

 BibleGateway Plus

5-Day Bible Study

HOW TO READ A VERSE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

By Christopher Reese



Throughout this Bible study are links to Bible Gateway reference resource notes that automatically open corresponding to the Bible text on your screen.

Day 1: Setting the Stage

One of the most indispensable spiritual practices for a Christian is regular Bible study. This is because Scripture is the primary means by which God has revealed himself to humanity.¹ In the Bible, God reveals “his nature, works, will, [and] purposes.”² Consequently, God desires his people to become intimately familiar with his Word.

The [apostle Paul](#) declared its principal benefits when he wrote, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)).



Respected Christian leaders affirm the importance of scriptural study as well. Bible scholar Charles C. Ryrie contended that “the Bible is the greatest of all books; to study it is the noblest of all pursuits; to understand it, the highest of all goals.” New Testament scholar D.A. Carson writes that with the Bible “we are dealing with God’s thoughts” and are therefore “obligated to take the greatest pains to understand them truly and to explain them clearly.”³

Most Christians realize that [engaging with the Bible](#) is significant, but we’re also aware of the hurdles involved. Bible study takes time, and there is a wide variety of scriptural material—[several dozen books](#), [two Testaments](#), and more than 1,000 pages in the average Bible. The texts are at least 2,000 years old, written by people who lived in very different locations and cultures than most of us.

The best way to approach any challenging project is by having a plan. This is true if you’re going to renovate your house, change careers, or understand Scripture. So, in this 5-day study, you’ll walk through several steps that will help you grasp any verse or passage of God’s Word you encounter. These are trustworthy ways students of Scripture master to uncover the meaning of the Bible. In fact, we’ll take the biblical verse [Romans 12:2](#) through these methods together so you can see a specific example of how each step is

done. We'll also make use of several of the [helpful reference tools available with Bible Gateway](#) and your [Bible Gateway Plus](#) membership. At the end, you'll have interpreted this verse and be able to apply the same steps to any passage you study.

The ultimate reason we want to [engage with and understand Scripture](#) is to more deeply know and love God, to advance his kingdom, and to strengthen our soul. [Peter](#) encouraged his readers to “crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” ([1 Peter 2:2](#)). Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians would be filled “with the knowledge of [God’s] will” so they would “live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work” ([Colossians 1:9-10](#)).

We hope you'll find this study encouraging and useful, and that the resource knowledge you gain will help you uncover the deep riches of God's Word from now on.

Reflections

1. Which of the Scripture passages above on studying God's Word speaks to you the most? Type it into the “Your Content” area of your Bible Gateway personal account or write it in a notebook and try to memorize it.
2. Which of the quotations we looked at from Christian leaders do you find most compelling? Why?
3. If friends asked you why you think it's important to study the Bible, what reasons would you give?

Notes

1. God has most fully revealed himself in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, but since we only have access to these through Scripture, it is the primary way we gain knowledge of God's revelation.
 2. As the noted Bible scholar B. B. Warfield explained. Quoted in Guy Prentiss Waters, [For the Mouth of the Lord Has Spoken: The Doctrine of Scripture](#) (Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2020), Kindle edition, 16.
 3. “12 Inspiring Quotes about Studying Scripture,” *Jesus Film Project* (blog), www.jesusfilm.org/blog/studying-scripture-quotes/.
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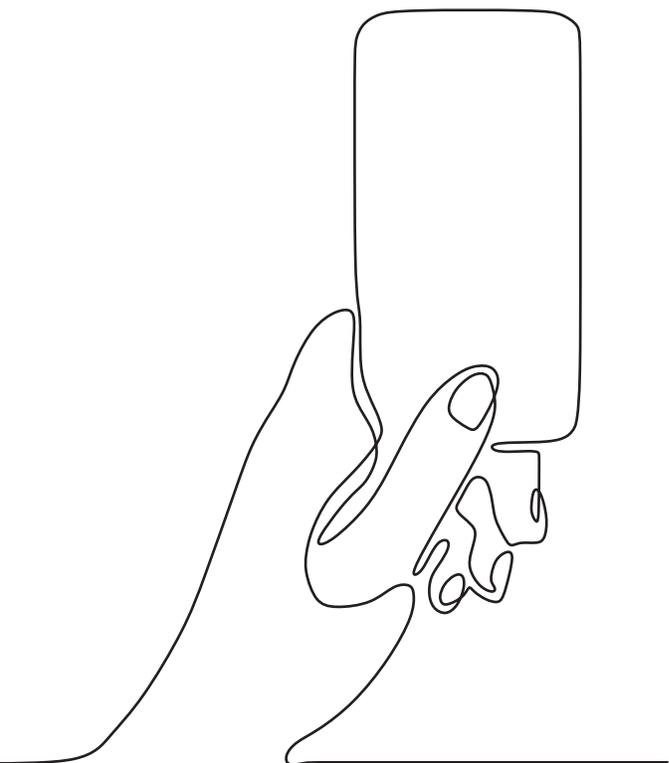
Day 2:

Getting the Big Picture

Imagine you and a friend are together in your living room, each reading a different book. Your friend is about halfway through her volume, which you've never read, and suddenly asks, "What do you think this passage means?" She then reads a few sentences out loud and waits to hear your opinion. Or suppose a different friend quotes a line from his favorite movie, one you haven't watched, and says, "What do you think this line means?"

