



Make Plain, Jesus Ministries

Make Plain, Jesus Ministries'
CHRISTIAN STRENGTHENING CLASSES
The 200 Level

**www.makeplainjesus.org
Email: contactus@makeplainjesus.org
410-846-0126**

Welcome to "Examining Your Christian Faith At A Deeper Level". This course is designed for those who want to begin their journey into drawing closer to the Lord by strengthening their understanding of the Word. Although this course consists of six sessions, it is intended to be the first in a series of courses that will take you a bit deeper in your understanding of the truths contained in the Bible. In fact, there are countless truths contained in the Bible that God wants us to understand but without digging deeper into studying the Bible, a person cannot grasp it.

Our goal in this six session series is to begin addressing the following:

Session 1: **How To Study The Bible**

Session 2: **What Does The Bible Say About God?**

Sessions 3 and 4: **Was Jesus A Good Man, A Prophet or More?**

Session 5: **Who Is The Devil?**

Session 6: **What Is The Truth About Heaven and Hell?**

This course is open to anyone who is interested in participating. It will be held **via conference call** so anyone interested in signing up should go to the calendar of events on our church website (<http://www.makeplainjesus.org/calendar-events>). From there, you can sign up for the Christian Strengthening Class which begins on September 22, 2016. All those participating should sign-up by September 19, 2016. If you have further questions, please call our office at 410-846-0126.

How To Study The Bible



Why Should I Study the Bible?

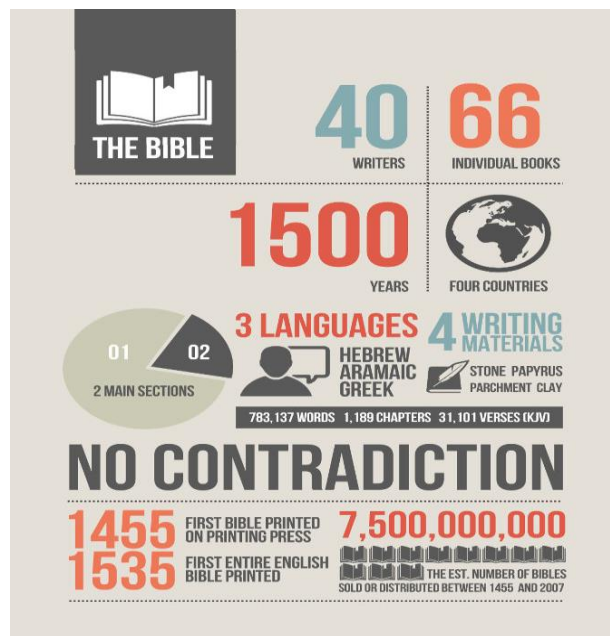
The Bible is no ordinary book. The words within its pages are like medicine to your soul. It has the power to change your life because there is life in the Word! (See Hebrews 4:12.) And when you discover the power and truth of God's Word, you will begin to see changes in your life that only this truth can bring. You will even learn how to recognize what the enemy tries to bring against you.

- Joyce Meyer

Studying the Bible is essential in the life of a Christian. It is the sustenance and power from which a Christian lives. Truthfully, it is more than "The Good Book". God designed it as "THE Book" by which we must live our lives. In essence, it is the instruction manual, written by God, to show us how to live our lives through seeking Him and experiencing His love for us.

Questions:

1. Have you ever read the Bible on your own?
2. What portions of the Bible have you read?
3. Do you read the Bible at least once per week?
4. What do you see as challenges to Bible study?



Statistics

The Bible is not an ordinary book that some person decided to create one day. It is a simple but complex compilation of past, present and future events. It took centuries to write and it had numerous authors. The following statistics based on the King James Version will just amaze you:

- 66 books (Old Testament – 39; New Testament – 27)
- Number of different authors: 40 (over a 1,500-year period)
- Chapters: 1,189
- Verses: 31,101
- Words: 783,137
- Letters: 3,116,480
- Number of promises that are given in the Bible: 1,260
- Commands: 6,468
- The Bible says more than 3,000 times “thus saith the Lord.”
- Predictions: over 8,000
- Fulfilled prophecy: 3,268 verses
- Unfulfilled prophecy: 3,140
- Number of questions: 3,294
- Longest name: Mahershalalhashbaz (Isaiah 8:1)
- Longest verse: Esther 8:9 (78 words)
- Shortest verse: John 11:35 (2 words: “Jesus wept”). This is the King James Bible.
- Longest book: Psalms (150 chapters)
- Shortest book (by number of words): 3 John
- Longest chapter: Psalm 119 (176 verses)
- Number of times the word “God” appears: 4,094
- Number of times the word “Lord” appears: 6,781
- Number of languages the Bible has been translated into: over 1,200

Based on these statistics, you can see that the Bible is a comprehensive work. It addresses our relationship with God, our relationship with one another, our purpose in life and so much more. With it being so comprehensive, it may cause you to feel overwhelmed without a good place to start. If you’ve felt overwhelmed and always wondered where to begin, you’ve come to the right place. This course is designed to give you some guidance with enough flexibility to shape custom study habits that work best for you.

The Tools

Question:

1. Have you used supporting tools to assist in your personal Bible study? If so, what tools did you use?

Whenever a person attempts to complete a task, the determination of whether they will be successful is highly dependent on the tools they bring to the task. For example, if a person wants to cut wood, he will not use a spatula to cut the wood. Likewise, you don't need a wrecking ball to write a letter.



