

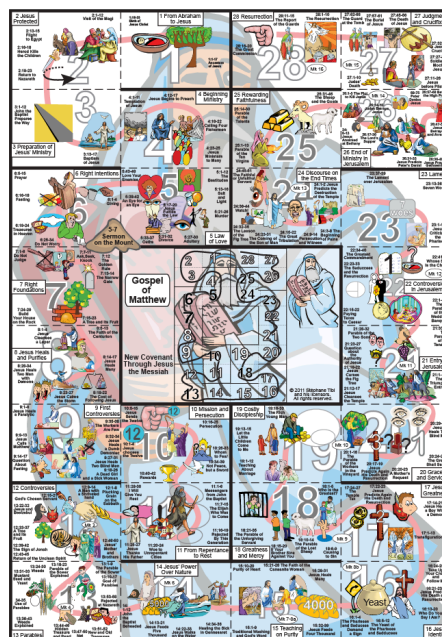
## Guide on how to use the StudyMaps of the Gospels for encountering God:

The purpose of this guide is to help you to know well the gospels, and to encounter God through these stories.

In the approach presented, you will learn to:

- hear Jesus speak to you through a story of the Bible,
- come to know Jesus and learn to dialog with him and follow him all the days of your life. As Jesus said: My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. (John 10:27)

The StudyMap for each day helps you remember what are the key stories in each chapter. When you begin a new gospel, it would be good for you to have a look at the StudyMap of the whole book (you can click here to access them: [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#), [John](#))

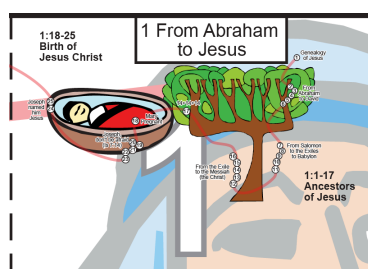


Then, you could have a look at the whole chapter, to see clearly which are the key stories. You can then close your eyes and try to remember the pictures, their places in the chapter as well as the title for each story.

You can find these daily texts on:

- <http://studymaps.org/Gospels/>
- <http://kingdombearer.blogspot.com/p/gospels-in-year.html>

For instance, in Matthew 1, you will be invited to remember the tree on the right and the baby in a basket on the left, as well as the title of each story (Ancestors of Jesus, Birth of Jesus Christ).



**As you begin this journey through the Gospels,** I invite you to close your eyes in prayer and:

1. If you sense the need or desire to do so, commit your life to God, to be a disciple of Jesus. Repent of your sins, ask Jesus to become your Lord and Savior. Then, invite the Holy Spirit to purify your heart, to fill you with his love and peace and to guide you. (Luke 11:13, Romans 5:5) If possible, ask a trusted Christian sister or brother to accompany you in prayer for this step.
2. Ask God if there is anything he wants you to change in your life. Whatever comes to your mind (picture, word, impression), if it makes sense with what you know of God, I encourage to do what he shows you. If needed, ask him guidance on how to do this. We don't worship a dead or distant God, but a living and ever-present God. He knows every single hair from our head. (Matthew 10:30)
3. Ask God if there is anyone you have to forgive, so that you forgive the person and thus remove the poison of unforgiveness from your relationship with God (Mark 11:25-26). In doing so, you are already beginning to listen to God and to follow Him.

**Then, each day:**

0. Begin by committing this time to God, inviting his Holy Spirit to bring you peace and to speak to you.

1. Look at the different parts of the story, following where the verses are located on the picture. Then close your eyes and try to remember the parts and their titles, in relationship with the picture.

(example for January 2 - Mt 1:18-25 ->  
18 *Mary pregnant on the right,*  
19-23 *Joseph, don't be afraid at the bottom,*  
24-25 *Joseph named him Jesus)*

2. Read aloud the text of the day, without rushing, to help you be focused. For those who have a Study Bible or some tools to help you briefly understand the context, read what you have on this text.