Both situations are challenging because you're missing the critical element that's required to make an informed interpretation: context. Since you haven't read the book or seen the movie, trying to make sense of an isolated snippet is, for the most part, shooting in the dark. You can make your best guess, but you're likely missing crucial information that would allow you to make an enlightened and correct assessment.

The same is true for the Bible. Without considering the relevant contexts in which a verse is written, a high likelihood exists that you'll misinterpret, or fail to fully grasp, the meaning of the verse. So, our first step in reading a verse for all its worth is to consider the *wide and immediate contexts*. We'll begin with the wide context, using our example verse, [Romans 12:2](#).



Wide Context—The Bible's Big Storyline

To help determine the meaning of a verse, we first want to get an "aerial view" of its location in the Bible. That perspective gives us important information about how to interpret it. So, the first context we'll consider is the *Bible's Big Storyline*. Many Christians aren't aware the Bible has an overarching plot that begins in [Genesis](#) and ends in [Revelation](#). One helpful way to think of this story is as a drama that takes place in four "Acts":

- 1) *Creation*
- 2) *Fall*
- 3) *Redemption* and
- 4) *Consummation*.

The [Old Testament](#) contains Act 1 and Act 2, *Creation* and *Fall*, but also predicts and looks forward to Acts 3 and 4, *Redemption* and *Consummation*, which take place in the [New Testament](#).¹ The [book of Genesis](#) records both God's *creation* of the universe and our world, and the *Fall* of [Adam and Eve](#) when they sinned in the [Garden of Eden](#). God had [warned](#) Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. [As Genesis 3](#) records, they did die by losing their spiritual connection with God, and would also eventually die physically as a result. This event is known as the *Fall*.

But God also predicted that a male descendant of Eve would one day destroy the devil's work ([Genesis 3:15](#)), and from our vantage point we can see this was fulfilled by [Jesus Christ](#), who delivered *redemption* (Act 3) ([Ephesians 1:7](#)).

This brings us to the final act, *Consummation*. Because the entire creation was damaged by the *Fall* ([Genesis 3:14-19](#)), in the future God will create a new earth and new heavens. As described in the New Testament [book of Revelation](#), God “‘will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” ([Revelation 21:4](#)). This will be the culmination of God's rescue plan, stretching from the first book of the Bible to the last.

Since this is the Bible's Big Storyline, every biblical verse fits into this story, like every piece of a jigsaw puzzle contributes to the puzzle's finished picture. Viewed from a different angle, no individual verse will ever contradict this story, but only add to or supplement it. So, let's quote our verse below and see where it fits within this big story.



“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” ([Romans 12:2](#))

The [book of Romans](#) is found in the [New Testament](#), and as we saw above, the New Testament unfolds the events of *Redemption* and *Consummation*. Since this verse doesn’t relate to God restoring creation (*Consummation*), we can see that it must relate to *Redemption*. Indeed, the apostle Paul, who wrote the [book of Romans](#), is giving instructions to God’s *redeemed* people about how they should live.

Redemption is a broad category, so this by itself doesn’t give us great detail about the meaning of our verse. But it’s vitally important to understand how this (and any) verse relates to the overall storyline of the Bible so we can properly interpret it.

Surrounding Context

Now that we’ve gotten an aerial view of our verse, we want to zoom in closer to get a better look at the details. We’re still focused on context, however, so the next level of context we need to consider is the *book* in which the verse appears. Our study verse, [Romans 12:2](#), is in the [book of Romans](#). With this knowledge in hand, we can start collecting important information that will help us understand the verse.

This is where study tools, like [those in Bible Gateway](#) and [Bible Gateway Plus](#), become essential. Since our verse comes from [Romans](#), a number of important questions arise:

- Who is the author of Romans?
- Who were the original recipients of Romans?
- Why did the author write it?
- What content does it contain?
- How does our verse fit in the writer’s flow of thought?

These are fundamental questions whose answers will help us understand our verse. In fact, they’re the same questions we would ask about any book in order to interpret a particular sentence, paragraph, or chapter within it.

