

# BIBLE STUDY METHODS

## The Timothy Method<sup>1</sup>

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

The Timothy method asks key questions about the four purposes of Scripture—teaching the truth, rebuking sin, correcting spiritual deficiencies, and training in godliness which help guide us as we evaluate and apply Scripture.

### Teaching

Begin with the first purpose of Scripture listed in 2 Timothy 3:16, teaching. “What does this passage teach?” Boil it down to a simple statement (or statements) of truth. Ask these clarifying questions. “What does this passage say about God? What does it say about man? What does it say about my relationship with God and others?” Everything in God’s Word relates to these simple questions. Jesus declared that all of the Bible hangs on the two commands to love God and love others (see Matt 22:34-40). Scripture becomes incredibly practical when you look at it in the light of these questions. To help cement the truths you find, write down everything you discover. Writing out your thoughts will do wonders to clarify your understanding of God’s Word.

### Rebuking

The second purpose of God’s Word that Paul describes is rebuke. Scripture rebukes us by revealing our sin and the ways we fall short of God’s standards. Once you see what a passage teaches, prayerfully ask if there is any way that you are violating this truth. Ask, “Am I falling short in this area? If so, how?” If you sense conviction, ask yourself, “Where and how is this sin taking place?”

It's critical to identify clearly how you fall short. For example, it’s not enough to know that you have a problem with anger. Responding properly to rebuke means specifically confessing where sin is rearing its head. Don’t just say, “I have a problem with anger.” Instead, identify how you sinfully express that anger: “When I’m angry, I tend to be critical of my spouse.” Finally, ask yourself, “Is this sin the problem or just a symptom of a deeper issue?” Many times, sin manifests itself in our lives as a response to other, less visible problems. Criticizing my spouse may be the result of my frustration at work or some other cause. Unless we deal with the root, the weeds will grow again. Real change demands that we go below the surface.

### Correcting

The third purpose of the Bible is correction. The Word of God not only rebukes us when we get off track, but it shows us the on-ramp back to the right road. Correction begins by asking,

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<sup>1</sup> Slightly modified. Green, K. (1998). The Timothy Method. Discipleship Journal, 106, p. 16-17

“What is the opposite of my sin?” For example, if I have a problem with uncontrolled anger, God desires patience and self-control. Next, ask yourself, “What action do I need to take to get back on track?” Write down specific ways that you could display right behavior. For example, I will listen to my wife’s point of view before I respond, and I will respond with a calm tone of voice. Pray that God would enable you to begin to make changes you’ve recognized are necessary.

### Training in Righteousness

Finally, God’s Word trains us in righteousness. The goal of the Christian race is to finish well. We must not only get back on the right track, but we must stay there. Hebrews 12:1 instructs us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and . . . run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” The Word of God trains us to run with perseverance. Ask, “What do I need to do to stay on track? The answer may be revealed in the passage you’re studying. However, you may also need to consider other scriptures to answer this question. Maybe you need to commit to pray about the issue at hand or memorize certain verses on the subject. Long-term change demands that we transform our minds and hearts. Use this final question as a catalyst to help you develop a plan of action.

### The Four Purposes of Scripture

<b>TEACH</b>	<b>REBUKE</b>	<b>CORRECT</b>	<b>TRAIN</b>
<i>What is the truth taught here?</i>	<i>Am I falling short? If so, how?</i>	<i>What is the opposite of my sin?</i>	<i>What do I need to do to stay on track?</i>
<i>What does the passage say about God?</i>	<i>Where and how is this sin taking place?</i>	<i>What action do I need to take get back on track?</i>	
<i>. . . about man?</i>	<i>Is this sin the problem or a symptom of the problem?</i>		
<i>. . . about my relationship with God and/or others?</i>			