

MEN
— IN THE —
Word
DISCOVERING GOD'S TRUTH FOR YOURSELF

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with a central upward-pointing triangle and two spiral motifs at the ends.

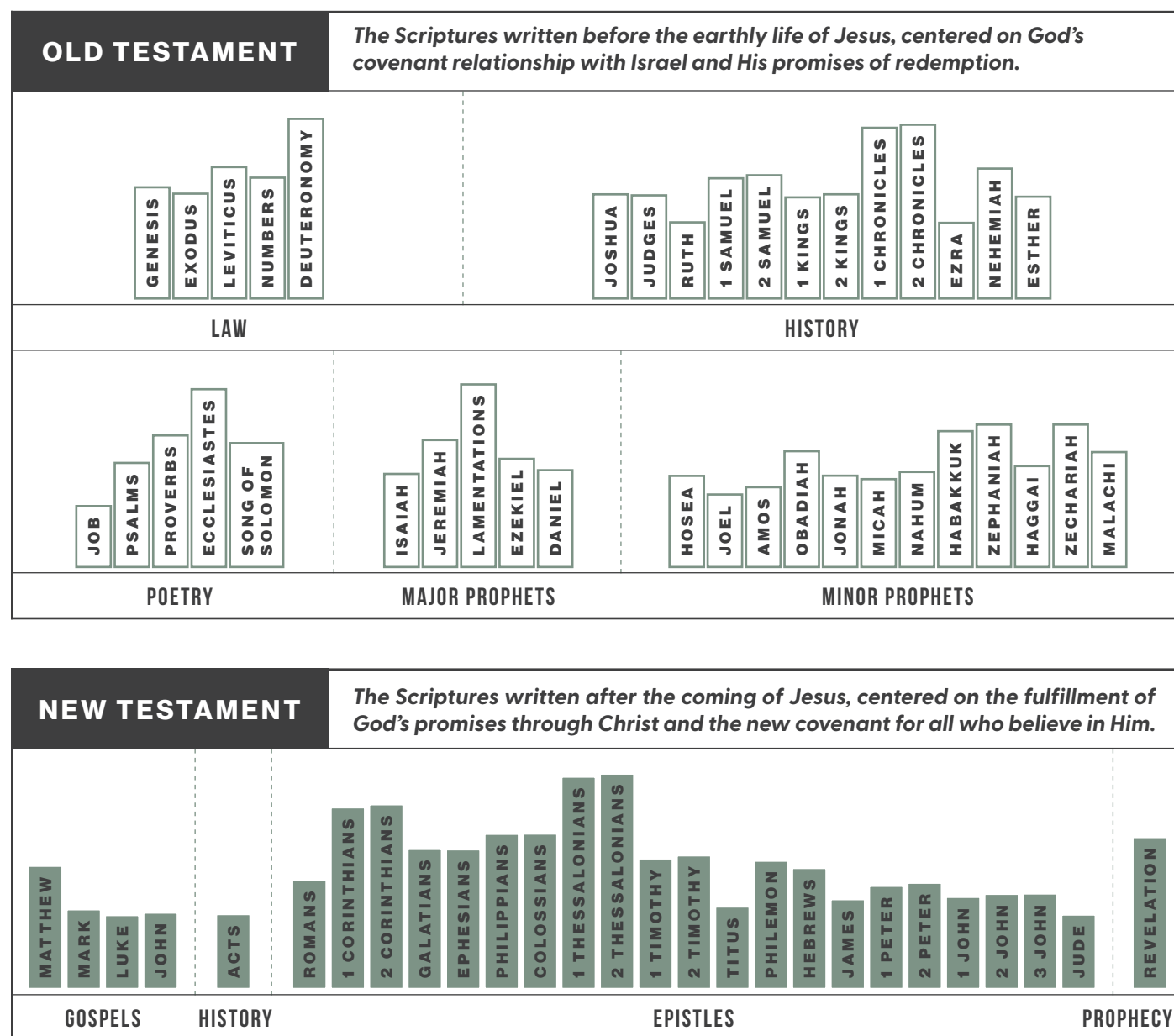
HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is one story centered on Christ, declaring God's love.

