

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE
WEEK 4 – HOW TO READ IT

Why read the Bible?

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers.

⁴ Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

- stability
- fruitfulness
- perseverance
- (spiritual) prosperity
- saved from perishing

What do these other verses show or teach us about the benefit and importance of reading the Bible?

- Luke 4:1-13
- Luke 24:25-27, 45-47
- Acts 20:32
- 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (taking milk as a metaphor for God's word)
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- Hebrews 4:12

First some don'ts...

1. Don't just read just it when you feel like it
2. Don't read it randomly
3. Don't read it merely for excitement, enjoyment or emotion

Do not expect to master the Bible in a day, or a month, or a year. Rather expect often to be puzzled by its contents. It is not all equally clear. Great men of God often feel like absolute novices when they read the Word. The apostle Peter said that there were some things hard to understand in the epistles of Paul (2 Peter 3:16). I am glad he wrote those words because I have felt that often. So do not expect always to get an emotional charge or a feeling of quiet peace when you read the Bible. By the grace of God you may expect that to be a frequent experience, but often you will get no emotional response at all. Let the Word break over your heart and mind again and again as the years go by, and imperceptibly there will come great changes in your attitude and outlook and conduct.¹

4. Don't give up because it's not always easy

¹ Geoffrey Thomas, Reading the Bible (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), page 22.

Now some do's

1. Make **time** to read it (every day)

- too tired or too busy?
- too lazy/too disorganized/too ill-disciplined/too distracted?
 - priority
 - regular
 - spiritual battle

- The average person spends 100 minutes on social media every day
- The average person spends 4 hours watching TV every day
- You could read the whole Bible in 72 hours
- only 15 minutes a day is required to read the whole Bible in a year

2. Read it in a translation you can understand

<p><i>'word for word'</i> ←————→ <i>'thought for thought'</i> Good for study/Harder to understand Easier to read and understand</p>		
English Standard Version (ESV)	New International Version (NIV) 2011 edition	Good News Bible
Mark 1:1-2 1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, who will prepare your way,” —	Mark 1:1-2 1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” —	Mark 1:1-2 1 This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It began as the prophet Isaiah had written: “God said, ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you to clear the way for you.’
Other similar translations: <i>New American Standard Bible</i> <i>New Revised Standard Version</i> <i>New King James Version</i>		Other similar translations: <i>New Living Translation</i>

3. Read it the normal way

The Bible is uniquely God’s Word; but it is still a ‘normal’ book

The normal tools of reading and comprehension apply:

- What is being said?
- What do the words mean?
- What point is being made?
- What event is being described?
- Who is involved?
- How does the story or the argument develop?
- etc.

4. Read it with a plan

- to read all or part of a bible book
- to read different parts of the Bible
- to read the whole Bible (see navigators.org/Tools/Bible Study Resources/Tools/The Bible Reading Plans)
- to follow some notes

5. Read the easier and/or more significant parts first

e.g. Mark (NT)
Genesis (OT)
Ephesians (NT)
Exodus (OT)
John (NT)
Acts (NT)

6. Read large chunks for breadth

7. Read and *study* smaller parts for depth

‘raking leaves and digging for diamonds’

- Questions as shovels
 - Content
 - Context

8. Read it to learn about God and Jesus

The Bible is a personal book – but it’s not primarily about me!

- What does this teach me about God?
- What does this teach me about Jesus?
- How does this fit in God’s great plan of salvation?

9. Read and *meditate* on something you have read

Not emptying the mind but filling it with God’s word

e.g. John 11:25 Ponder ‘I am the resurrection and the life...’

even Leviticus 18!

10. Read and memorize verses

11. Read with personal reflection

What should my response be?

- Is there a cause for adoration, praise or thanksgiving?
- Is there a promise to trust?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a warning to heed?
- Is there an encouragement to take away?
- Is there a truth to renew my thinking?

12. Read and pray

Pray for understanding

Pray what you have read

13. Read with a partner

14. Read with aids to understanding

Reference Bibles

Bible reading notes – see www.thegoodbook.co.uk

- Explore (dated)
- Explore by the book
- The Daily Reading Bible

BUT DO YOUR OWN THINKING FIRST!

Commentaries

- God's Word for You (the Good Book Co)
- The Bible Speaks Today (IVP)
- Focus on the Bible (Christian Focus)
- Welwyn Commentary series (Evangelical Press)

15. Read more deeply as you go on

Hebrews 5:11-6:3