

Some tips for Understanding the Bible

Get into a routine. For me the best time is the morning. If I don't read it then go through the day missing it, just as I would if I hadn't taken that first cup of tea or coffee at the usual time.

Pray for understanding. Don't plunge into it as you would a magazine. Before you begin reading, pause and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what He wants you to see.

Don't start at Genesis and aim for Revelation – you're almost certain to give up in Deuteronomy or Chronicles. Start with a Gospel, say Mark or Luke. Or if you want to start in the Old Testament, the book of Ruth, if you like a good love story, or the books of Samuel & Kings. But remember the Bible tells us about life as it is – just how messed up the world can be and yet how God brings His blessing through. If you're life's really down, the Psalms can be a good place to start. When you're done in you can really begin to see what their writers were getting at.

Get another translation.

Reading the same Bible over can be comforting but another version may open your eyes to new things. Try The Message or if you're a fan of the KJV, try the New King James or the English Standard Version.

Try Bites not Books

If you're short for time, or just not a big reader read a portion – just 1 psalm [or section of it if it's 119] or one chapter or one story. The point is not quantity but connection.

Ask questions. When you read something you aren't sure about, or one question you have leads to another, don't be afraid to ask someone for an answer. Ask another Christian, ask me. You can ask Google but take care, not everything written on the web about the Bible is sensible or Christian.

And pray for wisdom in responding. The Bible is a book for knowing God and developing your relationship. So be open to action. Action that's always consistent with Jesus, expressing faith in love, and developing your character in the fruit of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God our Father.

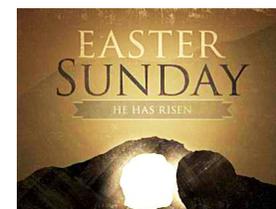
Let's Read the Bible! *Some Tips to Help No 1 in our occasional series*

Here's one tip for reading the Bible: read it as it is.

The Bible is God's book and what is in it is all we need to know. Consider: Genesis Chapter 16 which ends by telling us: Abram was 86 when Hagar bore him Ishmael, then Chapter 17 begins by telling us: Abram was 99 years old ... 13 years occupy the space between the two chapters, 13 years we know nothing about. What happened? All sorts of things. Think back on your last 13 years. But none of what happened to Abram in those 13 years matters for God's purposes.

There's always been fascination with what's not in the Bible, but being focused on what's not in our Bible can divert us from what is in it. The Bible is a compilation of 66 books put together across more than 1000 years through writers inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us all we need to know about God, why we are here, our relationship with Him, our present purpose and our ultimate future.

See the last page for some tips on reading the Bible.
The Bible Summarised in pictures with lots left out



Consider today's Reading: Luke 10:25-31 [NIV 1984]

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus,

"And who is my neighbour?"

30. In reply Jesus said:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

[1] What was the intent of the Law expert's first question?

[2] What happens in the first exchange?

[3] Why does the Law Expert ask Jesus his 2nd question?

[4] Jesus ends up telling a story. Why?

[5] How do we understand the story?

A morality tale

A theology lesson

An image of Jesus

[6] Something even deeper about Jesus?

[7] What is Jesus saying to us/to you today?

[8] What are we the Church/the Christian going to do in response?