We come to know God as we read His Word. As Jen Wilkin says, *"The Bible is a book that boldly and clearly reveals who God is on every page."*

It contains 66 separate books, written over approximately 1,500 years by the Holy Spirit, who inspired more than 40 authors. These men held a variety of jobs, including king, prophet, priest, royal advisor, fisherman, tax collector, doctor, scribe, soldier, shepherd, and tentmaker. It is organized into two sections:



The Bible contains a mix of different genres:

- » **Law:** Legal, ethical, and ritual commands for God's people, introduced under the Old Covenant.
- » **History:** Narratives based on true accounts of historical events.
- » **Poetry:** Verses intended to be spoken or sung that appeal to emotion and may include symbolism or imaginative language.
- » **Prophecy:** God's will spoken authoritatively for correction or encouragement, often foretelling His plans in response to human choices.
- » **Gospels:** The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.
- » **Epistles:** Letters containing the apostles' teaching, explanations, commands, corrections, and encouragement.

An Overview of the Bible: The 7 C's of Redemptive Context

- » **Creation (Genesis 1-2):** God creates a perfect universe and everything in it.
- » **Curse (Genesis 3):** Adam and Eve disobey God, bringing sin, suffering, and death into the world.
- » **Covenant (Genesis 3:15-Malachi):** God chooses the Israelites to be His special people, promising to love and bless them if they will trust and obey Him.
- » **Christ (Gospels):** Jesus, the Son of God, comes to earth to live the perfect life that humans could not live, doing miracles and preaching the kingdom of God.
- » **Cross (Gospels):** Jesus dies on the cross for all sins, is resurrected on the third day, appears alive to over 500 witnesses, and then returns to Heaven.
- » **Church (Acts/Epistles):** Jesus' followers form the Church, making disciples and teaching them to do everything He commanded them.
- » **Consummation (Revelation):** The future fulfillment of God's promise when He returns to renew the universe, destroy death, and live forever with His people.

We read God's Word:

Prayerfully
Repeatedly
Patiently
Meditatively
Purposefully
Inquisitively

Helpful Tools:

A printed copy of the text
Colored pencils or highlighters
A list of God's attributes
Prayer

Three Basic Steps to Studying God's Word:

Observation:
What do I see?

Interpretation:
What does it mean?

Application:
What shall I do?

OBSERVATION

What do I see?

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105

What is Observation:

- » **Investigating the Text:** “What do I see?”
- » **Gathering Facts:** “What does it say?”
- » **Systems of Logic in Observation:**
 - Inductive: moving from specific details to broad generalizations.
 - Deductive: starts with a general premise or theory and tests it against specific cases.
- » **Observing with a Biblical Worldview:** the foundational framework through which a person interprets reality, makes sense of life, and determines values.

Observation Asks:

- » Who wrote it?
- » Who is talking?
- » To whom was it written?
- » When was it written?
- » Where was it written?
- » How are the people involved responding?

Keys to Observation:

» **Structure and Grammar**

- Subject and object
- Verbs and verb tenses
- Connective words: but, and, therefore
- Prepositions
- Adjectives and adverbs

» **Emphasized:** Big repeated idea, author's stated purpose, amount of space given to subject

- Example: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:30-31 (NIV)

» **Repeated:** Terms, phrases, concepts, patterns, repeated scripture from the OT by the NT

- Example: "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good.
His love endures forever.
Give thanks to the God of gods.
His love endures forever." Psalm 136:1-2 (NIV)

» **Related:** Lists, points in a row, cause/effect (therefore, so, then, as a result), purpose clause (so that), questions/answers

- Example: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 (NIV)
- Example: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

» **Alike:** Similes, metaphors (like, to, as, also)

- Example: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." 1 Peter 2:2-3 (NIV)
- Example: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my souls for you, O God." Psalm 42:1 (ESV)

» **Unlike:** Contrast (but, yet), change of direction

- Example: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies." 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 (ESV)

» **Atmosphere:** Doubt, instruction, encouragement

» **Literary Form:** Narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, epistle

Observation Practice:

READ JAMES 1:1-27

Record observations directly on the separate scripture handout.

If needed, use the space below for additional observations:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

INTERPRETATION

What does it mean?

“The unfolding of your word gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” Psalm 119:13

What is Interpretation:

- » The Bible is our authority. Everything we believe is rooted in what God says about reality.
- » Interpretation is hard because we have to overcome so many barriers (*linguistic, geographic, historic, cultural, literary*) to understand what it meant when it was written.
- » Scripture has one meaning, but we can apply it to our lives in many ways.
- » Always go to Scripture first before you consult helpful tools.

