

# FORMED BY SCRIPTURE



the way of truth in a world of lies



Passion Creek  
CHURCH

Formed by Scripture: the way of truth in a world of lies

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# WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

## **The Bible is an amazing book.**

It's a collection of stories, documents, poems, prophecies, and letters written thousands of years ago by a strange cast of people. It's the divinely inspired Word of God, meaning it's how God has chosen to speak and reveal himself to us today. And it's a book with an agenda. Its agenda is to lead us to Jesus, God himself, who has the power to change our lives.

## **But the Bible is also a confusing book.**

Again, it's a collection of stories, documents, poems, prophecies, and letters written thousands of years ago by a strange cast of people. It's ancient, at times archaic, and more than a little troubling to our modern worldview. There's violence and miracles and parables and stories of people doing terrible things and stories of people doing amazing things. It makes bold claims about who we are and what our purpose in life is. And if we read it carefully, it confronts us by making us examine our own thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

So, what do we do with the Bible? How should we read it? How should we approach it? What exactly is the Bible and its purpose in our day-to-day lives?

## **Simply put, the Bible is a collection of writings that all points to Jesus.**

It's a unified library of narratives, poems, and discourses composited into one volume that tells one large story of God's care for Humanity

and how we can find meaning through our communion with him. And that story finds its culmination in Jesus.

But the ultimate purpose of the Bible is not just to relay information. The Bible is meant for our transformation. It's not enough to simply read or even to study it. To get the most out of Scripture, we must allow ourselves to be formed by it.

To that end, this guide is designed to give you a better grasp on how to get the most out of Scripture in your discipleship to Jesus. By reading through this guide and engaging in the practices, you'll be able to understand the story of Scripture, understand the genres of Scripture, and practice being formed by Scripture.

# THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible is one large story. Contained within each book, each narrative, each poem, and each letter are pieces of a grand story that reveal who God is and who we are. In order to best understand the Bible, we must learn to read it as a story.

Here's a basic overview of the story Scripture tells:

## **Creation (Genesis 1 - 2)**

In the beginning, God creates everything. Our world, everything in our world, and everything outside of our world finds its origin in God. In the first pages of the story, God brings life from nothing and calls it good. Every stage of creation, from the physical world to the waters, to the plants and animals that fill the world, to the light that gives life to the plants and animals, is a beautiful reflection of God's goodness and creativity. And the pinnacle of God's creation is Humanity (Gen. 1:26-27).

Adam and Eve, the first Humans, are put on earth in the Garden of Eden as representations of God himself. They're tasked with cultivating creation and reflecting God's goodness and beauty to the rest of the world. And for a while, all is as it should be. There's no fear, shame, or evil present. Humans have full and beautiful communion and fellowship with God, with each other, and they work joyfully to cultivate creation and expand the Garden.

## **Fall (Genesis 3 - 11)**

But soon, evil enters the world. Adam and Eve are given free will in

the Garden. They have the choice to co-rule over the Garden under God's authority, accepting what he says is good and evil. Or they can rebel against God and his rule. Instead of choosing to submit under God's authority, they choose autonomy and seek to rule by themselves. This introduces Sin into the world. But they don't make this decision alone. Eve is tempted by a serpent, Satan, who deceives her and encourages her to rebel against God and seek to rule on her own. Adam follows his wife, and as a result, their relationship with God is broken. Because of their Sin, Death spreads to the Garden, and God banishes them from the beauty and goodness they once ruled over.

This is a pivotal part of the story. In the Fall, Humans introduce sin and disorder into the world. Humanity's relationships with God and with each other are broken, and the three main enemies of the world are introduced: Sin, Satan, and Death.

After being kicked out of the Garden, Humanity is left to spread and inhabit the rest of the world. But as they spread, Sin and Death spread with them. The rest of the story of the Fall, from Genesis 3-11, is all about this spread. Wherever Humans go, Sin and Death go with them. And with each new generation, Humanity's Sin get worse.

