

Using the Bible in Your Writing

A Basic Method for Studying a Passage

Studying Scripture should be done early in the writing process, and as it judges the thoughts and attitudes of your heart, it may even drive you to make major revisions in your original idea, since you are no longer pooling your ignorance, but getting God's perspective on the subject. Here are some basic principles for studying a passage:

1. Pray for wisdom. What — you thought you could understand the Bible without any help from God?! Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth. That's His job, after all.
2. Read the passage *yourself* first — before looking at any other books that say what others think of it. After you have read it once, read it again — and again, and again. Read it until you can put its message into your own words.
3. Begin to look for interconnections between words. Are certain words repeated? Who or what is doing the action in the sentences? Who or what is being acted upon?
4. Note what literary form the passage is in, such as historical narrative, poetry or instruction. How does this literary form affect the meaning of the passage?
5. Read the *context* of the passage as well — perhaps as much as a chapter before and a chapter after. Re-read until you begin to see how the passage in question relates to the rest of the chapter, and/or the rest of the book.
6. Check related texts — those Scripture passages that contain the same topics, concepts or words.

Now you can look at commentaries from other authors, and be able to weigh their statements based on your own in-depth study, rather than simply taking everything they say as true, or parroting their ideas.