

# Reading a Biblical Text

## Bible Readings

- ◆ Genesis 2:4-25 (Creation)
- ◆ Genesis 7:1-19 (The Flood)
- ◆ Genesis 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel)
- ◆ Genesis 22:1-20 (Sacrifice of Isaac)
- ◆ Exodus 14:1-30 (Crossing the Red Sea)
- ◆ Exodus 16:1-36 (Manna and Quail)
- ◆ Exodus 20:1-17 (Ten Commandments)
- ◆ Exodus 21:1-11 (Treatment of Slaves)
- ◆ Leviticus 25:8-17 (Year of Restoration)
- ◆ Leviticus 25:35-38 (Loans to the Poor)

## Reflect

Reflect on the Bible story using these three questions:

- ◆ How did you understand this story when you were a child?
- ◆ As you read the story today, what do you now think the author intended to say?
- ◆ What application, if any, does the story have to contemporary life?

# A Bible Reading Method

## Pray

Pray before reading, asking God to help you understand and receive his Word. Through Christ you are in the Father's holy presence. Approach him boldly, humbly and expectantly.

## Read

Next, read slowly and carefully through the Bible passage. Sometimes, you'll want to read the passage more than once. You may also find it helpful to read the preceding or following passages to get the context. Take the time to read it as thoroughly as you can, expecting God to answer your prayer for understanding of his Word.

## Reflect

Reflect on what you have read, waiting in openness, ready to obey God's Word to you. Think through the passage, asking yourself such questions as:

- ◆ What does this passage say? What is its main point?
- ◆ What does it reveal about God, or about me?
- ◆ What insight am I given into myself and into my life situation?
- ◆ What does God require of me now, in thought, word or action?

These questions will help you "dig deeper" into the meaning of the passage as you study and reflect. Many people find it helpful to write their answers in a journal or notebook. You may find it helpful to use a Study Bible to help you probe the deeper meaning.

## Apply

The Bible's purpose is not only to give us information about God, but also to help us live in the proper relationship to God and others. Apply what God has taught you from today's reading to the circumstances of life – situations at work, home school, or church. Use what you have learned in order to become more like Jesus.

- ◆ How can God's Word apply to my life today: my situations at home, at work, school or church?

## Pray

End your time as you began, in prayer. This time turn the things you have learned into prayers. Make your discoveries from the Bible the basis of your prayer time. Ask God to help you live out and apply what you learned that day.

## Resource

Check out Scripture Union's daily guide for finding practical help from the Bible at: <https://scriptureunion.org/discovery>. Each day's reading covers 10-15 verses.

# 100 Essential Bible Readings

This Bible reading program, developed by Scripture Union, is built around 100 carefully selected short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. The passages are usually one to two chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The 100 readings take you through all of the major types of biblical writing including Historical books, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The Bible passages are organized into 20 sets of five readings each. This 100 Essential Bible Readings program enables you to get the big picture of God’s Word and in the process develop a daily Bible reading habit.



## OLD TESTAMENT

IN THE BEGINNING	
1	Creation Genesis 1:1-2:25
2	The Fall Genesis 3:1-3:24
3	The Flood Genesis 6:5-7:24
4	God’s Covenant with Noah Genesis 8:1-9:17
5	Tower of Babel Genesis 11:1-11:9

ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB	
6	The Call of Abram Genesis 12:1-12:20
7	God’s Covenant with Abram Genesis 15:1-15:21
8	Isaac’s Birth and “Sacrifice” Genesis 21:1-22:19
9	Jacob and Esau Compete Genesis 27:1-28:22
10	Jacob and Esau Reconcile Genesis 32:1-33:20

THE STORY OF JOSEPH	
11	Sold Into Slavery Genesis 37:1-37:36
12	Prison and a Promotion Genesis 39:1-41:57
13	Ten Brothers Go to Egypt Genesis 42:1-42:38
14	The Brothers Return Genesis 43:1-44:34
15	Joseph Reveals His Identity Genesis 45:1-46:7

MOSES AND THE EXODUS	
16	Birth of Moses Exodus 1:1-2:25
17	The Burning Bush Exodus 3:1-4:17
18	The Ten Plagues Exodus 6:28-11:10
19	Passover and Exodus Exodus 12:1-12:42
20	Crossing the Red Sea Exodus 13:17-14:31