## **Israel (Genesis 12 – Malachi)**

And yet, though Humanity spreads Sin and Death throughout God's good creation, God doesn't abandon them. Instead, from the first moment of their rebellion, God seeks after them (Gen. 3:8-9). God initiates his plan to save Humanity from the enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death by choosing a people group to restore his communion with. Israel is meant to be a nation of priests who will represent God to the world around them, bringing the goodness and blessing of a restored communion with God.

But like Humanity in the Garden, Israel fails. Repeatedly. Instead of following God's Law and representing God to the world around them, Israel often repeats the same Sin of Adam and Eve: seeking control and autonomy for themselves. They assimilate with other nations around them, abandon their worship of God for the worship of false gods and pagan idols, and are punished by God. The rest of the Old Testament is the telling of this same story, over and over again: Israel is with God, Israel abandons God, Israel is punished by God, then Israel comes back to God. But throughout all of this, God still maintains his faithfulness to his people by promising a King who will bring about a new Kingdom, where things will be put back to the way they were in the Garden. When the Old Testament ends, the story is left on a cliff-hanger: how will God restore the nation of Israel? How will God restore all of his creation? Who can save Humanity from the enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death? Where is this King?

## **Gospels (Matthew – John)**

The first pages of the Gospels answer the questions raised in the Old Testament. To bring restoration and salvation to the world, God himself comes to earth as a man, Jesus. In the Gospels, Jesus comes to bring the good news of the Kingdom and provide a way for us to be reconciled back to God. He is the promised and long-awaited King, and his Kingdom is a restoration of God's rule and reign here on earth. But this Kingdom isn't like anything that anyone has seen. It's made up of people who do God's will by loving their enemies, serving those around them, and giving their lives to follow their King. This Kingdom is open to anyone who "repents and believes the gospel." This means anyone willing to relinquish control of their own rule and reign and come under the rule of Jesus can have life in the Kingdom. Living the perfect life untainted by Sin and undeserving of Death, Jesus shows us in the Gospels what it looks like to live in this Kingdom.



Each Gospel account tells the story of Jesus from a different angle, but all four of the Gospels describe Jesus' death and resurrection. The final decisive victory over our enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death doesn't come by force. It comes from Jesus allowing himself to be overcome by these enemies on the cross. In his death, Jesus takes our Sin on himself and experiences the wrath of God against Sin, Satan, and Death. But in his resurrection, Jesus proclaims these powers powerless that once held us captive and at enmity with God. By believing in Jesus, we're counted clean and forgiven, and our communion with God can be restored.

## **Church (Acts – Jude)**

Most of the New Testament after the Gospels tells the story of the Church, a new group of humanity empowered by the Holy Spirit. What begins as a small community of Jesus-followers meeting in an attic becomes a worldwide movement of disciples bringing about God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. And as the Kingdom spreads, so does the church. The book of Acts tells the amazing origin story of the Church, and the letters after are all written to encourage, teach, and empower the Church to keep doing what Jesus commanded them to do: spread the Kingdom by inviting people wherever we go to follow Jesus.

When we read these letters in our contemporary world, we learn how we should live as a part of the Kingdom today. We learn how to continue fighting Satan and the Sin that still remains in us. And we learn about how God is still active in the world today through his Spirit. This part of the story is likely the easiest to read, and it has the clearest connection to our modern world.

But we also learn that the story is still incomplete. While we continue inviting others into the Kingdom through the Church, we look forward to the last chapter of the story.

## **Restoration (Revelation)**

In the final act of the story of Scripture, God restores all of creation back to him. Revelation is the last book of the Bible and describes this restoration in great detail. While much of the mechanics of this final restoration is up for debate, the one thing that's clear is Jesus is coming back. And when he does, he's going to right all of the wrongs brought into the world by Sin, Satan, and Death. As a Judge, Jesus will distribute justice and destroy Sin, Satan, and Death for good. Those who believe in Jesus will see the final restoration, while those rejected Jesus will get what they wanted in this life — eternal separation from God.