If it is a story that you can picture in your mind, then close your eyes and imagine this story, and that you are part of this story. You can imagine that you are an observer, or a participant – as you want - it is just a help to realize how real was the story and how much Jesus wants to speak with you. This way of reading, while imagining the story, was the way most people would listen or read a story in the Biblical times. It is also a part of becoming again like little children, letting God sanctify and use our imagination to speak to us.

3. Then, ask Jesus if there is something he wants to tell you about this story, and listen to him. Jesus promised to his disciples that he would be with them until the end of the age (Mt 28:20). When possible, picturing biblical stories in our minds and imagining that we are with Jesus in these stories can help us learn to hear Jesus' voice.

4. If what you heard from Jesus is coherent with what you know of Jesus – his love for you as a child of God and his character as Son of God – then apply what he tells you. If what you receive from God is not very clear, don't hesitate to ask questions to Jesus, still in prayer, on what he means or how to apply what he says. If you sense the need, don't hesitate to ask a mature Christian to understand something you are not sure about. We have a very practical God and he wants to guide us in very practical ways, for our greatest joy and for blessing many in this world. Sometimes he will speak to us directly in prayer, sometimes through other ways (others, nature, circumstances, etc.).

### **Explanation of the methodology:**

God wants us to learn to live as his beloved children. The way to do so is to follow Jesus, the Son of God. For this, we have to follow Jesus with all what we are, with our head and with our hearts. We can remember here the most important commandment: *you shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

#### **Head**

Definition: The head is associated with the reasoning capacity of the mind (analysis and synthesis).

The head is on the side of the scientific observation of an object, here the biblical text. When we study scriptures with the 'head', we are the subject and the text is the object we study.

Limits: This practice is very useful, but it is on the side of mastering a text, and is not designed for encountering God. We can do this even if we don't believe in God.

It helps us know key ways God interacts with humans, but does not lead us to such interactions. If left alone, this approach can even lead us away from interactions with God.

Biblical roots: In the Hebrew language, this 'head knowledge' is often associated with the verb 'bin' (בין) which in general means 'to know, to discern' - an analytical knowledge (separating things, and associating them).

#### **Heart**

Definition: The heart is associated with the capacity to relate to others, with emotions and interactions.

The heart is rather on the side of relationships, here the relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, but more generally relationships with others. When we learn through prayer to listen and obey God, God is the subject and we are the objects of his attention.

Limits: Without head knowledge, we will lack discernment, and it will be difficult to discern whether we are really hearing God speak to us or if we just speak to ourselves.

Biblical roots: For the 'heart knowledge', the Hebrew uses the verb yada (ידע) which often implies intimate knowledge of another person.

These two approaches are very different, and both are necessary.

Without heart knowledge of God, studying Scriptures is at best a pious practice, but will not transform us and lead us to be united with God in the way Jesus showed us through his life and actions.

Ultimately, the goal is to have our hearts and heads united, as we learn to dialog with God and follow him in all we see and all we do. This is the way Jesus showed us, this is the way of the disciple of Jesus.

**The whole purpose of the approach presented here is to help you achieve this goal:**

- Head: The StudyMaps and the memorizing of key elements of the text help you understand the text and how the different parts relate to each other (head - both analytical and synthetic knowledge).

- Heart: The time you spend to learn to listen to Jesus through a specific text helps you develop your heart knowledge of God. As much as possible, when you have the impression that God shows you something, ask him precisions, questions. Learn to dialog with God. Jesus did not guide his disciples by speaking alone but by interacting with his disciples. It was so during his coming on earth, and through the Holy Spirit it is still true today. Jesus insisted that he is with us until the end of the world, through the Holy Spirit in us.

May the Lord bless you as you follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior, as you learn to be united, head and heart, with God, through the Gospels.

Yours in the Living Messiah  
Stéphane Tibi