



## How to study the Bible

The Bible is the most powerful book that has ever been written.

It's a collection of 66 books, originally written in three languages and covering more than a thousand years. The Bible claims that it was inspired by God and that he speaks through it today. It doesn't simply teach certain facts; it gives God's own words, introduces him to the reader and helps the reader get to know him.

It is the life of Jesus Christ which divides the Bible into two: the Old Testament looks forward to his arrival and prepares for it; the New Testament tells of his life, death and resurrection, showing how they deal with the problem of sin. It makes plain that new life is possible for those who believe in Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Bible is to change our lives.

Getting to know God is the purpose for which we were made. In order to do this we need to spend time speaking to him and letting him speak to us.

This is a brief introduction to reading, understanding and acting on what the Bible says.

### Devotional study

- Put aside some time each day to be alone with God. Start by praying that God will help you understand and learn from what you read.
- Read some Bible verses from the book you are working through.
- Think through in detail what you have read about God the Father, the Lord Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Is there a command to follow? A promise to believe? A good example to follow, or a danger to avoid?
- After God has spoken to you through his word, speak to him in prayer. Pray that God will help you act on what you have learnt.

If you're starting out, one of the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (that tell the life story of Jesus) is a good place to begin.

You may find it helpful to follow some Bible reading notes such as "Closer to God" or "Every Day with Jesus", available from Christian bookshops. Or you can see (or listen to) an on-line Bible reading. (On the church website, go to "Resources".)

### A 3 week introduction to grasp what is where in the Bible

#### 1. The Old Testament

Day 1	Genesis 1-2	Creation
Day 2	Genesis 3	Human disobedience
Day 3	Exodus 20	The Ten Commandments
Day 4	1 Samuel 17	David and Goliath
Day 5	Daniel 6	Daniel in the lions' den
Day 6	Psalms 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Day 7	Isaiah 53	Isaiah foretells Jesus' suffering

#### 2. The Gospels

Day 1	Luke 2	Jesus' birth
Day 2	John 1	Jesus is baptized, and calls his first disciples
Day 3	Matthew 5-6	The sermon on the mount
Day 4	Luke 15	Some of Jesus' parables
Day 5	Mark 14	The last supper and the betrayal of Jesus
Day 6	Mark 15	The crucifixion
Day 7	Luke 24	Resurrection

### 3. The Early Church

Day 1	Acts 2	The coming of the Holy Spirit
Day 2	Acts 9	The conversion of Saul
Day 3	Acts 10	Peter is shown Christianity is for all nations
Day 4	Romans 3	The essentials of the Christian faith
Day 5	Romans 8	Life in the Spirit
Day 6	1 Corinthians 13	Love
Day 7	Galatians 5	The fruit of the Spirit

## Reference books

A study Bible that has maps, time lines, concordance and cross-references is really useful. It's helpful also to gradually build up a collection of reference books, such as a Bible dictionary, concordance, commentaries, etc, etc! There are many, many helpful books available.

## Keeping a journal

Many people find it valuable to record in a notebook what they discover as they read the Bible. It's a great way to review what you have been learning.

## Meditating on the Bible

Meditating is a combination of reviewing, repeating, reflecting, thinking, analysing and feeling. There are many ways to meditate on God's word. Some possibilities include:

- \* Take time to read a verse or a passage over and over until you understand it.
- \* Begin to memorize all or part of it.
- \* Listen – allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you through God's word.
- \* Consider how it fits with the rest of the Bible and life in general.
- \* Contemplate on what God is expressing through his word.
- \* Move onto application. Consider how the truth and power of the word of God should affect your behaviour.

## Memorizing verses or passages

Psalms 119 v 11 says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Memorization is a great habit to get into to make God's word part of your life. Here are two suggestions of verses to learn about God's peace:

Psalms 29 v 11 "The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace."

John 14 v 27 "Jesus said to his followers: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

## Reading through the Bible

Reading through the Bible as a whole is a great experience. Some people appreciate a flexible approach – perhaps reading a couple of chapters from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament each day; others prefer to simply read through the Bible from start to finish.

By reading 3 to 4 chapters a day, the Bible can be read in a year.

Some people prefer to take longer, and so read less at a time.

An alternative is to get hold of the Bible on CD and listen to it being read to you.

## Studying a book

Look up details of the author, date and circumstances of writing. Read the book carefully, and then write an outline that shows the flow of the main points that are made in each chapter. This way you'll get a "skeleton" of what is being taught. Trace through particular themes (for example in John's gospel, read through the book and underline references to "life", "light" or "truth".)

## Studying a passage

1. Write down where the passage fits into the whole book
2. Summarise the overriding message of the passage
3. Write down what each verse says
4. Check out other parts of the Bible which also teach on this point.
5. Ask "what do I need to do about what I have learnt?"

## Doing a word study

1. Choose your word. (e.g. hope, wisdom, truth)

2. Write down the dictionary definition and the definition of the original word (from a concordance or a word study book.)
3. Check out where this word occurs in the Bible. Use your concordance again.
4. Read through these verses and record insights you get from how the word is used in different contexts.
5. Ask God to show you what you need to do as a result of this study.
6. Find a verse that sums up the word's meaning and memorize it.

### Studying a Bible person e.g. Daniel, Mary

1. Select the person you want to study.
2. Make a list of all the references about that person.
3. Make a chronological outline.
4. Identify some character qualities.
5. What did this person discover about God?
6. Summarize the main lesson(s) from the person's life.
7. Apply this to your own life.

Please ask if you want further information!