

Outline of the Three Column Study

Turn a piece of paper on its side, or landscape. Then divide the paper into three columns. Label the first 'Scripture.' Label the second 'My Words' and the third 'I Will.'

Scripture

The length of the passage you chose affects how much time the study takes. Longer passages take longer to study. This isn't a bad thing, but you need to keep it in mind. Generally, try to keep your passages between 10 and 15 verses.

In the '**Scripture**' column, write the passage: word-for-word. This takes time but you control how much time by choosing smaller chunks of Scripture. Break larger passages into several sections, spread out over several days. What is most important, however, is this – when you copy a passage word-for-word you actually read it through several (about five to seven) times. It is a form a forced meditation for those of us who can't sit and think about a passage without losing focus. This process also keeps us from skimming familiar passages. When you write it out you have to think about every word.

My Own Words

When you finish copying the passage, use the second column to write the passage in your own words. Write it out like you're telling a friend about it over a cup of coffee. Don't move on until you can write the passage in your own words. You see, you don't really understand it if you can tell it to someone else in your own words. And you can't obey Scripture unless you understand it. It's that simple. Sometimes, you might have to stop on a passage for a couple of days and talk it out with the Holy Spirit before you can finish putting it into your own words. When you start this process, you will probably find there are several familiar passages that you can't write in your own words. Sometimes we 'know' more than we truly understand.

I Will

In the third column we transition from knowing God's Word to obeying God's Word. Look at each part of the passage. Ask God to reveal things you need to add to your life, take away from your life, or change in your life to obey this passage. Be specific. The passage may say that God created the Earth, but you have to decide what that means in your life. How does your life change because you believe God created the Earth? What do you need to do differently? What can you do in the next 24 hours to obey this passage? Every time we open God's Word, He invites us into relationship. We call His invitation 'grace,' because we can't do anything to deserve it. Obedience is how we accept His invitation. God lives with those who obey His Word. (John 14:23-24) When we study God's Word we have a choice: we choose to obey Him or we choose to disobey Him. It is really that simple. This third column is your response to God's invitation.

With leaders, we also ask them to apply SPECK to the passage: S – Is there a Sin to avoid? P – Is there a promise, a prayer, or praise in this passage? E – Is there an example to follow (or not follow)? C – Is there a command to obey? K – Is there knowledge that I need to retain?