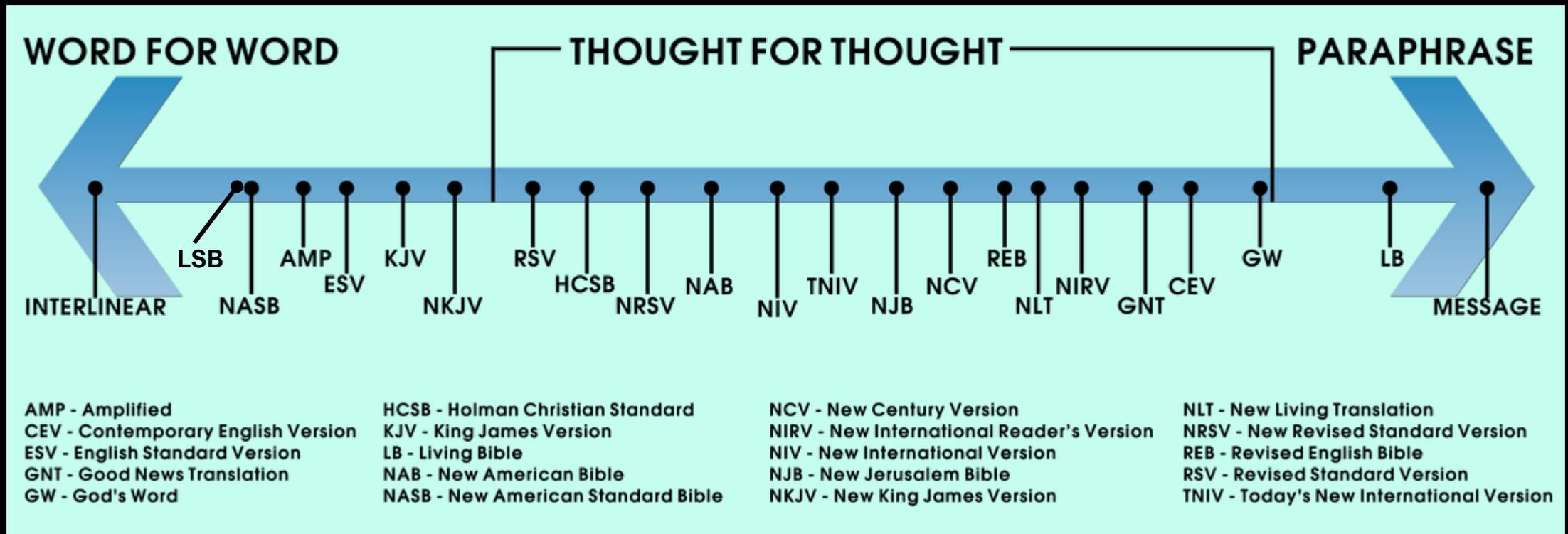


3. Choose the right translation.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture depends upon the use of an accurate translation.

- While paraphrases can be useful for the barely literate or for those who are completely unfamiliar with the Bible, more literal translations are essential for in-depth Bible study.
- In addition to the translation you use to do most of your reading and study, pick one or two other reliable translations which you can consult for comparison when studying specific texts.





THREE RECOMMENDED VERSIONS:

- (1) Legacy Standard Bible (LSB)
- (2) New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- (3) English Standard Version (ESV)

4. Read the whole book.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture commits to reading entire books, not just isolated texts.

- One of the most common errors made by well-intentioned Christians is to use biblical texts without any consideration of their context.

The background of the image is a landscape featuring a vibrant green aurora borealis in the sky, with snow-covered mountains and a dark, rocky foreground. The text is centered and reads:

**I CAN DO
ALL THINGS
THROUGH A
VERSE
TAKEN OUT
OF
CONTEXT.**

4. Read the whole book.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture commits to reading entire books, not just isolated texts.

- One of the most common errors made by well-intentioned Christians is to use biblical texts without any consideration of their context.
- This commitment—to read texts as dependent upon the books in which they are found—is based upon the simple rule that we should read the literature of the Bible consistent with how it was written.

