



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

## BIBLE STUDY METHODS

# SPECK

### Bible Study Method

#### The Short Answer

The SPECK Bible Study Method is a simple way to slow down and ask practical questions while reading Scripture:

- S — Is there a SIN to avoid?
- P — Is there a PROMISE to remember?
- E — Is there an EXAMPLE to follow—or avoid?
- C — Is there a COMMAND to obey?
- K — What KNOWLEDGE does this passage reveal about God?

SPECK can help readers move from simply reading words to noticing what Scripture teaches and considering how to respond. But SPECK is a tool—not a formula. Every passage will not contain all five elements, and readers should never force a sin, promise, example, command, or lesson about God into a passage that does not actually teach it.

Psalm 119:18 · 2 Timothy 3:16–17 · James 1:22–25

#### Opening Memory Anchor

**SPECK helps ask good questions.  
Scripture provides the answers.**



## PART ONE

# BEGINNER GUIDE

### 1. WHAT IS THE SPECK BIBLE STUDY METHOD?

SPECK is a Bible-reading method built around five questions:

- S — SIN** — Is there a sin to recognize, confess, resist, or avoid?
- P — PROMISE** — Is there a promise from God to understand, remember, or trust?
- E — EXAMPLE** — Is there an example worth following—or a warning worth avoiding?
- C — COMMAND** — Is there a command God gives that should be obeyed?
- K — KNOWLEDGE** — What does this passage reveal about God—His character, purposes, works, or ways?

These questions provide a simple framework for interacting with Scripture. SPECK is especially useful for beginners because there is no complicated system to learn. Open the Bible, read a manageable passage carefully, and work through the five questions.

The purpose is not to find something clever. The purpose is to notice what Scripture actually says.

### 2. WHERE SHOULD A BEGINNER START?

Start with a short passage—perhaps 5–10 verses. Good books for beginning SPECK studies include Mark, John, Philippians, James, and selected Psalms. Before reading, pause briefly and ask God for understanding. Psalm 119:18 gives a simple model: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Prayer does not replace careful reading or guarantee that every first interpretation will be correct. It expresses dependence on God while approaching His Word with humility and attention.

Then read the passage at least twice before answering the SPECK questions. The first reading asks: “What is happening or being taught?” The second asks: “What should be noticed more carefully?” Then begin SPECK.

A notebook, Bible-study journal, or simple sheet of paper is enough. Do not worry if every letter cannot be filled in. Sometimes a passage may strongly emphasize only one or two SPECK categories. That is completely fine.

#### Memory Anchor

**Do not make the passage fit SPECK.  
Let SPECK help examine the passage.**

### 3. S — IS THERE A SIN TO AVOID?

Ask: Does this passage identify an attitude, action, desire, belief, or behavior that opposes God?

Sin is not merely breaking arbitrary rules. Scripture presents sin as rebellion against God and falling short of His holy character and purposes. **READ: Romans 3:23; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4**

A passage might expose sins such as pride, unbelief, dishonesty, bitterness, greed, sexual immorality, idolatry, injustice, hypocrisy, or failure to love.

But context matters. If Scripture describes someone committing a sin, that does not mean the passage is commanding or approving that behavior. The Bible often describes human failure precisely so readers can see its consequences.

Ask: “What does this passage reveal about sin?” Then: “Is there something here that should be confessed, resisted, or avoided?”

### 4. P — IS THERE A PROMISE TO REMEMBER?

Scripture contains many wonderful promises from God. But one of the most important Bible-study habits is learning to ask: “Who was this promise originally given to?”

Some promises were given specifically to Abraham, Israel, David, particular individuals, particular churches, or followers of Jesus generally.

Not every biblical promise is an unconditional personal guarantee to every reader. For example, God’s promise to Abraham that he would become a great nation belongs to God’s covenant purposes involving Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3). A Christian should not simply replace Abraham’s name with a personal name and claim the identical promise.