Romans 1 ▾ New International Version ▾

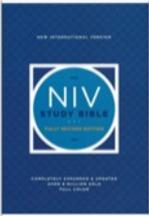
1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— **2** the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures **3** regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, **4** and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. **5** Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. **6** And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resources Hebrew/Greek Your Content

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 **NIV Study Bible Notes, Fully Revised Edition**
[NIV Study Bible](#),
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 PLUS

30 entries for **Romans 1**

Introduction to Romans

Romans

Thankfully, there’s a single resource that usually answers all of these questions—a study Bible—and there are several from which to choose and compare using your [Bible Gateway Plus](#) membership. For this example, let’s look at the [NIV Study Bible](#). Simply type “Romans 1” in the search box on the Bible Gateway [homepage](#), and press “enter” on your keyboard or click the magnifying glass icon. The menu of all the study tools will appear beneath the “Resources” link. Click “Study Bibles” and you’ll see the dozens that are available. Find “NIV Study Bible Notes, Fully Revised Edition” and select it. Then, click “[Introduction to Romans](#)” at the top of the screen. Scroll down and you’ll find bold headings that address all of the questions listed above (“Author,” “Recipients,” etc.).

While this document doesn’t allow space to describe the *NIV Study Bible’s* answers to all our questions, we’ll include an opportunity to explore some of them in the Reflections section below. The key point is that all the background information included in the introduction to the [book of Romans](#) provides valuable insights for interpreting [Romans 12:2](#). By understanding that the apostle Paul is the author, that he’s writing a letter (or epistle) to the Christians in Rome, what his purposes in writing were, and seeing an outline of his flow of thought, we’re in a much better position to interpret the meaning of [Romans 12:2](#).

For any verse you want to understand, read the introduction to the book in a study Bible or a commentary (to access commentaries, click “Commentaries” under “Resources”) where that verse is located.²

Reflections

1. Write down the four Acts of the Bible's Big Storyline. How does knowing this Storyline help you understand a particular verse of Scripture?
2. Categorize the following Scripture passages using the four Acts of the Storyline (*Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation*):
 - [Genesis 1:1](#) (to help you as an example, the answer is Creation. Answer the three below using *Fall* or *Redemption* or *Consummation*).
 - [2 Peter 3:10-13](#)
 - [Genesis 3:13-19](#)
 - [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)
3. Read the [introduction to Romans](#) in the *NIV Study Bible*. What are some reasons Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome (see the "Purposes" section)?
4. Read the "Contents" section in the introduction. Write down two or three points about the content of Romans that stand out to you.
5. We're still in the early stages of our study process, but is there something you've learned from the introduction to Romans that might help you understand [Romans 12:2](#) better?

Notes

1. For a helpful overview of the differences between the Old and New Testaments, see the Bible Gateway Blog article, [What's the Difference Between the Old Testament and the New Testament?](#)
 2. Book introductions in commentaries typically go into greater detail than those in study Bibles. Thus, a study Bible is often a good choice if you're looking for a brief overview of a book of the Bible. The same is true for the comments/explanations of the passages or verses in a study Bible—commentaries go into greater depth and detail.
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Day 3:

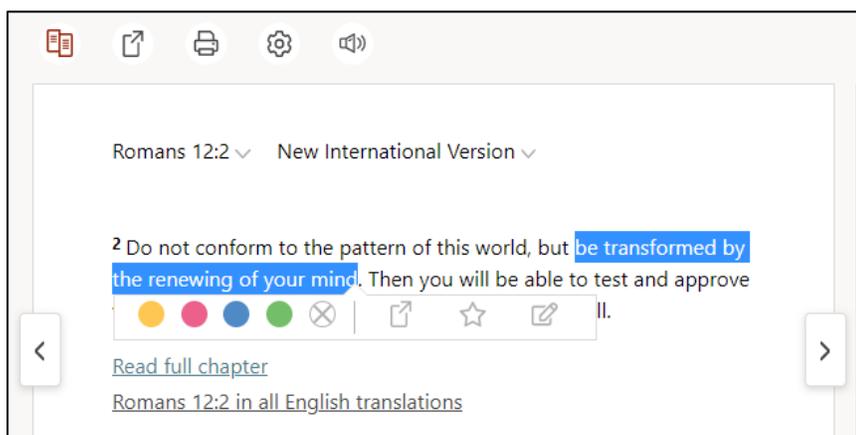
Observing the Verse

We've looked at the wide and immediate contexts of [Romans 12:2](#), and have gotten a bird's-eye view of the verse. We've seen the verse's place in the Storyline of the Bible (*Redemption*), and have learned some things about the book where the verse is located—[Romans](#). Hopefully you've already found this process to be spiritually enriching. It's both exciting and encouraging to learn new aspects about God's Word!

We now proceed to look more closely at the verse itself. We'll call this *observing* the verse. Bible scholars Duvall and Hays helpfully summarize the principle this way:

Our first step is to read seriously, to note as many details as possible, to observe our text as closely as Sherlock Holmes does a crime scene. Keep in mind that we are not yet asking, "What does the text mean?" We are simply asking, "What does the text say?" At the observation step, we want to see everything, all the details.¹

For convenience, let's quote our [Romans 12:2](#) passage again: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will."