Pitfalls of Interpretation:

- » **Misreading:** Not reading the text accurately
- » **Distortion:** Trying to make the Bible say something it doesn't say
- » **Contradicting:** Using Scripture to authorize practices that go against God's character
- » **Subjectivism:** Basing interpretation on personal taste rather than fact
- » **Relativism:** Assuming the Bible's meaning changes over time

Keys to Interpretation:

CONTENT

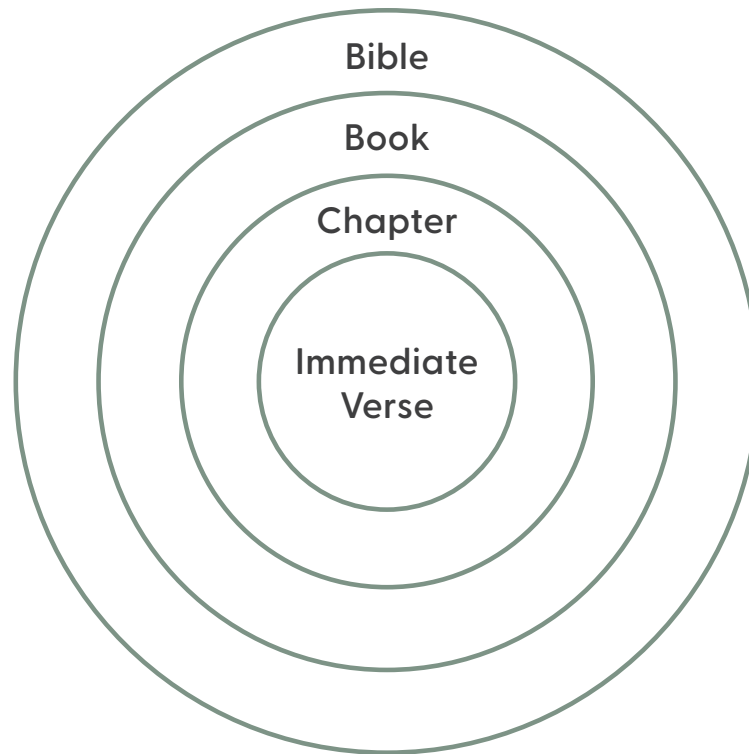
Observe the text thoroughly:

- » **Literal and figurative language**
 - *Literal: factual, concrete, and straightforward*
 - *Figurative: imaginative, poetic, and symbolic*
 - *Always assume a literal meaning unless there is a good reason not to.*
- » **Descriptive and prescriptive passages**
 - *Descriptive: this is what happened*
 - *Prescriptive: this is what God wants you to do*

CONTEXT:

Understand the setting of what you're studying:

- » **Literary:** Study the background of the text
 - *The book: author, date, place of writing, reason for writing, audience, genre, where it sits in the flow of the Bible*



- *The specific passage: look at the verse, sentence, paragraph, surrounding paragraphs, chapter, section, book, Bible as a whole*

- » **Historical:** Be aware of the time period, social system, political situation, and legal and ethical practices of the day.
- » **Cultural:** Study the ancient cultures involved in your passage. What did they believe, say, do, wear, eat, produce, write?
- » **Geographic:** Look at cities, terrain, weather patterns, trade routes, and tourism.
- » **Theological:** Take note of these facts from when the passage was written.
 - *What this author knew about God?*
 - *What his readers knew about God?*
 - *How people worshiped God at that point?*
 - *How much Scripture did they have access to?*
 - *What religions and worldviews were influential?*

COMPARISON:

Let the Bible explain itself:

- » Use cross-references. See how a word is used in different verses.
- » Don't compartmentalize the Bible. It is all one story about one God.
- » Use the Old Testament to help you understand the New Testament and vice versa.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MODERN AND ORIGINAL READERS OF THE BOOK OF JAMES	NOW	THEN
What is the year?		
What language is used?		
Where is the reader located?		
Who is the audience?		
What is the audience's economic status?		
Where is the reader going to church?		
How is the message reaching the reader?		

Helpful Tools:

- » **Different versions of the Bible:** ESV, NIV, NASB (*for language barriers*)
- » **Atlases:** maps (*for geographic barriers*)
- » **Bible and standard dictionaries:** origin, meaning, and use of key words and terms (*for language barriers*)
- » **Bible handbooks:** helpful information on biblical subjects (*for cultural and historic barriers*)
- » **Commentaries:** a Bible scholar's study of the text (*for language, historical, cultural, literary, and geographic barriers*)
- » **Interlinear texts:** translations with Hebrew or Greek text positioned between lines for comparison (*for language barriers*)
- » **Concordance:** an index to the Bible (*for language barriers*)
- » **Study Bible:** a Bible with commentary notes alongside the text (*for language, historical, cultural, literary, and geographic barriers*)

*See **Resources** (Page 20) for more information, including free options.

Interpretation Asks:

- » What do the words say?
- » How do these words fit in the verse, chapter, book, and Bible as a whole?
- » What is the literary, historical, cultural, geographic, and theological setting for the passage?
- » What did these words mean when they were written?