At the same time, Christians benefit profoundly from promises Scripture explicitly extends to believers. **READ: John 10:27–29; Romans 8:38–39; Philippians 4:6–7; 1 John 1:9**

Ask: “What does God actually promise here?” Then determine: “To whom is the promise given, and how does the surrounding passage help explain it?”

#### Memory Anchor

**A promise becomes clearer when its context is understood.**

### 5. E — IS THERE AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW OR AVOID?

The Bible is filled with real people making real choices. Some demonstrate faithfulness. Others provide warnings.

Examples worth following might include Abraham trusting God, Joseph resisting temptation, Ruth demonstrating faithfulness, Daniel remaining devoted to God, Mary submitting to God’s calling, and the early Christians sharing generously. Examples to avoid include Pharaoh hardening his heart, Israel repeatedly turning to idols, Saul repeatedly disobeying God, Judas betraying Jesus, and religious leaders practicing hypocrisy.

But be careful. Not everything a biblical character does is meant to be copied. David was called a man after God’s own heart, yet Scripture records serious sins in David’s life. Peter faithfully proclaimed Christ, yet Peter also made serious mistakes.

Biblical characters are not the heroes of every story. God is. Ask: “Does Scripture present this behavior positively, negatively, or simply describe what happened?”

### 6. C — IS THERE A COMMAND TO OBEY?

Scripture contains commands that reveal how God calls His people to live. Jesus said: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” — John 14:15

Commands may involve loving God, loving others, forgiving, speaking truth, rejecting sexual immorality, caring for people in need, praying, giving thanks, making disciples, living humbly, and pursuing holiness. **READ: Matthew 22:37–40; Ephesians 4:25–32; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**



But again, context matters. Some biblical commands belonged specifically to Israel under the Mosaic covenant. Others were given to particular individuals in particular situations. The New Testament helps Christians understand how Old Testament law relates to life under the new covenant established through Jesus.

So do not simply ask: "Is there a command?" Also ask: "Who received this command, and how does the rest of Scripture help explain its application?"

## 7. K — WHAT KNOWLEDGE DOES THIS PASSAGE REVEAL ABOUT GOD?

This may be the most important SPECK question. Bible study is ultimately about more than finding instructions for life. Scripture reveals God.

Ask what this passage shows about God's character, holiness, love, justice, mercy, faithfulness, purposes, works, relationship with His people, and plan of redemption.

Jesus taught that Scripture ultimately participates in the larger story of God's redemptive work. **READ: Luke 24:27, 44–47; John 5:39–40**

Not every verse is directly about Jesus, and Jesus should not be artificially inserted into every sentence. But every passage belongs somewhere within the biblical story that ultimately leads to God's saving work through Christ and the promised restoration of creation.

### Memory Anchor

**Bible study is not only about: "What should be done?"  
It also asks: "What does this reveal about God?"**

## 8. WHAT DOES SPECK LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Try SPECK with Mark 2:1–12. First, read the entire passage. Jesus is teaching in a crowded house when four men bring a paralyzed man to Him. Unable to enter through the door, they lower the man through the roof. Jesus first tells the man that his sins are forgiven. Some scribes silently object because they understand that forgiveness of sins belongs to God. Jesus knows their thoughts and then heals the man physically, demonstrating His authority.

**S — SIN:** The scribes respond to Jesus with unbelieving accusations in their hearts. The passage warns against rejecting Jesus even when confronted with evidence of His authority.

**P — PROMISE:** There is not necessarily a direct promise in this passage that should be turned into a personal guarantee. SPECK does not require finding a promise when the passage does not contain one.

**E — EXAMPLE:** The friends demonstrate determined faith by bringing the paralyzed man to Jesus despite obstacles. Their persistence provides a positive example. The scribes provide a contrasting warning about hardened skepticism toward Jesus.

**C — COMMAND:** The passage does not contain a general command directed to every Christian. Jesus commands the healed man to rise, take his bed, and go home—but that specific command was given to that man in that moment. There is no need to manufacture a universal command.

