**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE**

**10 Reasons to Read and Study the Bible**

1. **Encounter God** - The Bible is where we meet God and hear His voice and truth!
2. **Know God** - We don’t just seek to know about God, but to relate to and grow in love for Him.
3. **Glorify God** - We desire to grow in holiness and imitation of Christ in order to honor God.
4. **Experience God’s Past Work** - We learn from God’s revealed historical work among humanity.
5. **Understand God’s Present Work** - We hear how God desires to work in & through us today.
6. **Look Forward to God’s Future Work** - We trust in His promised future return and work.
7. **Protect from Satan’s Attacks** - We remember our real enemy in Satan, his demons, the world, and our flesh and are reminded that His truth is a spiritual weapon of offense and defense.
8. **Share True Hope with Others** - We evangelistically speak God’s hope, love, and Gospel truth.
9. **Live Life According to God’s Wisdom** - We submit to our Father’s loving instruction for life
10. **Obedience** - God has commanded us to listen and obey His voice through the Bible.

**10 Ways to Read the Bible**

As you seek to read the Bible, ensure to prioritize time to take the Bible for study and meditation: understanding, absorbing, internalizing, memorizing, and applying the Scriptures.

1. **Through the Bible** - Read the whole Bible from beginning to end or in some other order!
	* Try [about.esvbible.org/resources/reading/](http://about.esvbible.org/resources/reading/) or [www.biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan/](http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan/)
2. **New Testament** - If you read a chapter per weekday, you can read the whole Bible in a year
3. **Proverbs** - There are 31 Proverbs, so seek to read the one corresponding to the calendar day (i.e. read Proverbs 17 on the 17th day of the month, Proverbs 18 on 18th day of the month, etc.).
4. **Psalms** - There are 150 Psalms, so choose a Psalm each day to help guide your prayers (i.e. on the 17th day of the month select either Psalm 17, 47, 77, 107, or 137 to read and instruct you in prayer).
	* See Don Whitney’s [Praying the Bible](http://www.amazon.com/Praying-Bible-Donald-S-Whitney/dp/1433547848)
5. **Read slowly through Romans** - Go deeper and digest and study theology.
	* Use a resource like Wayne Grudem’s [Christian Beliefs](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0310255996) or [Systematic Theology](http://www.amazon.com/Systematic-Theology-Introduction-Biblical-Doctrine/dp/0310286700) to help you!
6. **Pick a single Bible book to read** - John: learn the basics of Jesus’ life and death. James: know and apply God’s wisdom. 1 John: ensure you are a believer.
7. **Subscribe to a faithful devotional aid to compliment your Bible reading**
	* Try [www.biblestudytools.com/devotionals](http://www.biblestudytools.com/devotionals)
8. **Study a character. Search and read wherever their name appears.**
	* Check out [The Baker Encyclopedia of Bible People](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0801066042)
9. **Study a place. Search and read wherever that place is mentioned.**
	* Check out [www.bibleplaces.com/sites](http://www.bibleplaces.com/sites) for some incredible descriptions and pictures!
10. **Study a topic. Search and learn about what God teaches about key issues.**
	* Check out [GotQuestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)

**Where did the Bible come from? What is the Bible?**

The Bible was spoken and revealed from God into the hearts of men that the Scriptures might be written and shared among God's children. Some of these writings are historical descriptions, prophetic writings, poetry and songs, wisdom, and letters. Although written by the hands of men, these writings were not written by the will of man, but were inspired and given by the power and will of God's Spirit. The Bible is the specific revelation by God about Himself, His work, and His plan for all of humanity so that we may love, trust, and obey Him. The whole Bible is breathed out by God, to make His people wise for salvation and to equip His people to lovingly teach, train, correct, and confront with God's truths (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:19-21

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." 2 Peter 1:16

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29

**Can we expect more books to be discovered or added to the Bible?**

No. God has clearly spoken in the Scriptures and across early church history such that the current collection of recognized biblical books (canon) is complete. This process of recognizing the words of God comes through the recognition of the authorship as a biblical prophets or apostle, the self-attestation of the book within the Scriptures themselves, and their continuity with other books of the Bible.

**Does the Bible have errors?**

The original writings (autographs) have no errors at all. The ancient copies (manuscripts) we possess have small differences between them. These differences have primarily arisen from those who were copying and translating them. These differences have been recognized, described and corrected via a modern day comparison of the thousands of manuscripts to produce reliable Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) compilations that have been reliably translated into many languages. None of the manuscript differences affect or speak to major theological issues but are most commonly mere grammatical issues. Comprehensive resources are available to explain the process of translation and decisions made concerning the compilation of manuscripts.

**Is the Bible trustworthy?**

Yes. The Bible shows its own trustworthiness through its self attestation in the lives of believers and its internal consistency over thousands of years at the hands of many writers. The Bible is clearly seen to be the most accurate book in all of human history through archaeological, historical, scientific, and documentary evidence. The biblical content clearly reveals that its author is God Himself. The Bible has the most and best manuscript evidence, seen in its thousands of copies that were written soon after its original writing and discovered in a multiplicity of geographic locations. No literary work in all of human history is comparable to the trustworthiness of the Bible.

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Titus 1:9

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:12-13

"The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Psalm 119:72

**Is the KJV the best translation?**

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible is a good translation of the Bible. When it was written only a few manuscripts had been discovered, which limited the scope and accuracy of its translation. Since its translation hundreds of years ago, many additional archaeological discoveries have been made which provided thousands of more trustworthy manuscripts in the twentieth century. Many modern day translations have been written since the KJV translation, providing plenty of accurate biblical translations. Many people prefer the KJV because of their personal familiarity with it. Many others struggle with the KJV since it uses Old English, a language that is antiquated, no longer spoken, and difficult for many modern day English speakers to understand.

Many teachers give the false impression that the KJV is the only accurate Bible to be used. This is a touchy issue, one which must be handled with great care and humility. Such teachers may have genuine motives in preventing any corruption of the Biblical translations, but such opinions are often rooted in human pride and personal ignorance of the translation process and manuscript evidence. Those who prefer the KJV have the joy of continuing in their freedom of this preference but must humbly encourage and accept the fact than many prefer translations based on a more comprehensive collection of biblical manuscripts and translated into the common languages of the day.

**Suggested book**: *[The King James Only Controversy by James White](http://www.amazon.com/The-King-James-Only-Controversy/dp/0764206052)*

**Why are there so many translations?**

When translating the Bible, the translators must make decisions to translate either literally with a word for word approach (formal) or with a thought for thought approach (dynamic equivalence). These two approaches are both accurate and helpful. Some writings are written with more simple wording to recognize the differences in literary capabilities of different people and communities.

There are also other translations based upon a paraphrase approach. The paraphrase approach is when the Biblical text is not translated but is instead summarized and restated. Although such an approach may be helpful for children's Bibles and chronological Bible storying, it is not a good approach for maturing and literate Christians.

The English language is blessed to have many translations, but some languages possess only one translation. Many languages have yet to have the Bible translated. Although the multiple translations are extremely beneficial, we must recognize and be aware that there are translations that make unhelpful and heretical changes to the meaning of the biblical text.

There are modern translations that have removed gender specific language (NIV), removed references to Christ's deity (Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation), added books to the Bible (Catholicism), or subjugated the Bible to other books and authorities (Catholicism and Mormonism).

"Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." 2 John 1:9

**Which translation is the best?**

Assuming the translation is faithful to the biblical text, the best translation is the one that you can easily read and understand. As some grow in their reading and comprehension abilities, they may find that more formal translations are most helpful to them in the process of study.

**Are devotional guides and books ok?**

Devotional guides and books can be helpful for Christians as an aid and tool to enhancing their personal study of God's Word. Devotional guides and books can also be a dangerous impediment to spiritual growth if Christians never grow in their own abilities to study Scripture. True Christians seek to mature and should never be content with solely a second hand experience with God as related through others. The Bible is clearly understood (perspicuity of the Bible), which means that it is intelligible through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. If you struggle with your own personal and direct study of God's Word, pray to God and seek help from others in order to enhance and increase your ability to hear God's voice through the study of His Word.

**How can I go about reading more of the Bible?**

Make a plan. Make time. Be intentional. The reading of God's Word is essential for spiritual growth. The best plan is the one in which you will be able to follow. It could be as simple as picking a Bible book and reading through it one day at a time. It could involve a goal like reading through the entire New Testament in a year by reading one chapter per weekday. Many books, Bibles, and apps have a a plan for reading through the entire Bible in a year. We tend to prioritize that which we find valuable. Prioritize and make time for the reading of God's Word, it is of infinite value.

"the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb." Psalm 19:9-10

**Is the New Testament more important than the Old Testament?**

**What is their relationship?**

All of Scripture is valuable and trustworthy. The Bible is one big story, not two separate sections (Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:14-17). God speaks not only through his prophets, but also through the life of Christ. The expression that "the New is in the Old concealed and the the Old is in the New revealed" helps us to understand this relationship. We need to give equal attention to the study of both the Old Testament and New Testament for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." James 1:17

"Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way." Psalm 119:127-128

**How can I understand the meaning of the Bible?**

The best way to understand the Bible is to spend time in it. Study Bibles, commentaries, and online resources ([GotQuestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) , [BibleStudyTools.com](http://BibleStudyTools.com) , and [BibleHub.com](http://www.biblehub.com) ). Here are some helpful questions to ask yourself, and seek answers to, as you discover the meaning of the Scriptures:

* Who is writing this?
* Who is it being written to?
* What type of writing is this?
* What does the Scripture mean?
* What do we learn about God?
* What do we learn about God's work?
* What do we learn about ourselves?
* Why does this passage matter?
* How do I need to respond to and apply these truths to my life? (Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, an example to follow, a prayer to offer, a truth to remember, an attitude to change, or a teaching to share?)

**What does it mean to meditate on God's Word?**

Meditation on God's Word is the filling up of one's heart and mind with the truths of God. As these truths are internalized, we are to spend more time in mental contemplation and processing over His truth in order to grow in our faith and to share our faith with others. Meditation happens when we read, listen to, pray over, learn, think, speak, write, and share about God's truths.

"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Joshua 1:7-8

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

**How can I share and speak God's truths lovingly to others?**

Memorizing the Scripture is the best way to prepare to share God's truths. We should pray to God for opportunities and courage to witness. When we pray according to His will we know he hears and answers us (1 John 5:14-15), and we know it is His will that we be His witnesses (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). The more we meditate, study, and memorize God's Word, the more our hearts and lips will naturally and courageously bear witness to the glory and goodness of God.

We must remember that we have a responsibility to warn others of God's coming judgment (Ezekiel 3:17-19 & 33:7-9). When we share the Gospel we ought to communicate the truths concerning God as Creator (Colossians 1:16-17, Hebrews 4:13, 9:27), mankind's sinful rebellion (Romans 3:23), Christ's sacrifice and gift (Romans 6:23), and our need to respond to God as our Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9). The Gospel must be clearly spoken from our lips but also must be faithfully lived out in our lives, marriages, families, and workplaces (Ephesians 5 & 6).

Here are three great online resources to learn how to share your faith:

* ***The Way of the Master***(Ray Comfort) ***[www.livingwaters.com](http://www.livingwaters.com)* [our personal favorite!]**
* *Share Jesus without Fear* (William Fay) *[www.sharejesuswithoutfear.com](http://www.sharejesuswithoutfear.com)*
* *Steps to Peace with God* (Billy Graham) *[www.peacewithgod.net](http://www.peacewithgod.net)*

Many people fear the questions that may arise when witnessing, but it is ok to answer that "I do not know, but will find out." A great resource for discovering God's answers to difficult questions is **[www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)** . Finally we must always remember that our calling is not simply to make converts, but to make disciples, connecting believers into church fellowships where they can grow in their love and knowledge of God.

**How can I recognize false teachers and false prophets?**

The best way to recognize false teachers is to listen to their teachings and watch their lives (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:15-22, Matthew 12:33-37, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 Peter 2, Jude 1:1-10, 2 John 1:9, James 3:1). If their teachings and lives do not line up with Scriptural truths, they may be false teachers, false prophets, or immature believers who do not need to be teaching or leading.

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." 2 Peter 2:1

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:8-9

**Steps to Studying the Bible**

1. **Pray** before Studying the Bible - ask God to open your mind and heart to His truths
2. **Read** the Bible - follow a plan, be disciplined, seek accountability, use an audio bible such as found from [faithcomesbyhearing.com](http://faithcomesbyhearing.com) (“Bible.is” as an app)
3. **Listen** to Faithful Teachings - commit to regularly listen to your pastor’s and others’ teachings while diligently checking the Scripture to ensure what they say is true (Acts 17:11).
4. **Study** the Bible - slowly and intentionally dig deep into the Scriptures
5. **Meditate** on the Bible - remove distractions and seek the work of the Spirit for your understanding and application of these truths in your life
6. **Pray** through the Bible - use the Scriptures to guide your prayer. The Psalms are the best for this, but you can pray as the Lord leads for conviction and turning from sin as well as for the increased maturity in Christ
7. **Memorize** the Bible - write, speak out loud, draw, use games, acronyms, songs, and repetition, recite portions of verses and progress to the whole verse, keep accountability to your memorization goals
8. **Teach** the Bible - find someone to mentor and teach, learning how to study the Bible, in teaching you will learn and grow most rapidly
9. **Evangelize** with the Bible - the Bible is meant to be shared, focus on Gospel presentation passages to use in witnessing
10. **Pray** for God to remind and deepen you into the truths of God, asking Him to help you to obey His Word

**10 Tips for Better Bible Study**

"Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible." Charles H. Spurgeon

**1. Pick a Plan**

Ever hear the expression, “a goal without a plan is just a wish”? If you want to draw closer to the Lord through the Bible you’ve got to make a plan that is “SMART” or 1)Specific, 2)Measurable, 3)Achievable, 4)Realistic, and 5)Timely

**2. Be Realistic, Keep It Simple**

Consider your past and present situations as you evaluate your goals for the future!

**3. Set a Time**

Are you a morning person or an evening person? Do you need to wake up earlier or block off a particular time of day a little better?

**4. Pick, Prepare, & Protect a Place**

Where is a spot (chair, room, car) where you avoid distractions while being focused on reading or hearing God’s Word?

**5. Make Reminders**

What will help you to remember daily? Leaving your Bible or devotional out in a particular spot? Sticky note? Dry eraser on the mirror or fridge? Phone app notification? Repeating calendar event?

**6. Keep Track of Your Progress**

Use a bookmark, check off a reading plan, use a chart to see what you’ve accomplished!

**7. Have a Catch-Up Plan, Readjust If Necessary**

Block off time (evening, weekend, a day per month) to pick up when you inevitably miss a reading or day. Find yourself getting too far behind, adjust your goals to be more realistic and achievable or stretch out your goal’s end date.

**8. Create Accountability**

Aim for the same goal with a child, spouse, friend, or family member. Share your goal and progress or setbacks online or with others for encouragement. Confess your failures or struggles to receive wisdom or prayer.

**9. Use Tools for the Journey**

Whether it is highlighters, gel pens, or a commentary, concordance, atlas, or app - find practical resources that make your journey more enjoyable and profitable.

**10. Celebrate Small Wins Along the Way**

Make celebratory steps and incentives as you keep up for a month, finish a book, or complete your next chapter. Make an end of the year prize that you look forward to using a small reward!

“The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion

 to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts.” George Mueller

**Passages Emphasizing the Importance of the Study of the Bible**

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. - 2 Timothy 2:15

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. - Isaiah 55:10-11

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. - John 5:39-40

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?" - Mark 12:24

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra - which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. - 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. - James 1:21-25

take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, - Ephesians 6:17

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. - Revelation 22:18-19

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. - Hebrews 4:12-13

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. - 1 Timothy 6:3-5

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. - Hebrews 1:1-2

