

## Topical Bible Study Checklist

**Step 1: Pray.**

Always begin by praying for God's guidance.

**Step 2: Pick a topic that has meaning to you.**

You may be thinking of a specific topic like praise, or you may have a question, like why did John the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God? You may be going through a situation where you need to give advice to someone from the Bible. The topic needs to be narrow enough that you will not be overwhelmed by all the material in the Scriptures. For example, love is too general. You could narrow the topic down to showing love to animals or loving a spouse.

**Step 3: Consider the information that you have access to without researching.**

What do you already know? Gather any verses that you can remember on the topic. In addition, brainstorm any information that you know about the topic. This information could be your own ideas that you want to test out, or it could be factual knowledge that you want to find confirming texts for. Quickly note down the ideas that you already have.

**Step 4: Collect new verses.**

Begin by using the verses that you have already gathered to begin your research. Look up the verse and find the cross references for it, using a study Bible, an online cross-reference tool, or a cross-reference app on your computer or tablet. You are using the cross-references to collect related verses to add to your research. Not all the verses provided by your cross-referencing tool will be applicable, so only write down the verses related to your research topic and ignore the other verses. Then you can extend your study with cross-references from the new verses until you are satisfied that you have enough verses or until you reach the end of the related verses that you can find by cross-referencing. If you need more verses for your research, the next move is to use your brainstormed ideas to come up with key words that you can look up in a concordance. You can collect many applicable verses in that way. Only collect as many verses as you need. Do not collect so many verses that you feel overwhelmed and cannot go on to the next steps.

**Step 5: Organize the verses.**

Rearrange the verses into related topics. Doing this electronically means typing category headings and cutting and pasting verses under the correct heading. With notecards, write categories on separate cards and rearrange your verse cards under those categories. Then you can label each verse card to show which category it belongs to, or you can simply rubber band the cards for each category together.

**Step 6: Write out your thoughts.**

Read the verses you have gathered on one specific topic and write out your ideas about what these verses have taught you. Either type this information under the appropriate category heading in your electronic file or write the information on more index cards. Think about the following questions to generate ideas. How are the verses that you collected related? What information in the verses is surprising? What is confusing about the verses? What new information have you learned? What application can you think of for your own life? What do these verses reveal about God? Do you have any more questions that these verses raise or that they did not answer? Can you think of any examples of the ideas that your read in these verses—either from your own life, your knowledge of history and society, or in the stories of the characters of the Bible?

□ **Step 7: Analyze the information that you have collected.**

Once you have carried out step five for all the verses, read through your research and organize your ideas. If you are using notecards, you can simply reorganize the note cards into a specific order and number them. If you are working with electronic media, you can easily cut and paste until you have everything organized in the manner that you like. You may stop after completing this step and consider your research finished, or you may begin writing out your findings in an essay about the topic as described in Step 8.

□ **Step 8: Write an essay on the topic.**

You might choose not to perform this step for all research. However, if you believe that you need to internalize the topic, condensing your research into an essay is an excellent method. Organizing your information into an essay format enables the details of your research to sink into your thoughts rather than being words on a paper that you forget in a few weeks. You can leave out some of your research information and include new thoughts as you write. Your essay does not have to cover your whole research. It can be about one category of your research, and you do not even have to include all of the information in one category. The importance of this step is that it helps you to synthesize the information that you have collected and see connections that you might have otherwise missed. An alternative method of synthesizing information is to tell another person what you have learned. If you have someone in your life who you can discuss your research with, you are fortunate, and both of you will be blessed by discussing God's word in depth. A third way of synthesizing the information is to prepare a speech using some of the information. You might present this speech to a group, record it with your camera, or simply say it out loud to yourself in the privacy of your own home. It is the preparation and speaking that synthesize the information. The audience and viewing yourself on video are optional.

□ **Ending Step: Always end your time of Bible study with prayer.**

Speak to God about what you have been doing and any concerns that you have. Thank Him for His guidance and discuss the lessons that you are learning with Him.