Interpretation Practice:

“...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” James 1:3 (ESV)

READ JAMES 1:3 THREE TIMES, MAKING OBSERVATIONS AS YOU GO.

What do you think it means to use only the text itself as a starting point?

NOW READ JAMES 1:2-4 THROUGH THREE TIMES.

What more do you understand about the meaning of James 1:3 after getting more context from the surrounding verses?

NOW READ THROUGH THE REFERENCE MATERIAL ON THE NEXT PAGE.

What else have you learned about the meaning of this verse from this information?

Alternate Version

“...because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” James 1:3 (NIV)

Word Study

Dictionary definition of “steadfastness”: firmness in purpose, resolution, faith, attachment, etc.; the fact or quality of being fixed or steady in direction or position (*dictionary.com*)

Bible dictionary definition of “steadfastness”: the quality of being resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering. In a biblical context, it is often associated with faithfulness, perseverance, and endurance in the face of trials and challenges. Steadfastness is a virtue that is highly esteemed in Scripture, as it reflects a deep commitment to God and His purposes. (*Bible Hub, Topical Encyclopedia*)

Cross-references

- » “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance.” *Romans 5:3*
- » “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...” *Hebrews 12:1*
- » “...so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” *1 Peter 1:7*

Commentary

For the Christian, testing of faith defines what a trial means: as Jesus was “tested” in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:1-13*), so believers are tested. The Greek *dokimion* (“testing”) denotes a positive test intended to make one’s faith “genuine” (cf. *1 Peter 1:7*). The result is steadfastness, a life of faithful endurance amid troubles and afflictions. (*from ESV Study Bible notes on James 1:3*)

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- » You can’t understand the Bible unless the Holy Spirit helps you. Ask Him for help.
- » Christians sometimes disagree about what a passage means. “*God is not confused about what He has said, even if we are.*” (*Living by the Book*)
- » Be patient. Sometimes it takes time for us to understand.
- » Be humble. We won’t understand everything, but we can understand enough to believe, trust, and obey.
- » Be faithful. Studying your Bible is a way to love God with all your mind, and there are so many blessings that come from it if you don’t give up.
- » Think, study, and ask questions. God is not afraid of your questions!

APPLICATION

What shall I do?

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.” James 1:22

What is Application:

Application is empowered by the Holy Spirit and expressed through obedience. It is not a to-do list.

EFFECTIVE APPLICATION IS:

- » Prayerful
- » A decision, not an emotion
- » Requires a plan of action
- » Complete obedience, not partial

FOUR STEPS OF APPLICATION:

1. Know the text and yourself
 2. Relate God’s truth to one’s own experience
 3. Meditate on His Word
 4. Practice obedience and repentance
-

Application Asks:

- » Is there something to learn or trust about God’s character?
- » Is there a promise to trust?
- » Is there a sin to confess and repent?
- » Is there a command to obey?
- » Is there an example to follow?
- » Is there a prayer to repeat?
- » Is there a verse to memorize or pray?
- » How should this scripture change me?

Five Substitutes for Application:

1. Interpretation for application
2. Superficial obedience for substantive life change
3. Rationalization for repentance
4. An emotional experience for a volitional decision
5. Communication for transformation

Application Practice:

APPLY JAMES 1:1-27 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Are any truths revealed about God's character?

2. Is there a promise to trust?

3. Is there a truth I need to believe?

4. Is there a sin to be confessed?

5. Is there a command to obey? Is there a warning to heed?

6. Is there an example to follow?

7. Is there a prayer to repeat?

8. Is there a verse to pray or memorize?

9. How should this scripture change me?



WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship is:

- » A command to disciple, not an invitation to an event
- » An invitation to a way of life, not a program
- » Demonstrating care for the spiritual well-being of others, not just ourselves
- » A culture of getting our Bibles open with one another, one-on-one, in our informal settings.
- » Seeking and following Jesus together and being transformed into His likeness together
- » Having concern for one another that translates into intentional actions that aim to encourage and spur one another on in love and knowledge of Jesus
- » Word-based, relationship-driven

Discipleship can look different, but the essentials are:

- » Proclaim Christ
- » On-going
- » Desire each other's maturity in Christ
- » All in God's strength
- » Multiplication

Common Questions Regarding Discipleship

AM I TRAINED ENOUGH?

- » Know and follow Jesus
- » Eager for others to know and follow Jesus
- » Keep trusted others in the loop

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE TIME?

- » Pray and ask God to show you what time you do have.
- » Set boundaries and decide on a period of time to meet.