Although there are many combinations of tools that can be used to enhance your Bible study, we want to outline a few tools that are essential to your study and understanding. Most of these tools can be found in actual paper or hard bound books as well as electronic books online. As a study of the Bible, you will need to decide which is best for your learning. For many, it is a combination of both. The key is to select which manner helps you learn the best.

Tool #1: A Study Bible

It is obvious but without a Bible, it is difficult to study! Based on our experiences at Make Plain, Jesus, a study Bible is essential. These Bibles contain study notes and references that help the reader understand what a verse or phrase truly means. Additionally, there are sections within these study Bibles that help you explore

themes and concepts. The point here is to leverage work already done by respected Christians before you. Learning from their countless hours of study also increases your revelation of topics along with grasping key insights.

Some may wonder which translation should be followed. We understand that some churches mandate a particular translation as the only true translation. If you have that type of directive regarding a major translation, you will certainly find a study Bible written in that translation. At our church, we do not put that requirement on our congregation. There are several reputable translations that a Bible student can use. Our Pastor uses the New King James Version (NKJV) as the basis for his study and then uses the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV) and the Amplified Version (AMP) for supportive study.

Tool #2: A Concordance

Everyone who is serious about Bible study should have access to a concordance. A concordance is an index to the Bible. It is a direct way to find where words are mentioned in the Bible (e.g. chapter, verse). Additionally, if you have the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, you have a dictionary for Hebrew and Greek words found in the original scripture manuscripts. These dictionaries aide in understanding what passages are truly saying. Sometimes, when a person quickly reads a paragraph, they may interpret the author's intent incorrectly based on current day vernacular. The concordance brings you back to the true meanings.

Tool #3: Commentary

Commentaries from respect sources are invaluable tools. God has anointed some people with amazing skills to interpret and explain the meaning of scripture. This is very valuable when you are struggling to understand a concept or verse in the Bible. It may only take your reading of a Bible scholar's explanation to help you understand the verse and apply it to your life. This is an important way to leverage another person's gift.

As you might expect, there are countless commentaries in the stores and online. You should spend time researching which commentaries work best for you. Some of the respected commentaries that have been around for a long time are:

- Matthew Henry's Commentary
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old and New Testament
- Treasury of David, Charles H. Spurgeon

- The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary
- The NIV Application Commentary
- Complete Bible Commentary (by John Wesley)

Additionally, if you want to do an in depth study on a particular book in the Bible, there are numerous commentaries that focus on individual books. A few examples include:

- Opening Up Proverbs
- Opening Up Psalms
- Introducing the New Testament
- Opening Up Hebrews
- Colossians & Philemon (N. T. Wright for Everyone Bible Study Guides)

As you can see, there is a wealth of material to leverage in order to increase your understanding. Just remember to not let the sheer volume of choices cause you to feel overloaded. You don't have to read every book in a week.

Tool #4: A Dictionary

If we are honest with ourselves, there are words we don't truly understand. Rather than skipping over the words and try to assume the meaning, it is extremely important to look up the words in a dictionary to ensure you "know" the meaning. This type of research will keep you from incorrectly interpreting the meaning of scripture and explanations contained in the supporting materials. There are several dictionaries available but two of the most respected are:

- Vine's Expository Dictionary – Greek and Hebrew definitions
- Webster's Dictionary

Tool # 5: Open Heart

When studying the Bible, the key to success is to approach it with an open heart. In other words, read each verse with the intent to grasp what the Lord will show you and then be willing to do it. Make sure that you diligently seek the understanding. Do not approach your study with a mindset of only accepting what you want to accept. Please remember that His Word is true and He provides it based on His love for us.

Tool #6: Meditate On What You Read

Many times there are parts of the Bible that are difficult to understand. Just keep in mind that no one person understands every truth and meaning during their first reading of the scriptures. A good practice is to read your selected verse or chapter and then stop to meditate on what you read. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you comprehend the meaning of the passage(s). This part is crucial because it is one thing to read the Bible but more important to understand what you have read in the Bible.

Questions

1. Have you ever taken the time to meditate on what you've read in the Bible?
2. Have you approached your Bible reading with an open heart in the past?

Study Plans

It is important to begin regular study of the Bible. How you begin is an important choice. There are countless plans for reading the Bible. You can purchase study books that will take you through the reading in a prescribed period of time. Some plans take you sequentially from Genesis through Revelations. If you are disciplined, you can read through the entire Bible in one year or less. It is a goal you can set and achieve if that is what you want to do.

For those who are new to reading the Bible regularly, we would suggest picking a Bible reading plan that covers a portion of the Old and New Testaments each day. This will give you an understanding of the covenants established in each testament as well as how it applies to you. Alternatively, if your focus is on key foundational themes, pick a plan that will allow you to cover all of the scriptures related to that theme. A key point to note is you can join reading plans for little to no cost! Many of the subscriber plans will email you the scriptures daily in order to keep you on track. As we have often said at our church, it is better to read and understand a few verses than to claim to have read the entire Bible without understanding it.

Although we are not paid or coerced to endorse any particular website, we have found that www.BibleGateway.com, www.biblestudytools.com and www.biblehub.com are very helpful sites. There are many other sites you can leverage to study but these are three sites we seem to frequent.

Conclusion

Now you have all of the basis instruction you need. It is time to get studying! Remember to set aside deliberate time for studying. Bring an open heart and watch how the Holy Spirit will increase your understanding.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- 2 Timothy 2:15