

How to Read the Bible

1. Read it like no other book

- a. Pray for God to open your heart to His Word, and for His understanding (I Corinthians 2:13-14)
 - i. Ephesians 1:17 *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better,"* (c.f. Colossians 1:9).
 - ii. James 1:5 *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him,"*
- b. The Bible is not to be read just for information; it is to be read in order so that we may be changed. Christ is the way, the truth and the life. When we follow him *"The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day,"* (Proverbs 4:18).
- c. Again, pray as you read. The Scriptures are the Sword of the Spirit, and we can not handle this sword in the flesh. Therefore, do not try to do in the flesh that which can only be accomplished in the spirit.

2. Read it with understanding

- a. This may sound strange and perhaps even obvious; nevertheless, it is a necessary exhortation. Matthew 22:31 *"have you not read what was spoken to you by God?"* (also cf. 12:3, 5, and 19:4). Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who had surely read their Bibles. But they did not understand the meaning (Matthew 12:7), and therefore Jesus rebuked them, and ultimately rejected many of them.
- b. Reading with understanding MUST include meditation (thinking) on the word.
 - i. Joshua 1:8 *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*
 - ii. Psalm 119:27 *"Let me understand the teaching of Your precepts; then I will meditate on Your wonders."*
 - iii. *"You will not get comfort to your soul out of what you do not understand... Pray to the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of scripture."* C. H. Spurgeon
- c. Pray for understanding and to be changed.

3. Read it often.

- a. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-2, *"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked... But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night."*
- b. Psalm 119:97, *"Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long."*
- c. Pray for understanding and to be changed.

4. Study and search while you read.

- a. Jeremiah 33:3 *'Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'* How shall we call, if not from the Scriptures themselves? We all know from experience, and Peter confirms, that there are *"things that are hard to understand,"* II Peter 3:16.
 - i. II Timothy 2:3-4 *"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer."*
 - ii. Use other resources like dictionaries, and commentaries. God has given us many whom he has given greater gifts. As a body, he therefore expects us to depend on those who have greater gifting in areas where we are weak.
- b. Jesus tells us we must have greater righteousness than the Pharisees who also searched the Old Testament scriptures, John 4:39. They understood they could lead the way to eternal life, but refused

to believe that they testified about Christ. Should we not search all the more knowing that all the prophets and the law point to Christ?

- c. Take notes.
- d. Memorize it. *"I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You,"* Psalm 119:11
- e. Pray for understanding and to be changed.

5. Read it "with an eye peeled for the Gospel." C. J. Mahaney

- a. All the Law and the prophets speak of Christ.
 - i. Luke 24:44 He said to them, *"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*
 - ii. Romans 3:21 *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."*
- b. All Scripture "predicts, prepares for, reflects, or results from the work of Christ." C. J. Mahaney.
- c. Pray for understanding, especially in the OT which is so rich in preparing the Church to understand Christ. He can be gloriously found in passages which may otherwise be obscure when not seen in the light of Christ.

6. Read it like every other book you read.

- a. Start at the beginning and read it through. Do not start in the middle of some passage and expect to be fully enlightened. II Peter 1:20, *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation."*
 - i. When we read without context we are more likely to incorrectly use scripture than when we are familiar with whole passages and books.
 - ii. While it is not necessary to read in order from Genesis to Revelation, every Christian should make the effort to do so.
 - iii. Nor does this mean we can only read whole books at a time, we should for the complete context, but it does mean reading entire sections of scripture which belong together.
- b. II Timothy 3:16–17 *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*
- c. Mathew 4:4 *"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*
- d. Pray for understanding and to be changed.

7. Apply the Word

- a. James 1:22-23 *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."*
- b. *"The eye glances but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest there, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot."* C. H. Spurgeon
- c. II Timothy 2:15 *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth"*
- d. Pray for understanding and to be changed.