The final act recorded in the Story of Scripture is a lot like the first. God will recreate the world and everything in it. Revelation 21 and 22 tell us God will make a New Heaven and New Earth where those who believe in Jesus will live forever. It's a complete restoration of what was lost in the Garden: communion with God, fellowship with each other, and all things being as they were meant to be. There will be no more weeping, no more Death, no more pain, no more suffering, and God will be in communion with his people forever.

# GENRES OF SCRIPTURE

If the Bible is a collection of stories, poems, letters, and writings, then that means we have to know how to approach each portion of Scripture differently. When we open up the Bible and begin reading, our first step is to recognize the type of genre we're in.

## The Narrative Genre

Stories play a huge role in Scripture. Over 40% of the Bible is narrative. And narratives are significant because they don't just give us information, they invite our participation. When we read narrative, we naturally look for ourselves in the story. We relate to some characters, we vilify others, and we ask what we would do in the situations described by the plot. Reading the Bible's narratives are meant to be read just like that.

You'll know you're reading narrative in the Bible when you find the three basic elements of story: people, places, and plots.

### **1. People.**

Specific people are described, and their names are often significant. Pay attention to how people in the story react to events, change over time, or interact with God and others.

### **2. Places.**

Places that are given names hold significance in Biblical stories. When Moses encounters God at the burning bush, it's near the same mountain where he'll later receive the 10 Commandments. Natural places, such as the waters and wilderness, also hold significance.

### **3. Plot.**

Pay attention to the basic flow of events of the story. Where is God in the story? How does he interact with people?

The book of Genesis, for example, is one long narrative made up of smaller narratives about specific people in specific places doing specific things. The first half of Exodus is one long narrative as well. So is the book of Acts in the New Testament. When reading narrative, it's important to ask the following questions:

- 1. What elements of the story stand out?**
- 2. What people, places, and symbols are mentioned? Why?**
- 3. How would you summarize the events of this story in your own words?**
- 4. Where is God in this story? What is revealed about the character and work of God?**
- 5. How do you relate to the people in this story? How do you not relate?**

## **The Law Genre**

You'll know you're reading Law as soon as you come across it. It's long, tedious, and oddly specific to life in the ancient world. Law begins in the second half of Exodus and extends through Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers. It covers specific stipulations of how to interact with others, how to atone for sin and participate in the sacrificial system, and how to live a good life in the eyes of God. And while much of the Law has been fulfilled in Christ, there's still some application for us today.

People have understood the Law in the Bible in three categories:

## **1. Ceremonial Law.**

This type of Law details how Israel was meant to relate to God. It includes temple Law and regulation as well as the sacrificial system. The ways that Israel was meant to atone for their sins and restore their fellowship with God are all a part of ceremonial law.

## **2. Civil Law.**

These Laws explain how to live with and relate to other people in the Ancient Near East. For example, most of the Israelites lived as wandering nomadic farmers. Civil law explains how they should deal with disputes and what justice should involve. Civil law is like our modern justice law.

## **3. Moral Law.**

This is the law we still keep today. Think of the 10 Commandments; no one would argue that we shouldn't keep the command to not murder anymore. This type of Law describes how God wants us to relate to him and what it looks like to live a good and moral life in the eyes of God.

When reading Law, consider asking these main questions:

- 1. What does this reveal about my sin?**
- 2. What does this reveal about how I should relate to others?**
- 3. What does this reveal about the person and work of Jesus?**
- 4. What elements of this law are comparable today?**
- 5. Is there a deeper heart issue at the core of this law that still applies to us today?**

# The Poetry Genre

Like Narrative, poetry takes up a large portion of the Bible. Over 30% of the Bible is Poetry. But Poetry has a different purpose than Narrative. Where Narrative invites us to witness God's faithfulness, Poetry invites us to experience God's faithfulness. Where Narrative tells us about God's actions, Poetry invites us to ponder and contemplate God's actions. And where Narrative asks us to see ourselves in the story, Poetry disarms us and allows God to communicate with us on a deep and intimate level. Poetry makes up the entire book of Psalms but can also be found within other books such as Exodus 15, 1 Samuel 2:1-10, and Luke 1:46-55.

