

“How To Read” The Bible

Reading the bible or starting a journey into scripture can be daunting. The Bible is a story (about Jesus Christ) but it's not a novel. It's not necessary to begin at page one and read to the end. One of the joys and flexibility of reading the Bible is it can be opened literally anywhere and a wealth of information, history, stories, lessons, and characters are presented.

So, where to start? The entirety of the bible, both Old and New Testament texts are fundamentally about Jesus Christ and His relationship with humans throughout the ages. He is the focus of the story. Therefore, He is the principal character we want to know about most. The New Testament books detail the life, mission, roles, and purpose for Jesus. The best place to start any bible study or reading is where we can learn about Jesus as the Christ.

With Jesus as our foundational cornerstone our reading can take on a unique and more personal understanding. So again, where to begin? The following is a suggestion for those looking to learn more while becoming more spiritually grounded, which is the goal of scripture. All you will need is a “Red Letter” edition of the Bible. This is a Bible with the text of what Jesus said and taught printed in red ink. You will only be reading the four ‘gospel books’; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It won't be difficult or time consuming. The first three gospel books; Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the ‘synoptic’ gospels. This means many of the stories and teachings presented are similar or the same in each book.

The book of Mark is thought to be the first written and is focused more on the message of Jesus than his historic presence. The book of Matthew was written primarily for a Jewish audience and the book of Luke portrays the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Finally, the book of John relates the who, how, and why of Jesus as the singular most important connection between God/Father and Spirit to each of us as individuals.

Start in the book of Matthew and read only the sections printed in red. When you finish the first red section go to the next red section, skipping everything in between. This may sound convoluted or disjointed but you'll get the flow quickly. By reading only the red worded sections you will gain an understanding of Jesus' thoughts, words, and deeds without being drawn into other parts of the story. By the time you reach the end of John's gospel you will be familiar with Jesus more than you might have imagined.

The next step is to read the entire gospel book of John. Yes, I know you just finished the red worded sections but now go back and read the whole book. Your knowledge and understanding will increase tenfold.

The third step, if you're interested or so inclined and wish to share with your family members or others in your care is to re-read the red printed sections again with your loved ones. In this way you will become their teaching aide and help them establish a knowledge and relationship with Christ. You'll be amazed how much this second reading will enlighten you further. More

importantly, you'll be sharing the most valuable information your family can receive and you'll be doing it together. Take your time. There's no rush. Think about what you're reading and what it's saying to you. Let your family ask questions. Find the answers together or research on your own so you'll be able to answer effectively. If you need help, seek it out. 'Google' any question and you'll find direction with answers. Make it fun for your family to learn new information about their lives and relationships. Remember, because you're only concerned with the red worded sections the amount of information and time is not overwhelming.

Good job starting to learn about Jesus! Stay tuned for more courses about where to go from here.

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