WHO SHOULD I ASK?

- » Those who are hungry to learn and grow.
- » Those who are struggling at the moment and would benefit from specific encouragement in the Word.
- » Those who don't yet know Jesus.
- » Those with whom you would like to build Jesus-centered friendships.

HOW DO I START A GROUP?

Pray

- » Ask God who He is leading you to invite, for the opportunity to ask, and for God to prepare hearts to hear and respond to His Word.

Invite

- » Personally invite them to join you or your group.

Study

- » Choose a book of the Bible and use the provided resource to guide your time.
(Resources on the Currey Creek Website under Discipleship Groups)

Apply

- » Live out what you're learning through obedience, prayer, and authentic relationships.

Multiply

- » Go and do this again with others.

Who Might God Be Calling Me to Disciple?

Use this worksheet to prayerfully consider the people God may already have placed in your life.

CATEGORY	WHO COMES TO MIND?	POSSIBLE NEXT STEP
<i>Unbeliever</i>		
<i>New Believer</i>		
<i>Someone Struggling</i>		
<i>Friendship to Deepen</i>		
<i>Family Member</i>		
<i>Neighbor</i>		
<i>Work Friend</i>		

Reflection Questions

- » Who seems spiritually open or curious?
- » Who is going through a hard season?
- » Where do I already have trust and influence?
- » Who am I already naturally spending time with?
- » Who may simply need encouragement and consistency?
- » What is one intentional next step I could take this week?

Attributes of God

GOD IS ALL-WISE

His wisdom is perfect and unchanging. God's thoughts and ways are always good, right, and true.

GOD IS ETERNAL

He is everlasting from everlasting. He has no beginning or end, has always been, and will always be.

GOD IS FAITHFUL *He is always true to every one of his promises and trustworthy in all his ways.*

GOD IS GLORIOUS *He is infinitely beautiful and great.*

God's glory is the revelation of himself in all his splendor, excellence, and perfection.

GOD IS GOOD *He is perfectly, completely good in his essence and incapable of evil.*

All that emanates and originates from God is eternally and immutably good.

GOD IS GRACIOUS *He gives us what we don't deserve. God bestows unmerited favor upon sinners.*

GOD IS HOLY *He is absolute perfection and purity.*

God is totally set apart from creation, separated from sin and abhorrent to it.

GOD IS IMMANENT *He is intimately involved in his creation, personal, near, and accessible.*

GOD IS IMMUTABLE *He never changes. God's character, counsel, and purposes do not evolve, improve or diminish. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE

He is personal and knowable, but we will never understand him exhaustively.

GOD IS INFINITE *He has no limits. He is unsearchable, unrestricted, endless, and impossible to measure.*

GOD IS JEALOUS *He is possessive of the people and worship that belong to Him alone and works to lovingly preserve and protect them from sin, to his honor and glory.*

GOD IS JUST *He is right and perfect in all he does.*

GOD IS LONG-SUFFERING *He is patient with sinners, withholding judgment and desiring their repentance.*

GOD IS LOVING *He loves us infinitely, unconditionally, and graciously.*

GOD IS MERCIFUL *He does not give us what our sins deserve.*

God is compassionate and kind to the weak and hurting in distress and misery.

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT *He is all-powerful.*

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT *He is everywhere, all the time.*

GOD IS OMNISCIENT *He is all-knowing. Nothing is unknown to Him – past, present or future.*

GOD IS TRANSCENDENT

He is the creator of all things and yet distinct, independent of and exalted above his creation.

GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT *He is dependent on nothing and no one.*

God is uncreated, has no origin, and is the creator and sustainer of all things.

GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT *He has no needs.*

GOD IS SOVEREIGN *He is in control. The creator, sustainer, and ruler over all things, God alone is all-knowing, all-powerful, and freely exercises divine authority over all.*

RESOURCES

Tips for Selecting a Bible

- » Includes good study references (*example: ESV Study Bible*)
- » Wide margins to make notes
- » Cross references
- » Concordance in the back

Study Tools

CONCORDANCE

- » The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
- » Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible

BIBLE DICTIONARY

- » Vine's Expository Dictionary
- » Douglas' New Bible Dictionary

ATLAS

- » Moody Atlas of Bible Lands

COMMENTARY

- » Laymon's Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary of the Bible
- » Gaebelein's Expositor's Bible Commentary

Online Resources

- » Bible.org
- » Biblegateway.com
- » Blueletterbible.org
- » DesiringGod.org
- » ESV.org



35 Cascade Caverns Road | Boerne, Tx 78015
830.755.8806 | curreycreek.com | info@curreycreek.com