**K — KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD:** This is the heart of the passage. Jesus has authority not merely to heal physical illness but to forgive sins. The scribes correctly recognize the theological significance of Jesus' claim: forgiveness ultimately belongs to God. Jesus' healing demonstrates His extraordinary authority and points toward the larger question Mark's Gospel continually answers: Who is Jesus?

**SPECK SUMMARY:** S — Beware unbelief. P — No direct promise needs to be claimed. E — Notice the friends' determined faith. C — No general command needs to be manufactured. K — Jesus has authority to forgive sins.

That is SPECK working properly. The method serves the passage. The passage does not serve the method.

## 9. HOW DOES SPECK DIFFER FROM SOAP?

SOAP and SPECK are both simple tools for interacting thoughtfully with Scripture, but they approach the process differently.

**SOAP:** Scripture · Observation · Application · Prayer

**SPECK:** Sin · Promise · Example · Command · Knowledge about God

SOAP provides a broad process for studying and responding to Scripture. SPECK provides five specific questions that can help readers notice particular features within Scripture.

Neither method is inspired. Neither replaces careful reading. Neither guarantees correct interpretation. They are simply tools. A reader may prefer one method or even use elements of both.

The goal is never to become skilled at a Bible-study acronym. The goal is to become increasingly skilled at reading Scripture faithfully.

## PART TWO

## WANT TO GO DEEPER?

### INTERMEDIATE

## 10. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST DANGER WITH SPECK?

The greatest weakness of any checklist method is the temptation to force Scripture into the checklist. A reader may feel obligated to find one sin, one promise, one example, one command, and one fact about God in every passage. That can distort Scripture.

Consider a genealogy, a lament Psalm, a prophetic vision, or a narrative describing a battle. These passages may not naturally contain all five SPECK categories. That does not mean SPECK failed. It means the reader should allow the genre, context, and purpose of the passage to control interpretation.

A useful rule is: **OBSERVATION BEFORE APPLICATION.** Before asking, "What does this mean for life today?" ask, "What did the biblical author communicate in this passage?"

SPECK should also never become a spiritual scorecard. A Bible-study session has not failed because one or more letters remain blank. Some days a reader may notice several important truths. Other days one truth may stand out. Sometimes a difficult passage may require more reading, prayer, context, or help before its meaning becomes clear.

There is no spiritual prize for filling every SPECK category. In fact, leaving a category blank when the passage does not support an answer can demonstrate careful Bible study. The purpose is not to complete a checklist. The purpose is to understand Scripture faithfully and respond to God's Word.

### Memory Anchor



**An empty SPECK category is not a failed Bible study.  
Never invent an answer just to fill the blank.**

## 11. HOW CAN SPECK BE USED WITHOUT TAKING VERSES OUT OF CONTEXT?

**FIRST — READ AROUND THE VERSE.** Do not isolate a sentence from the paragraph, chapter, or argument surrounding it.

**SECOND — ASK WHO IS SPEAKING AND WHO IS BEING ADDRESSED.** A promise to ancient Israel, a command to an apostle, and an instruction to the church are not automatically identical in application.

**THIRD — ASK HOW THE PASSAGE FITS THE REST OF SCRIPTURE.** The Bible contains many books and human authors, yet together Scripture tells the unfolding story of creation, fall, covenant, redemption, and restoration centered ultimately in Jesus Christ. **READ: Luke 24:44–47; 2 Timothy 3:14–17**  
Context protects SPECK from becoming a hunt for inspirational sentences.

## 12. SHOULD EVERY PROMISE BE “CLAIMED”?

No. The phrase “promise to claim” can be useful shorthand, but it can also be misunderstood.

God’s promises should be believed according to what God actually promised, to whom He promised it, and under what circumstances. Some promises are unconditional. Some include stated conditions. Some belong to particular covenants. Some concern specific historical circumstances. Some are explicitly extended to followers of Jesus.