THE LAW AND THE LAND	
21	The Ten Commandments Exodus 19:1-20:21
22	The Golden Calf Exodus 32:1-34:35
23	Joshua Succeeds Moses Joshua 1:1-1:18
24	Crossing the Jordan Joshua 3:1-4:24
25	The Fall of Jericho Joshua 5:13-6:27



THE JUDGES	
26	Israel’s Disobedience Judges 2:6-3:6
27	Deborah Leads Israel Judges 4:1-5:31
28	Gideon Defeats the Midianites Judges 6:1-7:25
29	Sampson Defeats the Philistines Judges 13:1-16:31
30	The Story of Ruth Ruth 1:1-4:22

THE RISE OF ISRAEL	
31	Samuel Listens to God 1 Samuel 1:1-3:21
32	King Saul 1 Samuel 8:1-10:27
33	David and Goliath 1 Samuel 16:1-18:16
34	David and Saul 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22
35	King David 2 Samuel 5:1-7:29

THE FALL OF ISRAEL	
36	David and Bathsheba 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25
37	King Solomon 1 Kings 2:1-3:28
38	Solomon’s Temple 1 Kings 8:1-9:9
39	Elijah and the Prophets of Baal 1 Kings 16:29-19:18
40	The Fall of Jerusalem 2 Kings 25:1-25:30

PSALMS AND PROVERBS	
41	The Lord Is My Shepherd Psalm 23:1-23:6
42	Have Mercy on Me Psalm 51:1-5:19
43	Praise the Lord Psalm 103:1-103:22
44	Godly Wisdom Proverbs 1:1-4:27
45	Proverbs of Solomon Proverbs 16:1-18:24

THE PROPHETS	
46	The Suffering Servant Isaiah 51:1-53:12
47	Jeremiah’s Call and Message Jeremiah 1:1-3:5
48	Daniel in the Lion’s Den Daniel 6:1-6:28
49	The Story of Jonah Jonah 1:1-4:11
50	The Day of Judgment Malachi 1:1-4:6



## NEW TESTAMENT

THE LIVING WORD	
51	The Word Became Flesh John 1:1-1:18
52	Gabriel’s Message Luke 1:1-1:80
53	The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-2:40
54	John the Baptist Luke 3:1-3:20
55	Baptism and Temptation Matthew 3:13-4:17

THE TEACHING JESUS	
56	Sermon on the Mount - Part 1 Matthew 5:1-6:4
57	Sermon on the Mount - Part 2 Matthew 6:5-7:29
58	The Kingdom of Heaven Matthew 13:1-13:58
59	The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-10:37
60	Lost and Found Luke 15:1-15:32

THE MIRACLE OF JESUS	
61	Feeding the Five Thousand Luke 9:1-9:36
62	Walking on Water Matthew 14:22-14:36
63	Healing a Blind Man John 9:1-9:41
64	Healing a Demon-Possessed Man Mark 5:1-20
65	Raising Lazarus from the Dead John 11:1-11:57

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
66	The Last Supper Luke 22:1-22:46
67	Arrest and Trial John 18:1-18:40
68	The Crucifixion John 19:1-19:42
69	The Resurrection John 20:1-21:25
70	The Ascension Acts 1:1-1:11

THE CHURCH IS BORN	
71	The Day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-2:47
72	Growth and Persecution Acts 3:1-4:37
73	The First Martyr Acts 6:8-8:8
74	Sharing the Word Acts 8:26-8:40
75	Good News for All Acts 10:1-11:18



THE TRAVELS OF PAUL	
76	The Road to Damascus Acts 9:1-9:31
77	The First Missionary Journey Acts 13:1-14:28
78	The Council at Jerusalem Acts 15:1-15:41
79	More Missionary Journeys Acts 16:1-20:38
80	The Trip to Rome Acts 25:1-28:31

PAUL TO THE CHURCHES	
81	More than Conquerors Romans 8:1-8:39
82	The Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:16-6:10
83	The Armor of God Ephesians 6:10-6:20
84	Rejoice in the Lord Philippians 4:2-4:9
85	The Supremacy of Christ Colossians 1:1-1:23

PAUL TO THE LEADERS	
86	Elders and Deacons 1 Timothy 3:1-3:16
87	The Love of Money 1 Timothy 6:3-6:21
88	Good Soldiers of Christ 2 Timothy 2:1-2:26
89	All Scripture is God-breathed 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8
90	The Coming of the Lord 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

THE APOSTLES’ TEACHING	
91	The Most Excellent Way 1 Corinthians 13:1-13:13
92	A New Creation in Christ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6:2
93	A Living Hope 1 Peter 1:1-2:12
94	Faith and Works James 1:1-2:26
95	Love One Another 1 John 3:11-4:21

