

# How to Read the Bible?

**What is the Bible?** “All Scripture [the Bible] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

What that means is that the Bible was given by God to instruct us by inspiration—i.e., God’s special revelation to the prophet, who was then guided by the Holy Spirit to write what he had been revealed in his own words while still carrying what God intended us to read. The implication of that is that we have, first of all, to ask the same Holy Spirit to guide us as we read, as the Bible in itself says that “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

So, our first need to read the Bible is the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. That being said, we must also consider what the Scripture says about itself, as well as the hints the Bible gives us on how to read and meditate on it. For example, if you read Romans 10:17, you learn that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God’s word was designed to be heard, repeated, and memorized. That is because, in our brain, hearing is connected with memory and cognition.<sup>1</sup>

With that in mind, observe what Psalm 1:2 says while talking about the righteous or just person: “his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.” The text says that the righteous delight in studying God’s word by constantly meditating on it day and night. The Bible reading tip in this verse is the word translated here as “meditates” is the Hebrew word *hagah*(הָגָה), which means moan, utter, or speak. In the same vein, Joshua 1:8 commands us, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate [הָגָה] in it day and night, that you may observe 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.”

When you read your Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate you and read aloud or at least at a lower volume so you can hear yourself. That is the tip for today.

## How to read Biblical stories

The Bible is made of different genres of text; however, about 70% or more of it are stories. And remember, the whole narrative of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, talks about God’s love for us and how He, through Jesus, is trying to rescue us from our own bad choices ever since Adam. Also remember that, even when God is not mentioned, He is the main character of the Bible. So, how can we read and benefit from what the Bible is trying to teach in a simple way we can do at home, even with kids? There are 4 questions you can ask that will help you get the most out of the Bible stories:

1. What does this story reveal about God—his character, personality, and love? One way to answer that is to consider how His action (or inaction) in the story aids in providing an answer..
2. What does this story tell us about man, human nature, sin, and the human condition? This will help to relate the story to our reality as we analyze the characters and look at ourselves at the same time.
3. What does the story tell us about God’s will for us, obedience, and the principles of how to live? To help with answering that, look back at the answers to the first two questions and contrast them.
4. Who else needs to hear it? When we share what we learn with others, we grow in our own understanding.

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1 Frank R. Lin et al., “Hearing Loss and Cognitive Decline in Older Adults,” *JAMA Internal Medicine* 173, no. 4 (February 25, 2013): 293–99, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.1868>; David G. Loughrey et al., “Association of Age-Related Hearing Loss With Cognitive Function, Cognitive Impairment, and Dementia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *JAMA Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery* 144, no. 2 (February 1, 2018): 115–26, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoto.2017.2513>.

## Resources:

- Bible Gateway (compares multiple Bible versions): <https://www.biblegateway.com>
- NET (New English Translation) Bible's notes: <https://netbible.org/>
- BibleArc (see text in the original with lexicons): <https://app.biblearc.com>

## Rules for Reading Biblical Texts

1. **Read** the entire chapter (passage, story)
2. **Agenda** is set by the author, not by the reader. (Look for clues in the context)

\* *Do not import knowledge* (believes, NT texts) into the text that the author does not want to provide. You might destroy tension and meaning...

3. **Pay attention** to the following nuances of the narrative.

- **Time:** When?



- Morning/Evening
- Day/Night
- Year/Age
- Is it before/after Something else?

- **Space:** Where?



- What do you see?
- What do you remember?
- What do you smell?

- **Characters:** Who?



- Who is who?
- What "social" roles?
- Social status?
- Gender relations?
- Generational relations?
- How they relate with God?

- **Design:** How? [mini lecture]



- Word use analysis: are there central words?
- Literary design analysis: What type of text: Narrative vs. Discursive? What type of Design: Fronting, Repetition, Alliteration, etc.?
- Tension buildup: Why does happen what happens? What interests and intentions do actors have?
- Function analysis: What does the text want to achieve?

- **Context:** What is the referential world? [mini lecture]



- Who was the intended first audience?
- What the portions of Scripture before and after this text/story is talking about?
- How this text is interacting with its immediate context and with the rest of the Bible? Does it refers or reacts to external sources as well?

- **Participation:** Where, who are you in the text?



- What do you feel about the narrative?
- Who do you associate yourself with?
- How will you re-imagine your life after reading this narrative?