

Prepare

Gather Context

The first step to studying any passage of Scripture is gathering context. For each passage you will study, understanding the larger context is essential to sound interpretation. The best way to gather context is by **reading the whole book!** You can read or listen to the audio book in your favorite version. The purpose is to see the broader story from beginning to end before digging beneath the surface. If you aren't able to read the whole book, read several chapters before and after your passage. Refer to a few outside resources to answer the questions at the beginning of your journal to help you frame the context of your passage. Use the following questions as a guide.

- Who is the author(s) and audience?
- Where is the author and audience?
- What are the key features of their location?
- When was this book written?
- When did the events in the book take place?
- When did the events take place in terms of redemptive history or the bigger narrative of Scripture? Exile, Exodus, church age, etc
- What is the main genre of this book?
Narrative, law, poetry, etc.
- What are the key features of this book?
- What is the overall theme of book?
- What happened directly before your passage?

Pray for Wisdom

You won't notice prayer as a separate step listed in this method. Prayer isn't a piece of the process, it permeates the process. Prayer is a two-way conversation with God: honest sharing and reflective listening. Prayer acts like the canvas on which the painting is created. God doesn't begin to listen at 'Dear Heavenly Father' and shut off at 'Amen'. Acknowledge His presence always. Ask for wisdom and understanding. From start to finish, we are in conversation with the One revealing Himself to us.