



SOAP GUIDE
For a deep dive in Bible Study

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What is S.O.A.P.?

It's a prayerful 4-step process of **S**cripture, **O**bservation, **A**pplication and **P**rayer.

It's a way to get more out of your personal time in God's Word whether you have 10 minutes or an hour.

It's a simple method for those who are new to Bible study and those who are experienced in Bible study. Both can use it to get to know God better and be transformed by his word.

It's a tool that can show anyone they can read, understand and study God's Word for themselves.

It helps us hear God's voice for ourselves and receive his very personal messages for us.

It's a means to grow together in our love for God and our obedience to his mission by sharing what we've observed, applied and prayed for in our personal Bible study.

SOAP facilitates effective Bible study by yourself and with others.

What You'll Need

You'll need your Bible, a notebook or journal and pen or pencil.

For deeper study, there are several excellent online study resources, such as:

- Biblegateway.com
- YouVersion Bible app or YouVersion.com
- Blue Letter Bible app or BlueLetterBible.org
- The Bible Project videos on YouTube.com

How does S.O.A.P. work?

Scripture

Read the verse, passage or chapter. If the passage is a longer one, write down the verse or verses (1-4 verses is a good) you feel drawn to, are curious about, or that is especially meaningful to you.

If you have time or are studying this passage over several days or weeks, you may choose to delve into another part or several parts of the passage.

Pray and ask “God, what do you want me to focus in on?” *Start by writing down the verse or verses that stood out to you.*

Observation

You can spend a few minutes or even hours observing the text and come away with truth that feeds your life, your walk with God, how you live on mission with him. With that said, the more time you spend “noticing,” the more you’ll notice!

The goal is clean, clear observation of what’s happening in the text. Helpful questions to ask yourself are:

What do I learn about God?

What do I learn about others and myself?

When you have time for more extensive study, it’s helpful to process the following questions as well:

- Who wrote the passage?
- Who’s being addressed?
- Who’s mentioned?
- Why was it written?
- What’s the history or background here?

Tips to dig deeper in observation:

Are there names, places or practices mentioned that would be helpful to know more about? Where else does the Bible speak about these people, places or practices?

Look for unusual or unclear words. Where else is this word used in Scripture and how does that shed light on its meaning? Can reading the passage in a different translation help you understand?

What other passages in Scripture does this remind you of? How do these passages relate? Or, read the passage in another translation to understand unclear words/phrases or get a fuller perspective.

Consider these things, then pray and ask, “God, why did you write this?”

Write down what the Holy Spirit leads you to observe.

(Note: Not all of these tips for observing are needed for studying every Scripture. Consider them tools to use when it makes sense to use them.)

Application

Spend time on this step making it as practical as you can. How can your life reflect what you’ve just learned or been reminded of? What difference does this truth make to YOU?

The acrostic SPECS lays out several ways you can apply a Scripture to your life right now. Is God showing you a...?

Sin to Avoid or Confess

Promise to Claim

Example to Follow

Command to Obey

Statement about God

Pray and ask, “God, what should I do as a result of reading this?”

Also ask, “How would I tell what I’ve learned to someone I know?”

Write down what you hear.

Prayer

Pray and ask, “God, help me respond to your truth by...”

Write out a heartfelt prayer based on how God is inviting you to respond. Pray this prayer for yourself.

Things to Consider as you Study God’s Word

Hermeneutics, or the methods we use to interpret the Bible, are important! Keep these three key hermeneutical principles in mind as you SOAP.

1. The Principle of the Text and Context – “Context is King.” How does the passage relate to what is written immediately before and after?
2. The Principle of Repetition – Repetition usually indicates emphasis and importance in a text.
3. The Principle of Genre – (“Genre” refers to literary style; the Bible is rich with many genres. For example, Genesis and Acts are historical narrative. Psalms are poetry. Proverbs are short instructive statements on how we should live (a form of wisdom literature), while books like Revelations include both prophecy and apocalyptic genres. The Bible also contains epistles (letters), parables, prose, gospels and books of law.

A passage of Scripture should be interpreted in light of its genre. For example, descriptions of fantastic animals in apocalyptic literature should not necessarily be interpreted literally but should be seen as descriptions of persons, forces, or institutions. We must consider how the passage’s genre affects how we interpret it.