

Week 1: Reading the Bible

Introduction

In Mark's sermon series we are learning why the Bible is the authoritative word of God that *is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises*¹. The Bible is the primary way God communicates His will with us.

In these Life Group lessons, we will discuss how to properly read, interpret, and apply the Bible's teachings to our lives. The essential first step is to read the Bible consistently. Once we are reading it, we need to understand and apply its teachings effectively. This will be the focus of the upcoming weeks.

Engage: How do you hope to grow in your personal habit of reading and applying God's Word in our study?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17. According to these verses, why is it important that we read and apply Scripture?

A good way to approach Bible study is to read, meditate, reread, and memorize God's Word. This iterative process God's Word to deeply penetrate your heart and mind, fostering greater understanding, personal growth, and a closer relationship with God.

How to Read

Questions

How can we read the Bible more often and consistently?

What are good ways to read the Bible?

The best plan for reading the Bible is the plan you will stick to.

¹ <https://www.bridgechurch.us/beliefs>

Reading tips

- Slowly and deliberately: Resist the urge to rush through passages. Take your time to truly absorb the words.
- Focus on the context: Don't just read isolated verses, but strive to understand the surrounding passages and the bigger picture of the book and the Bible as a whole.
- Use different translations: Comparing different versions can offer fresh insights into the meaning of a passage.
- Read aloud: This can help engage multiple senses and deepen your connection to the text.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:10-17 aloud as a group.

Meditation and Rereading

Even when reading quickly through the Bible, like on a Bible-in-one-year plan, it's wise to reflect on what you read. This is even more important when you are reading for more depth. Take time to think about what you read. Read slowly through your chosen paragraph, chapter, or chapters. After reading, ask yourself what this passage means. Then reread it.

Meditate

- Ponder the meaning: Reflect on the words, phrases, and themes that stand out to you.
- Ask questions: What does this passage reveal about God, Jesus, or yourself? How does it apply to your life?
- Turn it into prayer: How does this passage lead you to **P**raise God, **C**onfess sin, or ask for **H**elp for yourself or others (recall the PCH prayer Mark Brown taught last year).
- Connect with your emotions: Allow the passage to impact your heart and feelings, not just your intellect.

Reread

- Reinforce understanding: Revisiting the passage multiple times solidifies your grasp of its meaning and nuances.
- Discover new insights: Each reread can reveal details or connections you might have missed before.
- Deepen your meditation: Repetition provides more opportunities to ponder and pray through the text.

Tips for Meditation

Asking the following questions may help you discover the true meaning of the chapter or passage (Not all of these questions may be answered in every passage.):

- What is the main subject of this passage?
- Who are the persons revealed in this passage? Who is speaking? About whom is he speaking? Who is acting?
- What is the key verse of this passage?
- What does this passage teach me about the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Does this passage portray any sin for me to confess and forsake?
- Does this passage contain any command for me to obey?
- Is there any promise for me to claim?
- Is there any instruction for me to follow?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:10-17 aloud a second time. What do you notice as you re-read the passage?

The following quote from the book *Understanding the Bible* by John Stott conveys the seriousness of Bible reading for the believer.

Do we really believe that God has spoken, that God's words are recorded in Scripture, and that as we read it we may hear God's voice addressing us? Then we shall not grudge the time to listen. Instead, we shall want to register our protest against the rat-race of twentieth-century life and strive to recover the lost art of meditation. It is not a casual, superficial acquaintance with Scripture that the modern church needs, but rather to heed our Master's exhortation: "Let these words sink into your ears" (Luke 9:44 RSV).

There is no particular secret about how to do it. It just takes time, purposefully redeemed from our busy lives, in which to turn Scripture over and over in our minds until it sinks into our hearts and so regulates everything we think and do.

Memorization

One of the best ways to meditate on God's word is to memorize it.

When you find a Bible passage you want to recall and reflect on often, consider memorizing it. Memorization requires time and effort. Break the passage into small sections, memorizing one part at a time. Gradually add more until you've committed the entire passage to memory. Speaking the passage aloud can significantly aid memorization.

This Week: Would you like to memorize a verse from the passage we read? We can share next week how this was meaningful to you.

Toolbox: Reading Plans and Bible Memory Sites

Memorization

If interested, you can start here on good passages to memorize

<https://www.navigators.org/resource/how-to-memorize-scripture/>

<https://www.fighterverses.com/verse-index>

Bible Reading Plans

Some of these reading plans are useful for a broad reading of the entire Bible, some are more suited for studying books or topics. Both are useful approaches to reading the Bible. For reading through the entire Bible, many of these plans are integrated into Bible apps, such as the YouVersion Bible app, ESV Bible app, and Blue Letter Bible app. These allow you to synchronize your reading between web and mobile apps. The apps have the option to read the section out loud if you are driving or otherwise unable to read the text. Having the app read out loud while you read the text can also help with focus and pronunciation of unusual names.

Remember, the best plan is the one you will stick to.

Mark Brown's favorite Bible-in-one-year plan

<https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/navigators-book-at-a-time-Bible-reading-plan.pdf>

Other Navigators reading plans

<https://www.navigators.org/resource/Bible-reading-plans/>

YouVersion Bible app "Whole Bible" plans. These can be synchronized between web and mobile apps.

<https://www.Bible.com/reading-plans-collection/11477>

Thematic plans from a reputable organization like Ligonier Ministries (also available in the YouVersion Bible app)

<https://www.Bible.com/search/plans?query=ligonier>

The ESV Bible app provides many reading plans including, themes, topics, yearly, etc.

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/series/esvorg-reading-plans/>

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-story-of-redemption-a-1-year-reading-plan/>

<https://www.esv.org/plans>

Blue Letter Bible has multiple plans which can be synchronized between web and mobile apps.

<https://www.blueletterBible.org/dailyreading/>