Reference Bible Study Sheet

Pray

Pray that the Lord enables you to understand and accurately handle Scripture.

Read the Passage and Understand the Background/Context

Read passage or book as many times as possible.
Ask questions like:

1. Who is the author of this passage?
2. To whom was it written?
3. When?
4. Why was it written?
5. Where is it taking place?
6. How does this passage or chapter fit into the entire book?
7. Are there obvious segment divisions in this passage?
8. What is the tone of the book? (instructive, sorrowful)
9. Is there an obvious theme?
10. What literary form is this?   (narrative, law, poetry, wisdom, letters, prophecy)

In a Bible Atlas or Handbook, read about the general background and setting.

Observe

Print out the passage double-spaced.
Observe and mark with symbols or colors:

1. Repeated words or phrases
2. Important conjunctions or connectives
3. Cause and Effect words like: if, then, just as, in order that
4. Illustrations or examples
5. Theme or key words (They may not be repeated but the passage hinges on that particular concept.)
6. Contrasts or comparisons (but, however, like, as)
7. Questions and answers (Are the questions rhetorical?)
8. Movement of passage from general to specific or specific to general
9. Promises of God
10. Commands of God (stop, do not, love)
11. Warnings (woe)
12. Verb tenses
13. Time words (hour, later, before, in the morning, after, next, while, when)
14. Know the antecedents to the pronouns
15. Figures of speech
16. Parallelism
17. Are there natural division points?
18. List YOUR questions.
19. Make a list in the margin of any series of statements or words.
20. Are you noticing doctrine stated?
21. Purpose of the author --- is it stated?
22. Is an idea receiving much emphasis?

Interpret

Remember: Context is everything

1. As you interpret meaning, look at the words before and after in the passage.
2. Read the passage in other translations (not paraphrases)
3. Note how a particular word is used elsewhere in that chapter or book.
4. Focus on Christ – not yourself
5. Note the historical setting of the author.
6. Look at the obvious meaning first.
7. Take the words at face value unless:
   a. Doing so contradicts Scripture
   b. The passage later explains the real meaning of the verses studied. (ex. Daniel Chapter 2)

c. You notice clear indications that you are looking at symbolic or prophetic meaning.
8. Scripture interprets Scripture so make use of cross-references in the margins of your Bible or consult Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.
9. Look up unknown words in a concordance, such as Strong's.
10. Utilize word study books like Vine's Dictionary.
11. Spend time answering any questions that arose during observation of the passage.
12. Outline or diagram the passage
13. Consult commentaries

Apply

Prayerfully consider the following questions to help you apply the word:
1. How can I better worship/praise God in light of this passage?
2. What have I learned about the Lord?
3. Are there promises to hold?
4. Is my relationship with God affected/influenced by this passage?
5. Does this passage alter my relationship with other believers?
6. Does this passage alter my relationship with non-believers?
7. Are there sinful attitudes or actions I need to confess? (reprove, correct)
8. Are there imperatives to obey?
9. Should any of my priorities change?
10. Are there principles here I should follow?
11. What truth can help me give glory to God?
12. How does this passage help with the doctrinal understanding of _____?
13. What questions do I still have?
14. Name truths to believe.

15. How should I reflect what I've learned in this passage?

Write down specific new thoughts or actions you can take.
Finally, re-read in full the passage and commit the outline or key verses to memory.

Take time to file your pages in a notebook.

While not expected that you would answer every question on these pages, they are here to help you think through a passage.