

# 10 Principles for Effective Bible Study

1. Unless a passage is clearly symbolic, we should interpret the Bible literally. The Bible does contain parables, analogies, figures of speech, and symbolic language, but even those passages point us to literal truth.
2. Study the Bible in context. It is easy to lift certain passages out of context and assume they mean something entirely different. Doing so can lead to all kinds of error.
3. Study the Bible in its historical and cultural context. What did it mean to the people who first heard it? God's principles are true for all people at all times but must be properly understood.
4. Allow the Bible to interpret itself by looking up parallel passages and cross-references.
5. Understand that the Bible does not contradict itself, although sometimes we must dig deeper.
6. Consider grammar and sentence structure. Who or what is the subject of the sentence? To whom do the pronouns refer? In what tense is the verb?
7. Understand analogies, figures of speech, etc. Jesus Himself sometimes used exaggeration (pluck out your eye, cut off your arm), comparison, simile (I am the Door), and other literary devices to make a point. These are generally obvious. If not, they should only be considered after using other methods of interpretation.
8. Never base a doctrine on a single verse or rhetorical question (i.e. [1 Cor. 15.29](#) about being baptized for the dead).
9. Understand the difference between a principle and a promise. The book of Proverbs, for example, is a book of general truths and principles, not ironclad promises.
10. Always interpret personal experience in light of Scripture, not Scripture in light of personal experience.