

15 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE READING



Every believer has a deep desire to draw closer to God. Most of us though, after having tried many ways to do this, either give up or just copy other believers. Reading God's Word, however, is one of the sure ways to draw closer to Him and to hear Him speak to you, personally. Following are some guidelines you may consider in becoming more effective in the way you read Scripture.

1. Remember the Bible is different from ordinary books

Whenever you read an ordinary book, you may find yourself completing it within just a few days. But then, the moment you pick up the Bible, you may find it much harder to read without becoming distracted. The Bible is different from any ordinary book and its purpose is explained in 2 Tim.3:16 - *All Scripture 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. Which translation?

Some translations are a bit more difficult to read than others. You may consider reading several translations to uncover deeper, richer meanings behind the original text. The best still, is to choose a specific translation for daily reading. After some time, you can change to another translation. Do your own research for the most accurate or personal choice of translation. Bible translations can be categorised into two approaches.

1) The **word-for-word translations or literal translations** aim to convey the literal meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew texts, in the best possible way. Using a word-for-word translation is helpful if you want a very accurate text. Examples of such translations: Interlinear Bible, New American Standard Bible, Amplified Bible, English Standard Version, King James Version, New King James Version, etc.

2) On the other side of the spectrum you have the **dynamic-equivalent or thought-for-thought** translations. In these translations the focus is on how we will say it today – how we can use modern-day language to best convey the meaning of the message of the original Greek and Hebrew texts. Examples: The Message, Living Translation, Contemporary English Version, Good News Translation etc. The New International Version falls in the centre of this spectrum. (You can [view an infographic](#) that depicts the spectrum of translations.)

3. Find a quiet place and time to read

Be sure to put away your mobile device before you enter your time of Bible reading. Do not be fooled by thinking you will read your Bible on your mobile device! Soon a notification will appear and you will be curious to know who has messaged you or what the notification is about. Any mobile device is just going to be a distraction for you to become side tracked from reading your Bible. Before you know it, 20 minutes will

be gone! In the light of the time social media so quickly consumes, spending 10 minutes reading your 'paper Bible' is really not much to ask.

Distractions are the main reason believers do not get as far as to start and then keep reading their Bibles. Minimise the distractions in your situation; turn off your phone, computer, music, TV etc. If possible, find a quiet place in your home, go to work much earlier, if you have a garden you can sit outside, etc. Just these simple choices will greatly help you in reading more focused.

4. Read with an open heart and mind, and in context

Open your heart to what God is *telling* you through His Word, but also focus your mind or attention to understand *what* you are reading. God is revealing Himself in each verse! Be mindful to read within their context those individual verses that stand out for you. You can do this by reading the whole chapter or surrounding passages. That will help you steer clear of coming to a misinterpretation of a passage of Scripture.

5. Pray as you read

Simply reading Scripture is valuable, but spending time to turn your reading into prayer is even more valuable. So you do not only 'read', but also 'pray'. This helps us to have a more interactive experience during our time with God. It says in Isaiah 55:11 - *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.* So whichever passage you choose to start with, read through it once and then read through it once more, praying every verse in application to a situation that is on your heart. Sometimes you may feel inclined to pray for your family or friends; and at other times to pray for other people or specific situations.

6. Re-write what you read

On days when you are really tired or your mind is filled with many different thoughts and you struggle to focus in reading your Bible, it helps to take a short chapter and simply start re-writing it in your journal. This practice is very valuable when teaching children to focus on what they are reading. It is also a great help in memorising some verses the Holy Spirit puts on your heart.

7. Record what the Lord tells you

As we read our Bible, the Holy Spirit starts to put thoughts into our minds about our own lives regarding a specific passage. Be sure to write down these thoughts and your feelings, and even turn your thoughts into prayers in a journal.

8. Revisit some passages

Just because you have read through the Bible once, does not mean it will not speak to you in a whole new way when you read it again. As we become more mature as believers, reading the Bible touches us in new ways every time we read it again.

9. The focus is on God

God Himself is the focus of the Bible. Therefore, reading the Bible teaches us more about God; His attributes, His character, His names, His actions etc. You can keep a separate journal just to record all these different aspects of the character of God as a study of Who He really is.

10. Invite a friend to read with you

If you know yourself to be weak at keeping a discipline or you struggle to keep up with a specific Bible reading plan, ask a friend to join you and keep you accountable. This also gives you an opportunity to share some thoughts from Scripture with someone else.

11. Invite a Bible study group or a church family

Once you taste and see the impact regular Bible reading has in your own life, you can consider inviting your Bible Study Group or members of the congregation to join you as well!

12. Make a prayer card

You can consider writing down one verse from the passage you read every day on a piece of paper or cardboard. These verses you can stick on your bathroom mirror as a reminder of what God said to you on that day. You can also use this verse in your family devotions, teaching your children to daily meditate on a verse. You can put this 'prayer-verse-card' in your pocket and carry it with you throughout the day.

13. Bible reading plan

A Bible reading plan can be of great help if you feel at a loss of where to start. Pick a simple plan which will be easy to keep up with. You can choose from 'read through the Bible in one year' plans, to focusing on the New Testament, the Gospels, Psalms, etc.

- **From cover to cover:** Here you start at Genesis 1 and continue until you reach the end of the Book of Revelation.
- **Start in the New Testament:** If it is your first time reading the Bible or you are a new believer, start out by reading through the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- **Start with just one book:** The Bible is made up of 66 books. Choose a book which is easy and simple enough to start with, e.g. the Book of John in the New Testament. You can read one chapter a day and then pray through that.
- **Use a devotional:** A daily devotional book can be helpful as well. Most devotionals start with a verse or passage and then give some life application. Remember to also include reading your Bible apart from the verses or passages of a daily devotional.
- **Pick a word:** You can pick a word to study, e.g. *name*. Start by looking up places in Scripture where the word 'name' appears and write down the ones that stand out to you. In this way you can study one subject as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- **Use additional resources:** You do not have to be a Bible scholar to understand it, but some extra tools may be helpful. Invest in a Bible dictionary to start with. There are also several free online resources readily available; www.e-sword.net

14. Be transformed

Reading the Bible with the intention of coming to know the text is important. It is more important though, as we read, to continuously ask the Holy Spirit to show us areas of our lives in need of change. One way to be sure this happens, is to ask yourself some questions after reading a passage, such as: 1. What does this chapter say to me? 2. Why was it included in the Bible? 3. What does it say about God? 4. What does it say about man? 5. What are the things that must change in my life?

15. Persevere, keep reading!

While reading the Bible daily should be a habit for every believer, like all habits it takes time and effort to establish it as an integral part of your daily life. Do not give up if you skip a day or two. Make room in yourself to pause at a specific passage when the Holy Spirit points out something specific to you. Reading your Bible is primarily about building a relationship with God. It is not just a task to check off your list each day. Find the best time to read within your circumstances; it might be early in the morning or late at night. The specific timing doesn't matter; what matters is making it a daily habit.

Draw closer to Him and hear Him speak to you personally, through His Word!