We want to note as many details as possible so we grasp what the text is *saying*. This is necessary to do before we move on to decide what the text *means*. One easy way to keep track of your observations is to use Bible Gateway's Notes feature. To do this, simply search "Romans 12:2" on the [homepage](#). When the verse appears, highlight it and a toolbar will

become visible on your screen, including a note icon. Click or tap this icon and a new screen will pop up where you can add your notes. (Remember to click "Save" before you leave the page so you retain your notes.) You can always access these notes later by clicking the Account icon and selecting "Notes" from the drop-down menu.



What kinds of details, then, are we looking for in our verse? Some common elements to pay attention to include verbs, contrasts, cause and effect, and lists.² We'll look at each of these and see what they tell us about [Romans 12:2](#).

Verbs – Verbs are (usually) action words. They describe an action or call the reader to perform an action. This second case is especially important because it often indicates a command or instruction that God is calling us to obey. [Romans 12:2](#) contains two verbs that call us to action: 1) “Do not conform” and 2) “be transformed.” These are important to note.

Contrasts – A contrast refers to something being different from something else. Do we see a contrast in [Romans 12:2](#)? Yes, we find one in the first sentence. Paul contrasts conforming to the pattern of this world with being transformed by the renewing of our minds. That’s a significant observation.

Cause and Effect – Do we see an instance in our verse of something that causes something else? Paul says that if we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (cause), then we will “be able to test and approve what God’s will is” (effect). Cause and effect relationships often convey vital information.

Lists – A grouping of connected words that itemize or describe something is usually significant. In our verse, we find a list of three consecutive words that describe God’s will—“good,” “pleasing,” and “perfect.”

Now that we’ve done some research on our verse’s context (in yesterday’s lesson), and have made several key observations today, we can begin to move from what the verse says

to think about what the verse means. In your own words, then, type or write out what you believe Paul intended to convey in [Romans 12:2](#).

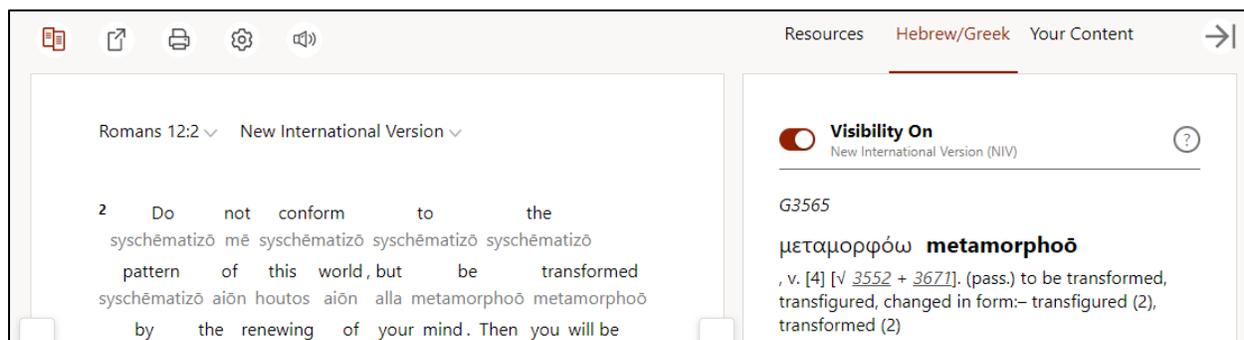
As we go through our next two lessons, you'll have the opportunity to add to or modify your initial understanding.