When reading Poetry, look for these three common poetic techniques:

## **1. Metaphor.**

The Biblical authors often use word pictures rather than just words. For example, God isn't just strong, he's my rock (Psalm 18:2). Pay attention to what is being compared, and look for the deeper truth behind the metaphor.

## **2. Repetition.**

Look for repeated words, phrases, or themes throughout the poem. These will indicate the main idea or message of the poem and will allow it to connect with you on a deeper level.

## **3. Contrast.**

Biblical authors will often contrast one idea with another. Psalm 1, for example, contrasts the way of the wicked with the way of the righteous. The righteous person is set apart by their delight in God's Word.

When reading Poetry, consider asking these questions:

1. What words or phrases are repeated throughout?
2. What is the context of the poem? Does it disrupt the flow of a narrative?
3. What metaphors are used, and what do they describe?
4. In what ways can you relate to this poem?
5. What truth in this poem can I reflect on the rest of the day?

## The Gospels Genre

The Gospels are four different accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They tell the good news that Jesus is Israel's long-awaited Messiah who ushers in God's Kingdom and opens it to all. They are carefully constructed and intelligently designed narratives that tell the story of Jesus.

The Gospels have two goals: To tell us about Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection in a faithful way, and to persuade us to believe in him by adopting his lifestyle and following him and his teachings as disciples. Each of the four Gospels are written by different people for different purposes:

**Matthew** — Writing to the Jews, describes Jesus as a fulfillment of Israel's covenants, prophets, and ultimate King.

**Mark** — Writing to emphasize Jesus as the Messiah who brings about the Kingdom by way of paradox; he must suffer and die.

**Luke** — Writing to emphasize the good news that Jesus brings for all the nations by fulfilling Israel's prophecies.

**John** — Writing to emphasize and demonstrate Jesus' humanity and divinity, and his primary characteristic of love.

When reading the Gospels, use these tools to help you.

**1. Pay attention to repeated words and ideas. How are stories presented in a certain gospel linked or related? What is the author trying to communicate to us about Jesus?**

**2. Pay attention to how people respond to Jesus. How do they relate to him? Where do you see yourself in these people?**

**3. Reread verses, sections, and entire Gospels. The Bible is meant to be meditated on until it consumes our minds, penetrates our hearts, and comes alive (Psalm 1, Hebrews 4:12). Don't worry about quick, surface level application; let the text bring you to Jesus and get to know him.**

## The Letters Genre

The New Testament Letters (also called epistles) are unique in that they're written by specific people directly to other specific people. In other words, when you read most of the New Testament, you're reading someone else's mail.

But even with the specific context of each Letter, as a part of Scripture the Letters address how we should think, live, and act today.

The Letters of the New Testament begin with Romans and end with Jude. Here are some tips to put into practice to help you read the New Testament Letters:



**1. Read Letters as a whole. Pay attention to the overall flow of thought of the letter. What topics, issues, doctrines, and ideas are brought up by the author?**

**2. Determine the context. Who's writing the letter? Why are they writing? What's happening at the specific church or group that the author wants to address?**

**3. Determine the main idea of each paragraph. Trace the main ideas of each portion of the letter together to get an idea of the main argument being made. Pay attention to the logical flow of each individual section, and look for repeated words, themes, or ideas.**

**4. Find the modern application. What is the main truth being communicated here? Do the issues addressed also occur in modern churches? What is my role in these issues? What does this letter highlight about the Kingdom, the heart of God, or my own heart?**

## **The Prophecy Genre**

Biblical Prophecy is easily the most confusing, and perhaps most misused genre of Scripture. Most of it occurs in the Old Testament (Isaiah through Malachi), which means that the prophecies predicted have mostly passed. But in the New Testament, there are passages that some argue haven't happened yet. Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation are the most notable examples.

When reading prophecy in the Bible, here are some things to keep in mind:

**First, prophets act as spokespeople on behalf of God, not fortune-tellers.** Their primary job is not to predict the future, but to critique God's people by speaking on God's behalf.

**Second, the prophets rarely predict the distant future.** Instead, they focus on what might happen as a result of Israel's sin.

