

Practical Tips for Reading the Bible

How do you go about reading such a large and varied book? There are many methods. Some read it straight through from beginning to end, from Genesis through Revelation. Some do that every year. Some pick out isolated chapters or verses, perhaps as recommended by a devotional book.

I read the Bible a book at a time. I choose a book and start reading from the beginning. Each day I read until I get something to think about or apply to my life. Then I'll stop and write a prayer in response to that passage. I ask any questions I have, record observations, apply the truth to my life, and pray that God will help me. Then I'll pick up at that point the next day till I've read the entire book. Then I'll choose another book. I make a point of reading all the books of the Bible. You'll be surprised at what beautiful truths you discover in lesser-known books and passages!

What should I do when I don't understand what I've read? You're in good company! Even the most able Bible scholars find much they don't understand. The Bible is unique in its ability to reward beginning readers while challenging even the most experienced readers. When you read something you don't understand, start from what you do understand, no matter how general or obvious. Apply that truth, and build from there.

Then begin to look at what you don't understand. Read the context – the verses before and after. Pray to God and ask Him your questions. Pray for understanding. A study Bible or Bible reference books can also help. For example, many Bibles have other Bible passages footnoted in the center column or at the bottom of the page. Read the passages footnoted to the portion you want to understand.

Most of all, don't be discouraged! Don't worry if you don't understand what others seem to understand. Experts study the Bible their entire lives and don't understand it all. Experienced Bible readers may have read a passage hundreds of time, then they'll suddenly see something they hadn't noticed before. But you can read the Bible for the very first time and begin to understand it.

If you want to know God, He will speak to you as you read, no matter how inexperienced you are. He inspired the Bible so that you can know Him. If you want to know Him, He will show Himself to You. He loves you and is reaching out to you.

*Father,
Your truth is the only truth.
Feed my mind and heart.
Nourish my faith.*