Reflections

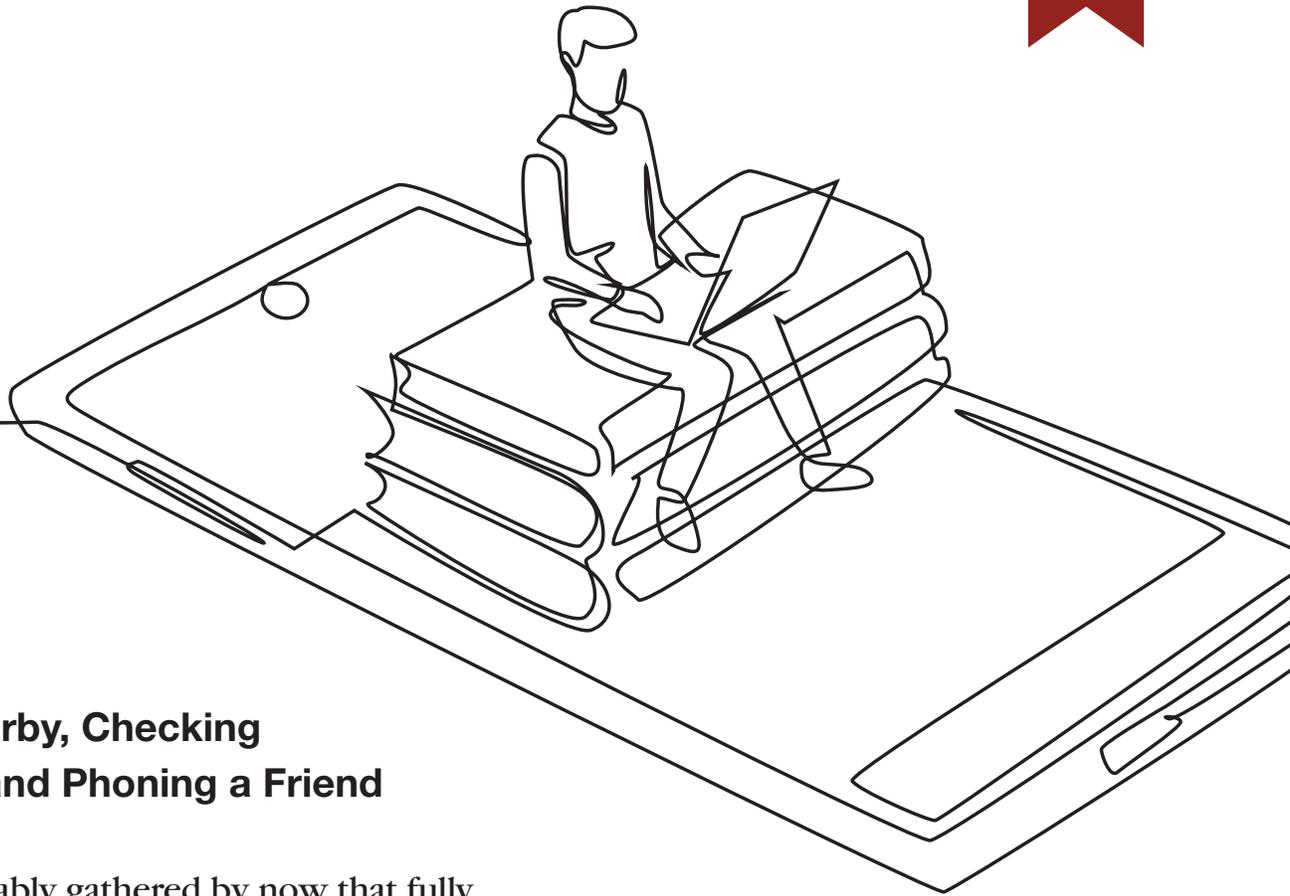
1. Why do you think close observation of a verse is an important step to understanding it?
2. To gain more practice using the categories we looked at above (verbs, contrasts, etc.), type or write out a favorite Bible verse or two and see how many of these you can find that apply to your verse(s). Having done this, did you gain any new insights into the verse(s)?

Notes

1. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, [Journey into God's Word: Your Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible](#), 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 29. My discussion here borrows from Duvall and Hays'.



2. Take an even deeper dive into the individual words of a verse by using Bible Gateway to examine the words in their original Hebrew or Greek language, and their encompassing meanings. Simply search for a verse, click “Hebrew/Greek” in the menu options at the top of the screen, select “Continue,” and move the slider from “Visibility Off” to “Visibility On.” You’re then able to click or tap on any word in the verse to see the word in the original language along with a short English definition. Turn the visibility off again by clicking any word and moving the slider back to the off position.



Day 4: Looking Nearby, Checking Your Work, and Phoning a Friend

You've probably gathered by now that fully understanding a verse of Scripture requires some work. A misconception exists in today's Christian culture that the Bible can be understood with the same ease that we understand a car bumper sticker. Yes, even a child can grasp the message of salvation, but to gain a mature comprehension of biblical teaching on any topic takes time, perseverance, and study. This is why Paul urged [Timothy](#), "Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)).

The reward for such persistence is extraordinary. In addition to the benefits we covered in our Day 1 lesson, the very [first Psalm](#) says the person who devotes time to understanding Scripture "is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers" ([Psalm 1:3](#)).

So, hang in there as we now consider three more study tools we can use to arrive at an informed interpretation of a verse.

Immediate Context

If you had to sum up in one word the most important principle for interpreting the Bible, it would be “context.” Most errors in explicating Scripture arise from failing to contemplate one or more important areas of context. Having already observed the contexts of the Bible’s Storyline and the individual book ([Romans](#)), one additional frame of reference we need to ponder is the verses immediately surrounding [Romans 12:2](#).

It’s usually beneficial to read the entire chapter in which is located the verse you’re studying. That immediate context often provides important clues for fathoming a verse. (Opening the full chapter is easily done by clicking or tapping the link at the bottom of the passage you’re reading on Bible Gateway.) In our case, when we look at [Romans 12](#), we see the significant word in [12:1](#): “Therefore.” The pastor’s old joke is that when you see the word “therefore,” you should go back and see what it’s “there for.” To do so, we need to have a look at [Romans 11](#).

