

## The 4 R Method for Everyday Bible Study

I love to be in God's Word regularly, but I need a Bible study method that's simple enough to use every day. That's why I use the 4 R Bible study method. This is what I do every day when I open the Bible, whether I have a few minutes or a big chunk of time.

The 4 R inductive\* method of Bible study is a basic way to dig a little deeper into any biblical passage. As we **read**, we carefully **record** our *observations*. As we **reflect** on those observations, we can more accurately *interpret* God's meaning. **Respond** is our last step because personal *application* is always the end goal. You don't need extra tools or resources. All you need is your Bible, a pen, a notebook or journal, and a humble, teachable attitude. The "R" repetition makes it memorable! You can take it anywhere!

[\(Click here to get a printable PDF of the 4 R Bible study method.\)](#)

There are some [general guidelines](#) for all and any Bible study. For instance, we must keep the [biblical genre](#) and the [context of the passage](#) in mind. We must seek to discover the original meaning of the passage. There are infinite ways to apply a passage, but only one meaning. And, to keep the proper perspective, we must always keep in mind that God's Word is first and foremost about God. (For more info, see ["Are You Reading the Bible All Wrong?"](#))

\*Note: The 4R method reflects the 3 basic steps of Inductive Bible study: 1) Observation; 2) Interpretation; and 3) Application.

### 4 R Bible Study Method

#### 1. READ

- **Have a plan**— A reading plan will help with consistency and context cutting down on frustration with your daily time with God. It's always easier to *begin* reading if you know *where* you'll be reading when you open your Bible. (I have several free Bible reading plans right here on my site. Check out the [Free Resources](#) page! And... If you'd like some structure, encouragement and accountability in your daily Bible reading, check out my Facebook group, ["Reading the Bible Together."](#))
- **Read prayerfully**— Before you begin, ask God to teach you. Ask Him to open your mind and heart to not only understand what you're reading, but also to be willing to apply His truth to your life. Keep praying while you read! Ask God questions about what you're reading. He wants you to understand.
- **Read multiple times**— God's Word is packed with wonderful things. It's easy to miss details and even deep spiritual truth with just one reading. Choose a Bible reading plan that has daily readings manageable enough to give you time to read the passage two or three times.

- **Read in different translations** - If you have time, reading in different translations will also increase understanding. (For more about Bible translations or for help choosing a new Bible see [“3 Steps to Help You Choose a New Bible.”](#))

## 2. RECORD

Please don't ask what the Scripture *“means to you.”* (*Major pet peeve by the way...*) Every Scripture passage in the Bible has ONE meaning - what God meant when the Scripture was first written. Our goal in this step is to carefully observe the text and record what we find. (Side note: Before you begin observing, make sure you understand the context of the passage. If you aren't sure what this mean, check out this post: [“4 Things to Consider for Biblical Context.”](#))

Although you may not find every one of the following in every passage, here are some things you should look for in each passage:

- **Truths about God**– The Bible is first and foremost a book about God. He is everywhere – in every passage, on every page. It may be blatant or subtle, but He will be there. Looks for truths about His nature, His character, His ways, and His purposes.
- **Key Words & Phrases**– Repetition in God's Word is not accidental. If you see words and phrases repeated, take note. God is trying to point to something important.
- **Important facts** – Mark any facts you see in the passage that will help you understand what's happening. Things like people, places, numbers can be key to comprehension.
- **Commands** – The Bible is full of commands. Some are one-time commands for specific individuals at a specific time. Others are for all God's people for all time. For instance, “love one another” is applicable to us today!
- **Spiritual principles**– There will be a lot of overlap here with “truths about God.” However, eternal spiritual principles impact our daily lives. For instance, Psalm 1 teaches that those who meditate constantly on God's Word will thrive spiritually and live fruitful lives for God's Kingdom.
- **Contrasts, comparisons, & word picture** - All these literary devices shed light on the spiritual truths in the passage. Therefore, making a list or a table could help your comprehension.

(See ["10 Observation Tips"](#) for a longer list!) Depending on your preference, you can mark these in your Bible, takes notes in a journal, or record them in some other way. I use a journaling Bible with an extra-wide, lined journaling column. I make study notes there and I use a highlighting system to help me observe the passage. (For more on my highlighting method see [“Bible Highlighting for More Effective Study.”](#))

## 3. REFLECT

Although God's Word has endless application, there is just one meaning. Look back over your recorded observations to help you recognize and understand God's original meaning of the passage. (In some Bible study methods, this step is referred to as "interpretation.")

#### 4. RESPOND

Knowledge of God's Word is never the end game. Application that leads to spiritual transformation is always our goal. So, once we've read and understood, let's ask God to show us how to apply these truths to our lives. The acronym [PROBE](#) can help us apply these truths to our lives:

- **Prayer** - Is there something in the passage I can pray for myself or others?
- **Repentance** – Is there a sin or area of disobedience I need to confess and turned away from?
- **Obedience** – Is there an action I need to take or a decision I need to make?
- **Believe** – Is there something I need to believe about God?
- **Express** – Is there a praise or thanksgiving I need to voice to God?

#### Kathy's bio:

A former "cultural Christian," Kathy Howard now has a passion for God's Word that's contagious. With more than 30 years of experience, Kathy has taught the Bible in dozens of states, internationally, and in a wide range of venues including multi-church conferences and large online events. Kathy, who has a Masters of Religious Education from the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, is a devotional and Bible study author. She also writes for multiple online magazines and devotional sites. Kathy and her husband live near family in the Dallas/Ft Worth. They have three married children, six grandchildren, and two accidental dogs. Kathy provides free discipleship resources and blogs regularly at [www.KathyHoward.org](http://www.KathyHoward.org). Kathy's new book, *Deep Rooted: Growing through the Gospel of Mark*, is available now!

#### Deep Rooted: Growing through the Gospel of Mark

Foster a delight for God's Word that keeps you rooted and growing. Want to experience regular spiritual nourishment from the Bible, but not sure how to start? **Deep Rooted**, a 40-day devotional journey through the life and ministry of Jesus, will show you how to interact with and apply Scripture, not just read it. These meaty, daily devotions, which are based on the 4 R Bible study framework, is designed to help you:

- Develop a regular habit of spending quality time in God's Word
- Know Jesus more fully and intimately
- Learn how to dig into Scripture on your own
- Be transformed by God's Word, not just informed
- Practically live out the truths you discover in Scripture

In **Deep Rooted: Growing through the Gospel of Mark**, Kathy Howard's seminary education, passion for God's Word, and vast Bible teaching experience come together in a unique devotional experience. Finally, a daily devotional with some meat on its bones!