**Third, the main task of the prophet was to keep Israel in line** by reminding them of God's promise and God's law. Should Israel stray from God's law, God would punish and discipline them. But they also point the people toward hope, especially hope that would be fulfilled in Jesus.

As you read Prophecy in the Bible, use these tools to help you:

**1. Identify the sin that the prophet is critiquing. The role of the prophet is to critique God's people and encourage them to repent. What sin does the prophet point out? Is there a modern-day equivalent for God's people?**

**2. Identify the punishment that God is warning about. What is God's primary concern when it comes to this specific sin? Is there a modern warning for God's people who commit this sin today? What hope does God promise, and how is that hope fulfilled in Christ?**

**3. Identify the correct course of action God's people should take. What does repentance look like for the specific sin being addressed? Is it about the love for God, or the love for our neighbor? What should God's people put into practice today as a result of this prophecy?**

# HOW TO READ SCRIPTURE

## Some Quick Tips

### 1. Time.

Pick a consistent time to read Scripture when you're awake and alert, not likely to be distracted, and that you can commit to every day. The goal is to build a habit of coming to God's word consistently so that it remains a regular part of your schedule.

### 2. Place.

Pick a consistent place where you can read every day. It could be in a chair by a window at home, an office or a desk, or your favorite spot in the living room. Try to be alone, and most importantly, leave your phone alone! A consistent time and place is dependent on the season of life you're in, so don't feel guilty if you're not able to read in a quiet room with a cup of coffee or tea at your side every day.

### 3. Plan.

It's helpful to have a plan in mind when beginning your journey through Scripture. If you get behind on your reading plan, that's okay! Consider skipping what you've missed and jumping to the day's reading. Better to miss out on a few chapters of Leviticus than miss out on Scripture altogether. Bible plans are available everywhere online, but we suggest you begin with the bookmark we provided with this booklet.

### 4. Pace.

Some people prefer to set a reading pace over a reading plan. Rather than having an allotted portion of Scripture to get through each day, consider setting a timer for 10, 15, or 30 minutes and reading your Bible until the timer goes off.

# Memorization

Putting the Bible to memory can be challenging. For most of us, memorizing Scripture either sounds pointless or old-school. What benefit does memorizing the Bible have for us today when we can simply Google a verse we want to know?

But memorizing Scripture might be one of the most powerful ways to get the truths of the Bible to sink deep from our heads to our hearts. Humans are largely cognitive beings, meaning that our lives and experiences are shaped by the things we give our minds to every day. We're formed by our thought life, and usually not for the better. Where most of us give the most mental attention and energy to our work, our to-do lists, or our anxieties, memorizing Scripture invites us to turn our attention regularly back to God's word. When we memorize Scripture, we combat the way of the world around us with the reality of God and the way of Jesus.

To truly know God and his word, the Bible must become like second nature to us. As easily as we recall conversations, song lyrics, arguments, or movie quotes, we should recall Scripture.

Jesus himself shows us what this looks like. When he's tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus fights back with Scripture that he had memorized. In order for us to fight the lies of the enemy, and to truly submit to the authority of God's word, we must learn to make Scripture a part of our entire beings.

Use the next page to put memorization into practice.

## **1. Choose a passage of Scripture to commit to memory.**

It could be one you're already familiar with (John 3:16-17, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:12-13, etc.) or one that has deep meaning to you (Galatians 5, Matthew 5, Romans 8).

Whatever passage you choose, start small! The goal is to get God's word into you, not to get through God's word.

## **2. Choose a method to start memorizing:**

**1. Write the verse(s) down on one side of an index card and the reference (ex, John 3:16) on the other side. Carry this card with you and look at it throughout the day. Build a habit of reading God's word during small moments of waiting rather than checking your phone.**

**2. Write the verse in routine places throughout your house—on your bathroom mirror or on your fridge, or even as the background on your phone. As you move throughout your house and come across the verse, cite it out loud to yourself.**

**3. Spend 5-10 minutes each day writing the verses out on a scrap piece of paper. Try looking up the verses less often the more times you write them out.**

**4. Use an app such as Verses or Dwell on your phone.**

## **3. Practice memorizing in community.**

Ask a friend to participate in this practice with you or hold you accountable. If you're doing this as a Together Group, hold each other accountable and recite the verses you've memorized at the start of each discussion.