THE REVELATION	
96	A Voice and a Vision Revelation 1:1-1:20
97	Messages to the Churches Revelation 2:1-3:22
98	The Throne of Heaven Revelation 4:1-7:17
99	Hallelujah! Revelation 19:1-20:15
100	The New Jerusalem Revelation 21:1-22:21

# Studying a Biblical Text

## Bible Reading: Matthew 18:1-5

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me"*

### 1. What is happening in the reading? Try this:

- ◆ Identify the characters by name.
- ◆ Identify the words and phrases that seem significant to you.
- ◆ Identify the emotions or feelings that are expressed by the characters.
- ◆ Identify the plot and theme of the reading.
- ◆ Consult a commentary that will help you discover if there are any important details that a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader would likely miss. For example, the word that Jesus would have used for child is synonymous with the word slave. Jesus is not instructing his followers to become childish; he is telling them to become humble, powerless and dependent. This childlike or slave-like disposition, not arrogance or selfish ambition, is the path to Christian greatness.

### 2. How is the happening in the reading present in today's world? Think about:

- ◆ Newspaper stories about murders that are committed for personal or financial gain
- ◆ Corrupt politicians who are more concerned about selfish desires than service
- ◆ Television programs that glorify selfish ambition at the expense of harmonious relationships
- ◆ An unbalanced competitive spirit that compels some people to cheat to get to the top

### 3. How is the happening in the reading present in my life? Examine this:

- ◆ What characters do I like/dislike in the reading?
- ◆ Why do I like particular characters?
- ◆ Why do I dislike particular characters?
- ◆ How do I see what I like and dislike in my own personality?
- ◆ How do I compete with others in my life?
- ◆ What is my definition of greatness?
- ◆ Am I willing to be dependent upon others? Why or why not?
- ◆ Am I willing to hand my life over to God in the way that a young child must be dependent upon a parent? Why or why not?

The critical task here is to discern how the Word of God that you discover in the Bible is also calling you and guiding you outside of the Bible in your daily life. When we develop an understanding of the Word of God in the Bible, we are then in a privileged position to seek out and follow Jesus, the living Word, with more confidence in our daily experiences. The Bible helps us to clarify in our minds the identity of Jesus so that we will recognize him when he presents himself to us in every moment of every day.

# Reading the Bible with Heart

Select a Gospel story with lots of action (e.g., a parable or healing story) to “read with heart.” A few examples of Gospel stories are listed below. You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

## Reflection

1. Read the Bible passage slowly.
2. Read it again and pay attention to any verses that draw their attention.
3. Identify an attention-grabbing verse that really settles in your heart.
4. Write that verse down on a piece of paper or file card or note, and carry it with you through the day or week.

# Reflective Bible Reading

1. Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. (See the list of “Scripture Passages by Topics” list if you need help.)
2. Choose a comfortable place where you will not be interrupted.
3. Light a candle, if possible. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit.
4. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
5. Acknowledge God’s presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
6. Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
7. Say the words or phrases that struck you.
8. Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
9. Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
10. Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
11. Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
12. Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
13. Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.

