



WIDCOMBE

Baptist Church

WALKING WITH GOD A Spiritual Survival Kit Personal Bible Study

What this session is not about/what it is about

- Not a session on how to teach the Bible
- A session on the importance of reading the Bible personally and how to do so.

The importance of reading/studying the Bible

- For the non-Christian – to bring us to faith
- For the Christian – to enable us to grow in our knowledge of God and enable us to live for God in our daily lives

What the Bible is

- **A library of 66 books** – (OT = 39; NT = 27).

Written by several different authors over a period of 1,600 yrs.

A variety of types of literature (narrative, law, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, parables, letters, genealogy, apocalyptic writings).

e.g. read Luke 15:1-7 = narrative and parable

Charlotte's Bible Story Book - Introduction:

"Now some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what he has done.

Other people think the bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you'll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose), they get afraid and run away. At times they are downright mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a story... There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to

tell this Story. And at the centre of the Story, there is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers his name..."

- In spite of the differences there is an amazing consistency and a single theme – redemption.
- Although written in a different context to our own and in a different age it is amazingly relevant to us today in whatever culture/context we find ourselves.

- **God's Word**

Written by individual men yet inspired by God (God breathed). The Holy Spirit is the author. God's primary means of communication to His creatures (Creation and conscience do not reveal God's nature, purposes, laws and means of relationship to Him).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path"

Psalm 119:105

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"

I Peter 1:21

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

II Timothy 3:16

It is a Word which brings us to Christ and which, having brought us to Christ teaches us how we are to live our lives to His glory.

Effective listening

Since the Bible is God's Word, God speaks to us through it. It is not a dry text book, indeed it is a book like no other book. It is living and active. God speaks to us through his word and we must listen to what he is saying and be prepared to be obedient to what he says to us.

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

James 1:22

It is remarkable how, when we read the Bible prayerfully and thoughtfully, God speaks into our very situations.

"... when the Spirit of God impresses me with a passage in the course of my regular Bible reading, I stop and pay attention ... I believe He wants to communicate with me each day through His Word."

"Warren W. Wiersbe; On being a Servant of God

This is the role of the Holy Spirit – he is the author of God's word. When we read it prayerfully and thoughtfully God speaks to us supernaturally; we engage with him; he feeds our innermost hearts; he communicates with us to the situations of our everyday life.

It is a book therefore that is essential to Christian conversion and to Christian growth. We need to read it diligently and prayerfully. We need to seek to meditate upon it and to seek to understand it. This is not always easy. We need help to do so. Help comes to us in two ways:

- Through the Holy Spirit (author and inspirer of God's Word – also our interpreter)
- Through practical helps – more of which we will consider shortly.

How to read/study the Bible for ourselves

Because it is important to learn about God and grow as a Christian we need to read the Bible regularly – at least once a day. We need to be disciplined – for most of us we will need a structure – a set time and place where we will not be disturbed and distracted. Turn off your mobile/email/etc.

This might sound very strict and legalistic. It isn't meant to be. Sometimes things will rightly demand our attention and disrupt our routine. It is however important that we establish a routine otherwise the regular reading of God's word will not ever be a priority for us.

Depending on our progress we will want to read/study the Bible at an appropriate level but whatever level there are some essential ways in which we must approach in our reading:

- Prayerfully
- Systematically
- Thoughtfully
- Submissively
- Practically

Consider the 'Scripture Union method':

Prepare yourself to meet with God and pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to understand and respond to what you read.

Read the Bible passage, taking time to absorb and simply enjoy it. Listen for what God is saying to you.

Explore the meaning of the passage. Ask yourself: "What's the main point of this passage? What is God showing me about himself or about my life? Is there a promise or a command, a warning or example to take special notice of?"

Respond to what God has shown you in the passage in worship and pray for yourself and others. Decide how to share your discoveries with others.

Different levels of reading/study

The amount of time that we will give to reading God's word and the depth at which we read it depends on a number of factors – our development as Christians, our personal circumstances and different stages of life that we are going through.

Non-Christian and new Christian:

Read Bible once a day minimum but as often as practical.

Resources:

- Bible (suggest New International Version)
- Notebook for writing personal notes, thoughts, questions you don't understand
- Bible reading notes – (e.g. 'Daily Bread' or 'Time with God')

As you develop as a Christian you will want to use more advanced study notes:

Resources

- Bible (suggest New International Version)
- Second Bible (English Standard Version Study Bible), Different translation style (good for comparison), Study Notes, On-line facility
- Notebook for writing personal notes, thoughts, questions you don't understand

Bible reading notes

Good Book Company

'Explore' – "Daily reading notes to help you understand clearly the message and challenge of God's word"

Scripture Union

'Encounter with God' – "Those who want to interpret and apply the Bible in a way that is relevant to the problems and issues of today's world."

These give you a reading for the day, sometimes more in-depth discussion questions, and a Bible reading plan for reading the whole of the Bible in one year.

- Use of 'Search the Scriptures'
- Use of 'The Bible Panorama' – Day One Publications
- Bible commentaries ('Bible Speaks Today' series, New Bible Commentary)
- 'God's Big Picture' – Vaughan Roberts
- 'Briefing' Magazine

As circumstances permit you may want to dig deeper and begin to study the Bible seriously as well as read it.

Resources:

- In depth Bible study guides (Books of the Bible, Topics, Bible Characters, etc) – useful for group work or personal study
- Pillar Series
- Bible dictionary
- Bible Atlas'
- The Essential IVP Reference Collection' – electronic Bible Study resource.
- How to read the Bible for All it's Worth
- How to read the Bible book by book
- 'Digging deeper' - Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach
- Moore College Correspondence Course

Serious Bible Student

Distance Learning Courses:

- Cert H. E. in Biblical Studies and Theology

List of resources

Bibles

New International Version
English Standard Version Study Bible

Bible study notes

Scripture Union www.scriptureunion.org.uk
The Good Book Company www.thegoodbook.co.uk

Search the Scriptures – Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

Bible Study Guides

Scripture Union – Life Builder series www.scriptureunion.org.uk
The Good Book Company www.thegoodbook.co.uk
Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

New Bible Commentary – Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

New Bible Dictionary – Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

New Bible Atlas – Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

The Essential IVP Reference Collection www.ivpbooks.com

The Bible Panorama – Day One www.dayone.co.uk

The Bible Exposition Commentary – Warren W Wiersbe

Bible Speaks Today series – Inter Varsity Press www.ivpbooks.com

The Pillar New Testament Commentary www.ivpbooks.com

How to read the Bible for All its Worth - Zondervan

How to read the Bible Book by Book – Zondervan

God’s Big Picture – Vaughan Roberts www.ivpbooks.com

Digging Deeper – Beynon & Sach www.ivpbooks.com

Briefing Magazine – The Good Book Company www.thegoodbook.co.uk

Moore College Bible Course www.thegoodbook.co.uk

Cert H. E. in Biblical Studies and Theology www.thegoodbook.co.uk