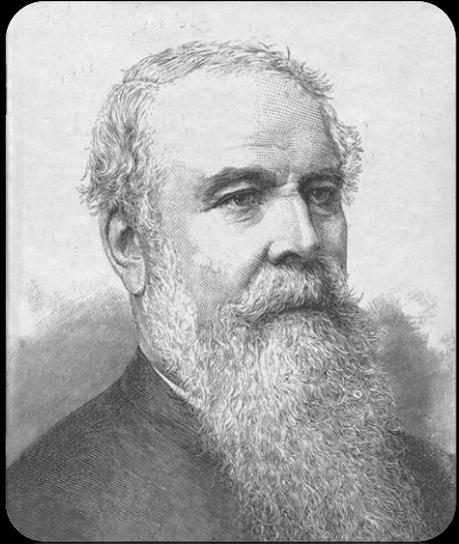




- The word “context” is comprised of two Latin words:

con (“together”) + *textus* (“woven”) =
“woven together”

- A text taken out of context becomes a pretext for inserting one’s own preunderstanding.
- The more you interpret *out of context*, the more you interpret *according to convenience*.
- “Disregarding the context is one of the greatest problems in Bible interpretation” (Roy Zuck).
- “Every basic cult is based on ignoring the context” (Roy Zuck).



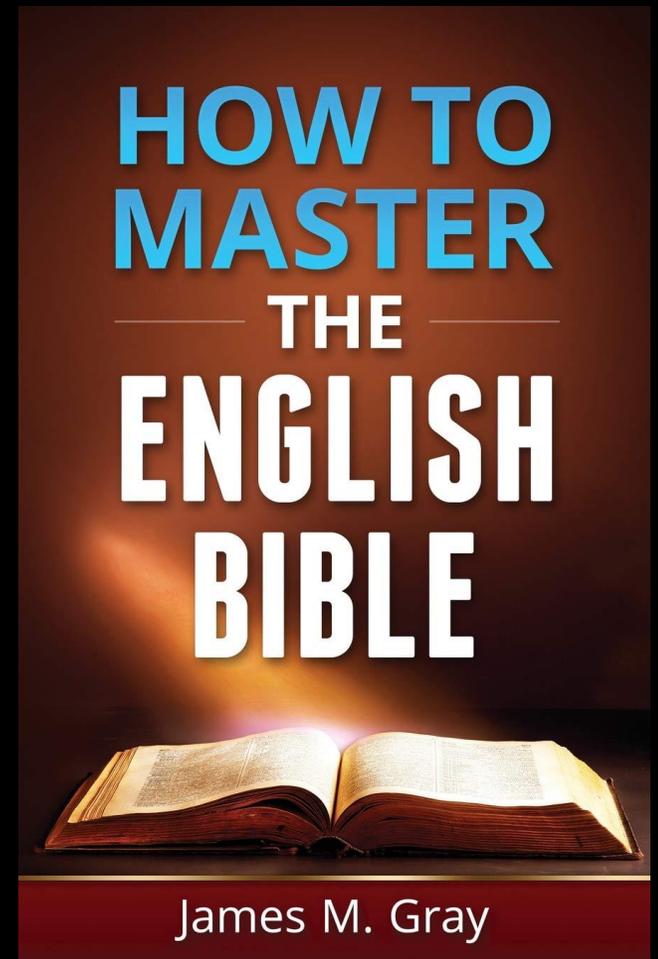
“For another thing, read *all* of the Bible—and read it in an *orderly way*. I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is to say at the least, a very presumptuous habit. ‘All Scripture is profitable’ (2 Timothy 3:16). To this habit may be traced that lack of *well-proportioned views of truth*, which is so common in this day. Some people’s Bible-reading is a system of perpetual ‘dipping and picking.’

They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This also is a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction, it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But with this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time—to read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which everyone must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for nearly forty years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.”

—J. C. Ryle, *Profiting from the Scriptures*

“Many of the books of the Bible have a single thread running through the whole; a pivotal idea around which all the subsidiary ones revolve, and to catch this thread, to seize upon this idea, is absolutely necessary to unravel or break up the whole in its essential parts.”

—James Gray, *How to Master the English Bible*, 34



- 1. Acknowledge your need for truth.**
- 2. Pray for divine assistance.**
- 3. Choose the right translation.**
- 4. Read the whole book.**

Basic Bible Study, Pt 1

Steps 1–4

REVIEW