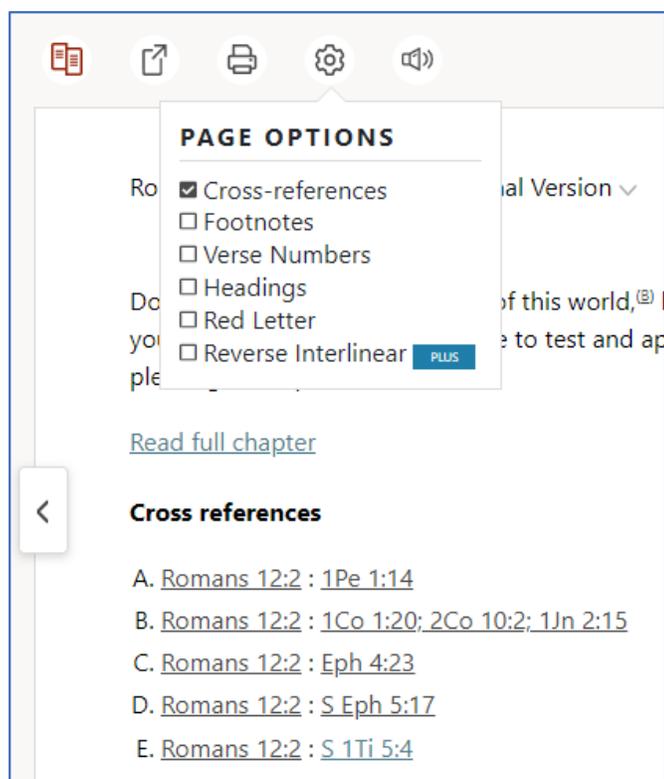
You may recall from the material we read in the [introduction to Romans](#) in the *NIV Study Bible* that Paul “sought to address the tension between Gentiles and Jews in the Roman church by explaining the relationship between them in God’s overall plan of redemption.” In [Romans 11:28-32](#), Paul is making clear how God has shown mercy to both Jews and Gentiles. Notice that Paul uses the word “mercy” four times in these verses, and that he repeats this word in [Romans 12:1](#): “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”



Our verse ([12:2](#)) immediately follows [12:1](#), which emphasizes Paul’s message that, because of God’s generous mercy (described in [11:28-32](#)), we should strive to live counterculturally from those who don’t seek God’s ways; to do that we must renew our minds in order to change our behavior to reflect God’s priorities. This contextual connection greatly contributes to the full interpretation of [Romans 12:2](#): Paul is saying God’s wonderful mercy toward us is the very reason we should not conform to the world, but be transformed.

Cross-References

Although the Bible consists of individual books that were written by numerous human authors, in one sense God is its single author. To assimilate all that God has said about a particular topic, we must consider the entire canon of Scripture (i.e., [all of its books](#)). This attention to overall background knowledge contributes to proper biblical interpretation and application.



Fortunately, much of this information is readily available at Bible Gateway using the “Cross-references” feature. To enable it, search for any verse—but let’s use [Romans 12:2](#). Once the verse appears, click the gear (Page Options) icon to enable “Cross-references.” You’ll immediately see a series of superscripted capital letters appear in the verse next to certain key words. Clicking on these capital letters will bring up one or more other Scripture verses that relate to that key word. Reading these additional passages can shed fuller light on a verse.

For a more in-depth list of cross-references that trace more than 8,000 topics throughout Scripture, use the *Thompson® Chain-Reference® Bible*. With your screen open to [Romans 12:2](#), select this volume

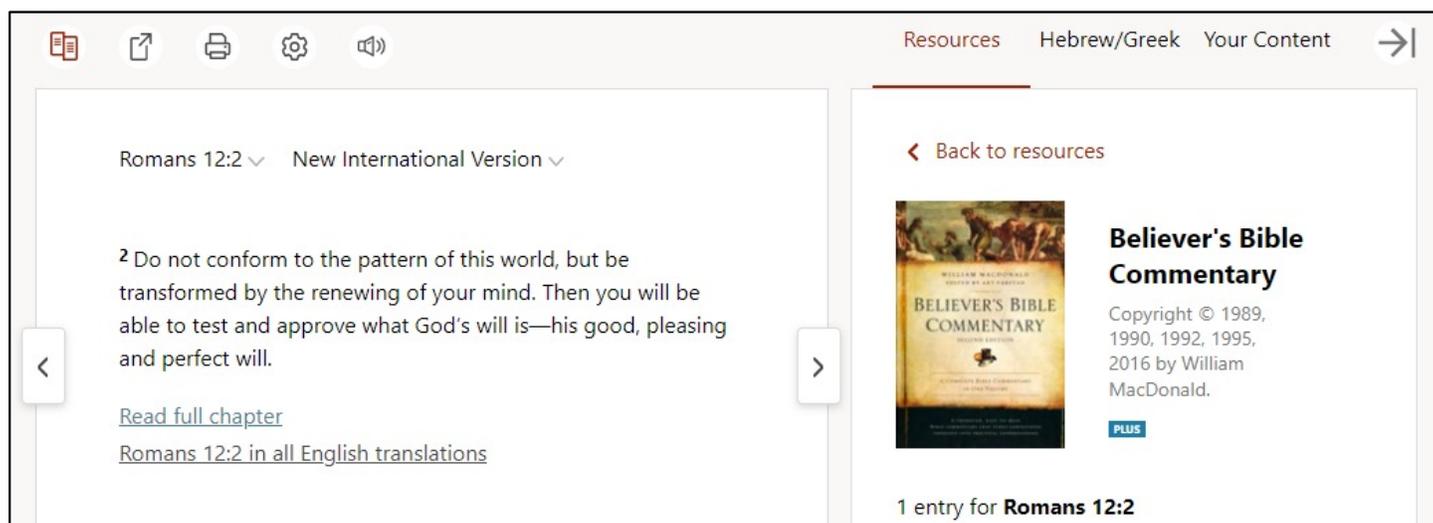
among the study Bibles in the Bible Gateway Plus Resources section. You’ll see six topics that appear for [Romans 12:2](#), with an abundant number of cross-references chained together in a linked trail for each one. These trails span the entire Bible, giving you a picture of how each concept is portrayed from [Genesis](#) to [Revelation](#).