Faith does not mean making Scripture promise something God did not promise. Faith means trusting what God has actually said.

### Memory Anchor

**Biblical faith does not enlarge God’s promises.  
Biblical faith trusts them.**

## 13. HOW DOES SPECK POINT TOWARD JESUS?

Jesus should not simply be added to the “K” section of every study whether the passage supports the connection or not. Instead, ask how the passage fits within the Bible’s larger redemptive story.

A passage might connect to Jesus through a direct prophecy, a promise fulfilled in Christ, a covenant, sacrifice, priesthood, kingship, temple, exodus, wisdom, judgment and salvation, resurrection, or new creation.

Sometimes the New Testament explicitly makes the connection. Other times a broader biblical pattern points toward Christ. And sometimes the responsible approach is simply to understand the passage in its immediate context before tracing its place within the larger biblical story.

Jesus Himself taught His followers to understand Scripture within that larger story. **READ: Luke 24:25–27, 44–47**

## 14. CAN SPECK BE USED WITH ANY PART OF THE BIBLE?

Yes—with flexibility.

**NARRATIVE:** Look carefully at examples, consequences, God’s actions, and the author’s evaluation of events.

**POETRY AND PSALMS:** Pay attention to imagery, emotion, worship, lament, wisdom, and what the passage reveals about God.

**WISDOM LITERATURE:** Look for general principles of wise living while remembering that proverbs usually describe how life ordinarily works rather than making unconditional guarantees.

**PROPHETS:** Consider the historical situation, covenant context, calls to repentance, warnings of judgment, and promises of restoration.

**GOSPELS:** Pay particular attention to Jesus’ identity, teaching, actions, death, and resurrection.

**LETTERS:** Follow the author’s argument rather than extracting isolated commands or promises.

**APOCALYPTIC PASSAGES:** Pay attention to symbolism, Old Testament imagery, the original audience, and the passage’s central theological message before attempting detailed interpretations.

The method remains the same. The way the questions are answered depends upon the kind of biblical literature being read.

The “K — Knowledge about God” question may also look different depending upon the genre. In narrative, God may reveal His character through what He does, says, permits, judges, rescues, or fulfills. In a Psalm, knowledge about God may emerge through worship, lament, trust, praise, or remembrance of God’s character and works. In wisdom literature, God may be revealed through His ordering of creation, His standards for wise living, and the relationship between wisdom and reverence for Him.

In the prophets, God’s holiness, justice, patience, mercy, covenant faithfulness, and promises of restoration often come into view. In the Gospels, pay special attention to what Jesus says and does and what those things reveal about His identity, authority, compassion, mission, death, and resurrection. In the letters, knowledge about God often appears within explanations of the Gospel, salvation, the Church, Christian living, and the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In apocalyptic passages, symbolic visions frequently reveal truths about God’s sovereignty, judgment, victory, faithfulness, and ultimate purposes even when every symbolic detail is not completely understood. Even a genealogy can reveal something important about God’s faithfulness across generations and His unfolding redemptive purposes.

Do not ask only: “What fact about God can be extracted from this verse?” Ask: “What does this passage, read according to its kind of literature and its place in Scripture, reveal about who God is and what He is doing?”

## 15. CAN SPECK BE USED WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

Yes. SPECK can work well for one-on-one Bible study, families, small groups, discipleship relationships, and informal Bible discussions.

A group might read the same passage together and then work through each SPECK question. Another option is to assign different letters to different participants: S — Does anyone notice a sin or warning? P — Is there a genuine promise in this passage? E — Is there an example to follow or avoid? C — Is there a command, and who receives it? K — What does this passage reveal about God?

Then compare observations and return to the passage together. The goal is not for everyone to produce identical answers. Different readers may notice different legitimate details. But interpretations should remain accountable to Scripture.

When disagreement occurs, return to questions such as: What does the passage actually say? What is the surrounding context? Who is speaking? Who is being addressed? What kind of biblical literature is this? How does the rest of Scripture help clarify the issue?