# Scripture Passages by Topic

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

- Affliction:** Romans 8:18–25, 35–39; Sirach 2:1–18; John 14:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:12–13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.
- Anger:** James 1:19–21; Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 12:16; Sirach 30:24; Colossians 3:12–13; Psalm 37:7–8
- Charity/Love:** John 13:1–15, 15:9–13; Romans 12:9–21, 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Peter 4:8–10; 1 John 3:11–20; 1 John 4:7–12, 18–21.
- Confusion about God:** Isaiah 55:8–9; James 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:12–13; James 1:2–3; Luke 6:22–23; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10
- Death:** 1 Corinthians 15:19–22; John 11:1–44; Romans 5:12–15; Colossians 3:1–4.
- Discouragement:** Philippians 4:6–8; Psalm 138:7–8; John 14:1; John 14:27; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 94:18–19
- Fear:** John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:1–5; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 43:2; Sirach 34:14; Matthew 10:28
- Forgiveness:** Ezekiel 36:25–36; Matthew 18:15–18, 21–35; Luke 15:11–32.
- Friendship:** Sirach 6:5–17, 9:10–16, 13:1–13; Luke 10:25–37, 11:5–13; John 15:14–17, 20:11–18.
- Happiness or Joyfulness:** Psalm 4:8–9; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 34:6; Psalm 71:23; Isaiah 29:19; Acts 2:28; 3 John 1:4
- Impatience:** Romans 8:24–25; Psalm 37:7–8; Proverbs 25:15; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 5:8–10
- Life:** Isaiah 65:17–25; Genesis 1:1–2:4; John 15:4–7; Romans 6:3–11, Romans 20—23; Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 5:9–13.
- Loneliness:** Psalm 25:16–17; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:13; John 14:18; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:23–24; Revelation 3:20
- Marriage:** Genesis 2:18–24; Deuteronomy 24:5; Isaiah 62:3–5; Matthew 19:3–11; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:22–33.
- Peace:** Ezekiel 34:25–31; Isaiah 2:2–5; John 20:19–26; Luke 24:36–43; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Timothy 2:20–26.
- Physical Illness:** Psalm 103:2–3; Jeremiah 30:17; James 5:14–15; Exodus 23:25; Sirach 31:22; Matthew 10:1
- Sadness:** Sirach 30:21–23; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 4:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Matthew 19:21–22; Isaiah 41:10; Proverbs 15:30
- Temptation:** Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 119:9–11; James 1:13–14; Ephesians 6:10–11
- Thankfulness:** Tobit 12:6; Psalm 107; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 30:13; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 118; Daniel 3:89; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Exodus 18:8–12; Psalm 111; John 11:41–42; Ephesians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:3–6.
- Worry:** Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:34; 1 Peter 5:6–7; Philippians 4:18–19; Mark 13:11; Philippians 4:6

# Praying with the Psalms

The Psalms are the Bible's book of prayer. The Psalms have been used in worship for thousands of years. We often go to the Psalms today for prayer, personal devotion, and for communal worship. Select one of the Psalm passages below that you feel most comfortable with as the focus of this prayer experience. (You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.)

- Psalm 8:1-7 "What is man, that you think of him?"
- Psalm 11:1-7 "I trust in the Lord for safety."
- Psalm 16:1-11 "I am always aware of the Lord's presence."
- Psalm 23:1-6 "The Lord is my shepherd."
- Psalm 25:1-14 "Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive my sins."
- Psalm 30:1-12 "Lord...I will give you thanks forever."
- Psalm 32:1-11 "Happy are those whose sins are forgiven."
- Psalm 62:1-12 "God alone protects and saves me."
- Psalm 63:1-8 "O God....My whole being desires you."
- Psalm 86:1-13a "Teach me, Lord what you want me to do."
- Psalm 103:1-14 "Praise the Lord, my soul!"
- Psalm 121:1-8 "Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do."
- Psalm 139:1-12 "Lord, you have examined me and you know me."

1. Read the Psalm passage you selected in quiet. Read every word, pausing when necessary, in order to let every word present itself to you. Read the words as if you had never read or heard them before. Be open to new insights that may come. Read the words as if they were the words of your own prayer. Whenever you read "I," "my," "me," etc., read it as if that meant you.
2. From the passage you have read, select a phrase, a verse or two verses to be the words you will use to begin your own prayer.
3. Write those words down and then continue writing an additional sentence or two of your own continuing the thoughts and feelings begun by the words of the Psalmist.
4. Here are a few ways you can incorporate praying with the Psalms in their daily life:
  - Read a psalm as you rise each day.
  - Read a psalm as part of your evening prayer.
  - Read a psalm or part of a psalm as part of your meal blessing.
  - When you are experiencing strong emotion, like joy or grief or frustration, flip through the psalms and see which one reflects your own feelings then pray it.



# Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is a way of praying the Scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savor it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally, and aids that union we have with God through Christ.

Use the Lectio Divina experience to guide you into a prayer reflection on a Bible passage and imagining how you will live the passage in your daily life.

Select a Scripture passage that you would like to reflect upon and pray with. This may be a story from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a passage from the Prophets, a Gospel story or parable, or a passage from one of Paul's letters. You can also select the Gospel reading from Sunday worship.

1. **Read:** Read the Scripture passage slowly and purposefully. Reflect on it silently for a few minutes to pray with it and to ponder what it might be saying.
2. **Meditate:** Read it a second time followed by a few minutes of silence. Discover a word or two from the passage that is echoing in your heart or stands out for you in any way.
3. **Pray:** What do you want to communicate to God? What emotions do you want to express to God?
4. **Act:** Reflect on how God is challenging you through this Scripture passage. What is God calling me to do? What is the next step you need to take?

# Scripture Passages for Lectio Divina

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

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- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon's House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
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