Cross-reference verses may not always be directly relevant to the verse you're studying, but frequently they are. Thus, they allow you to see what God has said about a particular topic elsewhere in Scripture. We'll practice with these in the Reflections section.

Commentaries

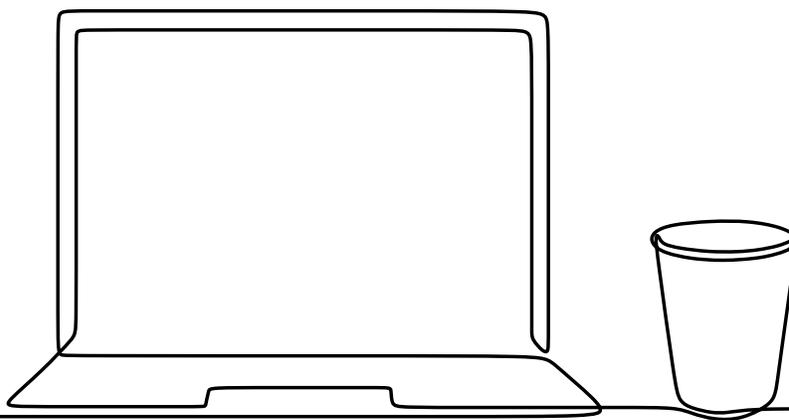
Commentaries are written by scholars to explain the meaning of biblical texts. They draw on their exhaustive knowledge of the Bible's original languages, historical and cultural settings, and literary features to describe what the biblical writers wanted to convey to their original audiences. Sometimes commentary authors also suggest ways that contemporary Christians can apply biblical texts to their everyday lives—which will be the focus of our study on Day 5.

After you've completed the study techniques we've covered so far, commentaries are helpful tools for understanding the meaning of a Scripture passage. (Study Bibles are also helpful for this, and typically provide briefer comments than commentaries.)



The screenshot shows the Bible Gateway interface. On the left, the text of Romans 12:2 is displayed in the New International Version (NIV). The text reads: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Below the text are links for "Read full chapter" and "Romans 12:2 in all English translations". On the right, a sidebar titled "Resources" shows a list of commentaries. The first entry is "Believer's Bible Commentary" by William MacDonald, with a "PLUS" button next to it. The entry indicates "1 entry for Romans 12:2".

Accessing commentaries with Bible Gateway is easy and follows the same set of steps used to read the *NIV Study Bible*. Simply search "Romans 12:2" on the [homepage](#). Then, click the "Resources" link near the top of your screen. A display of the available study resources will appear. Click "Commentaries" and several volumes will appear. As an example, click the *Believer's Bible Commentary*.



You'll immediately see there is one entry for [Romans 12:2](#) in this commentary. Clicking "[12:2](#)" will expand the entry so you can read it. The first comment by the author says the following:

Paul urges us not to be conformed to this world, or as Phillips paraphrases it: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." When we come to the kingdom of God, we should abandon the thought-patterns and lifestyles of the world.

The author is quoting a different Bible translation, [*The New Testament in Modern English by J.B Phillips*](#), to help us understand the meaning of Paul's command to not conform to the pattern of this world. It's often helpful to read a Bible passage in a few different translations to understand it better. Bible Gateway offers [many English translations](#) that can be used for comparison. When you view a single verse on Bible Gateway, you're able to read all English translations for that verse on one page by clicking or tapping the link at the bottom of the verse.

The author also suggests a life application of this command for Christians today: "When we come to the kingdom of God, we should abandon the thought-patterns and lifestyles of the world."

As you read through the rest of the author's comments on this verse, you'll gain further insights into the meaning of [Romans 12:2](#).

Every commentary has its own characteristics and viewpoints, and as you use them, you'll become more familiar with the differences. Compare three or four commentaries to see what they say about any verse you're studying. Different scholars will emphasize different facets of a text, so reading several will greatly add to your knowledge and understanding, and will help you apply what you learn to your Christian walk of faith.

