

READ

the Bible



GOD GAVE A BOOK



That means we get to hear, read, engage with and enjoy the words of God. That's pretty amazing and for many Christians getting a Bible of their own is the greatest gift. Discovering how to read the Bible so that we grow in love for God, the likeness of Christ and learning from the Holy Spirit is a skill we all need to, and can, have. We've put this simple guide together to help you get going or develop your reading of God's book.

Getting started

Step 1: Get a Bible you can read OR listen to. The most common way of engaging with the Bible is not to read it but to listen to it. Listening to the Bible being read is not a second-best option, it's fine. There are plenty of excellent apps and Bibles available. If you need help choosing one or finding one in your mother tongue, let us know.

Step 2: Start to read (or listen). I recommend praying before you start, just to ask God to speak to you as you read. And pray when you finish, thanking God for His word and asking the Spirit to apply it to your life. At its simplest, those two steps are all you need.

4 BENEFITS

"BLESSED IS THE
ONE
... WHOSE
DELIGHT IS IN THE
LAW OF THE LORD,
AND WHO
MEDITATES ON HIS
LAW DAY AND
NIGHT.
THAT PERSON IS
LIKE A
TREE PLANTED BY
STREAMS OF
WATER,
WHICH YIELDS ITS
FRUIT IN SEASON
AND WHOSE
LEAF DOES NOT
WITHER—
WHATEVER THEY
DO PROSPERS."
PSALM 1:1-3

Lex Loizides in his book *Beginnings* outlines four main benefits of reading the Bible. Here is our summary of his reflections on Psalm 1:

Stability and strength: If we learn to love the Bible we will be like a 'tree firmly planted by streams of water'. Knowing God's word gives us stability and strength – truth to hold on to through the ups and downs of life. We also become nourished and refreshed as we keep our hearts and minds focused on God's truth.

Fruitfulness: There is a connection between knowing God's Word and bearing fruit. As we read more of the Bible, we begin to see our hearts, minds and actions changing to become more like Jesus.

Perseverance: Like a 'leaf that does not wither', this Psalm shows us that – even when we get tired, worn out and feel the pressures of life – God's word can lift us up again and help us keep going. The Bible is the nourishment that we need to persevere.

Prosperity in all of life: God doesn't promise wealth, worldly success or a trouble-free life. But this Psalm suggests that if we delight in God's word, we will flourish – becoming more like we were created to be –and will draw closer to God – the source of true life.

USE SOAP

We have to wash our hands a lot at the moment so this way of reading the Bible is really easy to remember. S.O.A.P

Scripture: Just start reading according to your reading plan or the part of the Bible you're reading through. I suggest reading/listening to at least a chapter (more if you can) and then focus in on a smaller section. If you haven't picked up your Bible in a while, why not start with Mark's Gospel.

Observation: What struck you and caught your attention in what you read? What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. Paraphrase and write this scripture down in your own words.

Application: Ask yourself how what you have read applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.



Prayer: This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

THE SWEDISH METHOD

“THE
CHRISTIAN
LIFE IS A
LISTENING
LIFE.
CHRISTIANS
ARE
PEOPLE
WHO
EXPECT TO
BE SPOKEN
TO BY GOD.”

ROWAN
WILLIAMS

In many ways the way a lot of people engage with the Bible today is almost the opposite of how it was done in most countries since the church began. They *listened* to it and we *read* it. They listen to it together and we read it alone. That's not all bad of course, but it's worth remembering that there are riches to be discovered by reading the Bible ***with others***.

This technique below – named The Swedish Method after first being used with a group of Swedish students – is great for small groups but you can use it on your own too. You'll see it shares a few things in common with SOAP. So you read a passage together (preferably out loud) and then each person goes back over the passage on their own while being on the lookout for three things:



A light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention.



A question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the text, or a question the reader would like to ask the writer of the passage or the Lord.



An arrow: A personal application for the reader’s life.

RESOURCES



To stretch yourself some more, make sure you add these things alongside your reading of the Bible.

Some Scriptures about the Scriptures:

Dt 11:18; Josh 1:7-8; Ps 19:7-11; Ps 119:1-16, 34; Mt 4:4; Mt 7:24; Jn 6:63; Jn 8:32; Acts 20:32; Rom 12:1-2; Rom 15:14; Phil 4:8; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; James 1:22; 2 Pet 1:16-21

Additional methods for reading the Bible

Lectio Divina and meditation on scripture

In-depth study with a commentary or study Bible

Videos

The Bible Project

Look at the Book

Websites

Practicing the Way.

Books

Beginnings by Lex Loizides,

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster,

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Practice of Biblical Meditation by Campbell McAlpine,

Unbreakable by Andrew Wilson

How to read the Bible for all it's Worth by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart