**How to study the Bible 101**

**First: Are you a natural reader?**

Even for folks who enjoy reading the Bible could seem like a humongous task! After all it is such a BIG book! But if you’re not a reader, studying the Bible may seem more daunting to you than scaling Mount Everest. Today, reading the Bible is easier than ever! With the help of Audio Bible Apps and other Audio Bible helps, one doesn’t need to actually read anything…**just listen!** Now, if you’re not willing to do that…well then, you’re on your own! Literally, because no one can get to truly ***know*** GOD outside of His Holy Word!

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/> allows you to choose from many translations

<http://www.bible.is/> is another option. It has dramatized versions too. But there are many options online.

You can play these whilst driving, walking, washing dishes, exercising…whatever!

Okay, that’s a great starting point. But remember: “Those who read succeed!” That goes for Bible reading too!

So,

1. **What Bible version should I use?** *(Get a Translation not a Paraphrase like The Message/Living Bible)*

*Use a good and readable translation – below are some ‘good translations,’ the readability depends on you!*

* 1. ESV – English Standard Version
  2. NASB - New American Standard Version
  3. CSB - Christian Standard Bible (called the Holman Christian Standard Bible prior to 2016)
  4. NIV **(1984)** – newer versions are not recommended - gender neutral - sometimes too inclusive
  5. NLT – Easiest to read and understand of the recommended versions

(The ESV & NASB are “Word for Word” Translations [“what GOD says”] from the original Hebrew (Old Testament) & Greek (New Testament). The NIV and NLT are “thought for thought” Translations [what GOD meant by what He said]. The CSB is a middle ground between the ‘word for word’ and ‘thought for thought’ translations. If you’re just getting started and know very little about the Bible, perhaps “thought for thought” is the way to go. But if you use a good study guide (see below), you can opt for the ‘Word for Word’ version.

1. **A study guide** 
   1. A Study bible has notes below the texts explaining the verse. They are pricier and bulkier than regular bibles though. A good one starts around $30.
      1. “The John MacArthur Study Bible”

<https://www.gty.org/store/products/bibles/none/1/40>

* + 1. “The Reformation Study Bible, Edited by RC Sproul”

<https://reformationstudybible.com/>

* + 1. and “The ESV study Bible” are recommended.

<https://www.crossway.org/bibles/esv-study-bible-none-case/>

* + 1. Shop around – Ollies Bargain Outlet in Knoxville has been known to carry the ESV Study Bible at 50% off
  1. OR purchase a Study App <http://www.studybible.org/> (John MacArthur) ($5.99) – **highly recommended.**

1. **Listen to ‘Expository’ Bible teachers… not just any pastor**
   1. There is a lot of junk out there, unfortunately. Even some of the most popular pastors and best communicators today on TV or online are not very good at actually teaching the Bible.
   2. Listen to teacher’s who actually read the whole passage and then teach and explain the Bible ‘verse by verse’ (this is called: *Expository* or *Exegetical* Preaching or Teaching) – explaining the meaning and history and the context of the text.
   3. Again, you can always listen while driving, walking or washing dishes etc.
   4. Remember you want to listen to teachers that are actually going to teach you the Bible and how it fits together.

Monergism <https://www.monergism.com/> This is a site with *Sermons and Bible studies on almost every Bible passage taught by variety of Trusted Bible Teachers*. Below are some Bible Teachers we would recommend, but get to know them and choose your own favorite:

Martin Lloyd Jones - John MacArthur – RC Sproul – Voddie Baucham – Sinclair Ferguson – Eric Alexander – Steven Lawson – Brian Borgman – James M. Boice

1. **Don’t just ‘take time, but “Make time” to study:**

This is usually the toughest part of Bible Study *(the enemy will seek to distract you and keep you too busy to study the Bible – don’t fall for it!)*

* 1. Treat this time like any important appointment or meeting (set a daily time on your schedule)
     1. Schedule to Study the Bible at least 5 times a week – perhaps: Mon-Fri
     2. If you’re a night owl – do it at night (but not too late when you’re not able to focus)
     3. If you’re a morning person, get up a little earlier and do it
     4. If you have a flexible schedule, then some other time of day or…
     5. Perhaps: Lunch break at work.