Reflections

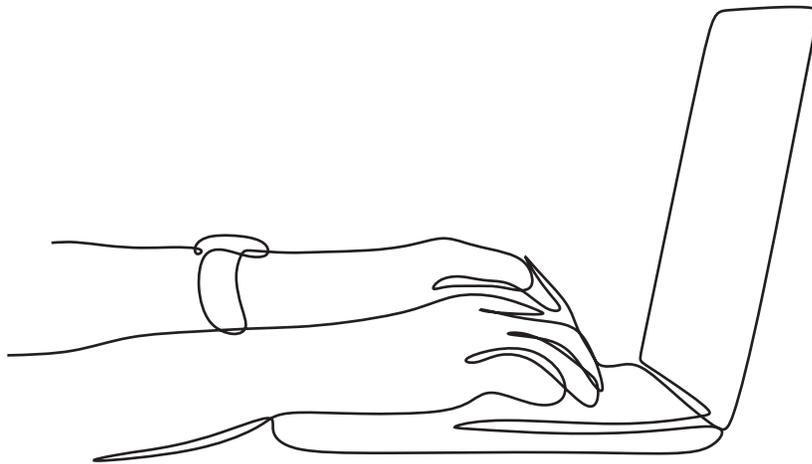
1. Why do you think it's important to consider the immediate context of a verse you're studying?
2. Check the cross-references for [Romans 12:2](#) using the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. Do any of these concepts that are traced throughout the Bible contribute to your understanding of [Romans 12:2](#)? If so, make a note about them.
3. In addition to the *Believer's Bible Commentary*, which we looked at above, choose one or two other commentaries and read their explanations of [Romans 12:2](#). Make a note of any insights that stand out to you.
4. Using all of the methods you've learned from our study today, type or write out the meaning of [Romans 12:2](#). This will probably be a paragraph long at this point. Has your understanding of the verse changed from how you expressed it in yesterday's lesson compared with today's?



Day 5:

Putting It Into Practice

Over the past four days we've been working through a series of steps you can follow using the [more than 50 resources](#) in your Bible Gateway Plus membership to better understand any verse in the Bible. We've seen that it's vital to examine the wide, surrounding, and immediate contexts of the verse. We've practiced closely observing the verse and its individual words to grasp the verse's nuanced and full-bodied meaning. And we've looked at helpful study tools, such as cross-references, topical chain-linked trails, and commentaries, that provide specialized biblical insight.



Congratulations on coming this far! Having accomplished this, there's one final step to reading a verse for all its worth—application. Once you master the author's original intent for a verse, it's necessary to think through the difference (if any) the verse should make in your life. Bible scholar Matthew Harmon observes, "The goal of understanding the Bible and applying it to our lives is life transformation. We want God's Spirit to use God's Word to make us more like God's Son."¹

Harmon suggests three key questions we should ask about any biblical passage to help us apply it:

1) What does God want me to think?

The greatest battlefield in the Christian life is our mind because we act according to our beliefs. This is why Paul directed believers to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)).

In relation to our thinking, Harmon advises that we contemplate the following concerning the passage we're studying: What does it tell us we should think about God, people, how to relate to God, and how to relate to others?²

2) What does God want me to desire?

Our desires include our feelings and inclinations. God is interested in our inner motivations as well as our outward behavior ([1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#)).

Harmon writes, “As God shows us who or what we should desire, we can pray for his Spirit to change us so that our desires, inclinations, and feelings line up with what Scripture says.”³

3) What does God want me to do?

Not all Scripture passages will lead to direct action on our part. Some examples include historical narratives, like the accounts of Israel in the wilderness or of the reign of King David. And a number of [Old Testament](#) laws that no longer apply to God’s people—for example, the laws about making physical sacrifices.

In the case of [Romans 12:2](#), however, we have straightforward instructions from Paul, applicable to all believers today. Thus, we should consider what we should do, or perhaps cease doing, in light of Paul’s words.

With these probing questions in mind, we’re ready to move to the Reflections portion so you can consider how to apply [Romans 12:2](#).

We hope you’ve found this study helpful, and that you’ll use the principles and your [Bible Gateway Plus membership tools](#) to read a verse for all its worth and continue growing in your love and knowledge of God and his Word.



Reflections

1. In your own words, write a sentence or two that describes the goal of Bible study.
2. Think through each of the three application questions discussed above in relation to [Romans 12:2](#). You may find it helpful to make notes as you go. Then, in a few sentences, describe how you can apply [Romans 12:2](#) to your life.
3. Having studied [Romans 12:2](#) in some detail, what new insight(s) do you have about this verse?

Notes

1. Matthew S. Harmon, [*Asking the Right Questions: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), Logos edition (no page number), chapter 9.
2. Harmon, chapter 9. Harmon proposes four questions, but I'm omitting his second question ("What does God want me to believe?") because it overlaps with the first question.
3. Harmon, chapter 9.

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