

Ten Methods of Bible Study

1. Survey Method

Reading through rapidly and getting the overall impression, the big picture. What are the recurring words, ideas, persons, or events? What is the style and atmosphere of the book? You should do at least three readings just getting the overall view and main idea of the book.

2. Analytical Method

This is an examination of the separate parts:

- Browse a book
- Define divisions
- Select sections or segments
- Probe paragraphs
- Search sentences
- Weigh words
- Trace themes

3. Synthetic Method

This is the opposite of the analytical method, which looks at the book in detail. This is similar to the Survey Method in that after you have looked at the book in detail, you then look again at the overall view, the big picture, in light of the study you have done on the detailed passages, seeing a theme(s) throughout the whole book.

4. Critical Method

Who wrote the book? To whom was it written? From where was it written? When was it written? Date? What is the reason for writing the book?

5. Historical Method

Understanding the book in its historical context. What is the historical setting and what was life like at the time? For example, if it is an Epistle, when was the church founded? Who made up the church? What were their strengths and weaknesses? Try and recreate the setting and atmosphere of the time.

6. Comparative Method

This is taking one passage of Scripture and comparing it with another passage because Scripture interprets Scripture.

7. Topical Method

- a. Biographical
- b. Theological
- c. Psychological
- d. Geographical
- e. Political
- f. Cultural
- g. Sociological
- h. Scientific

8. Literary Method

What kind of literature is the book or passage?

A. The two large groups are:

- 1) **Prose** – the plain speech of mankind or the ordinary form of written or spoken language. Prose is the medium used in newspapers, novels, magazine articles, etc.
- 2) **Poetry** – one third of the Old Testament is Hebrew poetry, which makes use of parallelism and figures of speech. Meter and rhyme are not characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Poetry is written in stanza form.

B. Other types of literature:

- 1) Historical narrative: tells a story
- 2) Hymn
- 3) Parable
- 4) Covenant document
- 5) Epistle
- 6) Didactic: intended for instruction
- 7) Gospel: a literary category created by the four Gospel writers. A Gospel is not a biography but focuses on the last two to three years of Jesus' ministry. Its objective is to evoke commitment to Jesus as Lord.
- 8) Wisdom: found in Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs (see Bible Dictionary for more details).
- 9) Apocalyptic: highly symbolic and non-chronological. It deals with the theme of the triumph of God and the ushering in the AGE TO COME. Usually written to encourage the saints in times of persecution.

9. Rhetorical Method

This is the use of figures of speech to communicate concepts (see Figures of Speech handout).

10. Devotional Method

Same as application (see Basics of Bible Study handout).