A group leader does not need to have every answer. A good leader helps everyone keep returning to the text.



### Memory Anchor

**Good Bible discussion does not revolve around: “What does this verse mean to me?”**  
**It begins with: “What does this passage actually say?”**

## 16. A SIMPLE SPECK WORKSHEET

**PASSAGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAY** — Ask God for understanding and approach His Word with humility.

**READ THE PASSAGE TWICE.** What is happening or being taught? \_\_\_\_\_

**S — SIN** — Is there a sin to recognize, confess, resist, or avoid? \_\_\_\_\_

**P — PROMISE** — Is there a promise? Who receives it? What exactly does God promise? \_\_\_\_\_

**E — EXAMPLE** — Is there an example to follow or avoid? How does Scripture evaluate the example? \_\_\_\_\_

**C — COMMAND** — Is there a command? Who receives it? How does it apply faithfully today? \_\_\_\_\_

**K — KNOWLEDGE** — What does this passage reveal about God—His character, works, purposes, or ways? \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTEXT CHECK** — What comes before and after this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

**GENRE CHECK** — What kind of biblical literature is being read, and how should that affect interpretation? \_\_\_\_\_

**JESUS AND THE BIBLICAL STORY** — Does Scripture provide a legitimate connection between this passage and Jesus or the larger story of redemption? \_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONSE** — What truth should be believed, remembered, obeyed, or prayed about? \_\_\_\_\_

**REMEMBER:** Every SPECK category does not need an answer. Never force the passage to fill the worksheet.

## 17. WHAT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED ABOUT SPECK?

SPECK is intentionally simple: **S — SIN to avoid** · **P — PROMISE to remember** · **E — EXAMPLE to follow or avoid** · **C — COMMAND to obey** · **K — KNOWLEDGE about God**.

But the acronym is not the goal. The goal is learning to open Scripture, read carefully, understand faithfully, know God more deeply, recognize the Bible's unfolding story centered in Christ, and respond to God's Word.

Do not rush to fill every blank. Do not force every category into every passage. Do not turn every promise into a personal guarantee. Do not turn every description into a command. Do not copy every biblical character. Do not separate application from context.

**PRAY humbly. READ carefully. OBSERVE honestly. UNDERSTAND context. ASK good questions. FOLLOW where Scripture leads. RESPOND faithfully.**

For a broader devotional framework using Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer, see **3Nails Study #257 — SOAP Bible Study Method**.

### Final Memory Anchor

**SPECK is a tool. Scripture is the authority.**  
**Ask the questions. Study the context. Know God. Follow Jesus. Return to the Word.**

### REVIEW

1. What do the five letters in SPECK represent? 2. Why should every SPECK category not be forced into every passage? 3. What question should be asked before treating a biblical promise as a personal promise? 4. Why is it important to determine whether a biblical character is presented as a positive or negative example? 5. Why is “Knowledge about God” especially important? 6. What three safeguards help prevent taking Scripture out of context? 7. How can the genre of a passage affect the way SPECK is used? 8. Why is leaving a SPECK category blank sometimes a sign of careful Bible study? 9. How can SPECK be used in a small group or discipleship setting? 10. What is the ultimate purpose of using SPECK?

### SCRIPTURE READING PATH

Practice SPECK with: Mark 2:1–12 · Psalm 23 · James 1:19–27 · Philippians 4:4–9 · John 15:1–11. Try each passage without assuming all five SPECK categories will appear. Let Scripture determine what belongs on the page.

### ROOTED IN SCRIPTURE — POINTING TO JESUS

A Bible-study method is successful when the method gradually becomes less important and careful attention to Scripture becomes more natural. SPECK provides five memorable questions. But those questions continually point beyond themselves—to the Bible, to the God who speaks through His Word, and ultimately to Jesus Christ.

**Open the Bible. Pray for understanding. Read the passage. Ask good questions. Check the context. Trust what God has actually said. And keep returning to Scripture.**