When you read the Bible passage: Sit down and slowly read through it and the study notes / app if possible. You’ll get the most out of your study if you follow a study guide or listen to one of the Bible teacher’s (above) whistle sitting and taking notes. Yet, if you’re really pressed for time due to no fault of your own, then, listening whilst driving, walking, doing chores etc. That is a better option than not studying at all!

But, for the most adequate study time:

* 1. Find a quiet spot where you will not be distracted to study and pray
  2. Always **make it clear** to your family or others **where you’ll be** and **how long you plan to be**. Ask them to please respect your privacy for the allotted time. Be fair, don’t choose a space and time that is your family’s recreational meeting space. (I know a man who sits in his car in his garage – it’s the quietist place in his home, since he has a large family).
  3. Take a journal, a notepad and a pen (or you may prefer digital versions)
     1. Take a notepad to mind dump (i.e. write down distractions: e.g. Phone Mary, pay water bill…) and then stop thinking about that and focus on your Bible Study.
     2. The journal is to keep track of what you’re learning (what you write is entirely up to you)

(Personally, I’ve created a separate “*gmail* journal account” that sends to my own quiet time email. It makes cutting and pasting Bible passages easier than writing them out – Just email it to yourself! Gmail keeps a great record of my personal journal)

Ideas on what to Journal?

* + - 1. Ask yourself: “What is God teaching me in His Word right now?” Write down what you learned in today’s passage (and how it pertains to your life.
      2. Write down what’s going on in your life and in the lives of others close to you right now?
      3. Write down prayer requests *and* keep track of answered prayers too – remember to always thank God for answered prayer, even if the outcome wasn’t what you expected or wanted.
  1. *Always* **pray** first: Ask God for “Wisdom, Knowledge & Understanding.”
     1. Ask God to **teach you** from His Word (i.e. give you *Knowledge* & *Understanding*)
     2. Ask God to help you **Apply** what you learn (that’s *Wisdom* – correct application)

All of the Bible is ***‘God breathed’*** therefore…

* + - 1. The Holy Spirit *inspired* it when it was first written
      2. The Holy Spirit is the one who will *enlighten your mind* to *understand* God’s truth in His Word today
      3. If you are saved, the Holy Spirit lives in you and will *lead you* to *live out* God’s Word and *apply it correctly* in your life!

This may seem like a lot of work to start, but it will flow more and more naturally as you go. **Just get started** with the basics! - Read or listen to the Bible regularly. You can always build on as you go!

## The Bible's so BIG...where to start reading?

## Our church follows its own Bible reading track we call "five by five" ****(5x5)**** which we HIGHLY recommend for all our members. We all read the same 5 prescribed chapters of scripture at home for 5 days a week. Then we go over those chapters together on Sunday at church and sometimes on Wednesday nights as well.

## The schedule is on our calendar <https://www.hispeopleknox.com/calendar.html>

## What if I’m not in your church or on this track, or what if I’d like to do more? - *You do have other options*

## ****Option 1:**** Give me the meat of the New Testament message in a nutshell:

## Begin with the *Gospel of John* and follow it up with the book of *Romans*. This will be deep, deep stuff, but you asked for the meat, right! We recommend you use a study Bible or follow an audio sermon/Bible teaching series as mentioned above in point #3 to get the very most out of John’s gospel and the book of Romans.

## Option 2: The gospel narrative in the shortest amount of time

## The *Gospel of Mark* is the quickest to read and most action packed of the gospel narratives.

## ****Option 3:**** Slow and steady wins the race. - This option will help us to understand how the bible fits together.

## Begin with *Luke's Gospel*, then the book of *Acts* (which is actually the Gospel of Luke part 2). From there, follow the path of the rest of the New Testament: *Romans, Corinthians*...until the last book *Revelation*.

## Once you're at the end. Begin at the very beginning of the Old Testament with *Genesis* and work your way all the way through to the end of the Bible again.  Don’t stop in Leviticus or Numbers, as most do! Push through, there really is a lot to gain even from some books that initially seem long winded. Once again, if you use a study bible or app, or listen to a Bible Study online by a good teacher, some of the most seemingly boring books will come to life! After all, it’s God’s Words. They all fit together in His beautiful promise of the Gospel! Read / listen to the Bible, study it! You will be so glad and so much the richer for it, if you stick with it. – God speed!