## Large Portions

There are many ways to approach Scripture, but as our culture evolves and our attention spans decrease, one way of reading is becoming less and less common. Much of the Bible was meant to be read in large portions at a time, often in community and often out loud. For example, it's widely believed that much of the Old Testament narratives and stories were passed down orally. People would sit and tell the story of Abraham as a whole, or the story of Joseph and his brothers. And when the New Testament letters would be delivered to their church, the community would gather around to sit and hear the letter read in its entirety.

There's nothing wrong with reading the Bible in small doses. Meditating on a verse at a time, singing a Psalm, or dissecting a phrase from the New Testament are all key practices. But something is lost when we abandon the ancient practice of digesting long passages of God's Word at a time in one sitting.

By reading large portions of Scripture at one time, we're able to notice things that might slip past us by reading a verse or two at a time. We get a broad picture of the sweeping narrative of the Bible, and we see how each book plays a role in telling us the grand story of God. We also see how each part of the Bible relates to the other parts, and we learn how to recognize themes and ideas carried across the whole of the story from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

Use the next page to put this to practice.



### **1. Get Comfortable.**

Make sure you're in a place, position, and posture to be still, attentive, and open to God.

### **2. Pick a Passage.**

Consider finding a Narrative to read, or work your way through an entire Letter. Here are some suggestions to get you started: Genesis 1-3; Ruth; Psalm 119; Matthew 5 – 7; John 18 – 21; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; James; 1 John, 2 John, & 3 John.

### **3. Invite the Holy Spirit.**

Take a deep breath and settle in. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you listen. Also, ask God to form you through what you read.

### **4. Read.**

Spend time to read the entire text in one sitting. It might help to put on some instrumental music, or to read the text out loud. As you do, don't get bogged down by details. If there's something small you don't understand, take note of it to look up later and then move on. The goal here is not total comprehension of every subtle reference in Scripture, but rather a broad understanding of the sweeping story of Scripture.

### **5. Prayer.**

After the last verse is read, don't rush to get up. Take a moment in stillness, letting the words reverberate. Ask God if there's anything He wants you to do, think, or feel in light of what you just read. He might prompt you with an insight, a conviction, or a word of encouragement. After a few moments, pray to thank God for the experience of reading the Bible as a story.





# Meditation

Everybody meditates. Everybody ponders ideas, thoughts, events, tasks, worries, and anxieties every moment of every day. Meditation is simply what you give your mind to. And most of us give our minds to things that are shaping us into anxious, depressed, and lonely people. But God has designed us for more than this.

In Psalm 1, the Psalmist compares the person who doesn't meditate on God's word with the person who does. The word "meditate" in Psalm 1:2 is the Hebrew word "hagah". It literally means to moan, growl, or chew. It's the same word used to describe how a lion mumbles and growls to itself as it's gnawing on a piece of meat on a bone. The one who delights in God's word is always thinking about it, pondering it, working through it, and allowing it to form and shape them.

When we learn to sit with Scripture, to slow down and add the practice of meditating on God's word, we give the Spirit space to form us into people shaped more by the truths of Scripture than our daily worries and anxieties.

There's an ancient way of reading Scripture meditatively called *Lectio Divina*. To practice *Lectio Divina*, prepare to set aside 20-30 minutes in a quiet and distraction-free environment. While any passage of Scripture can be meditated on, some are easier to start with than others. Here are some suggestions: Psalm 23; Psalm 100; Isaiah 55:1-3; John 15:1-7; Matthew 5; Romans 12.

Use the next page to put meditation into practice.

### **1. Prepare to meet with God.**

Turn your phone off. Get in a quiet, solitary place. Take a few moments to still yourself before God. Quiet your mind, heart, and body by taking a few deep breaths and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide you.

### **2. Read the passage slowly and carefully.**

Take your time, and then read it again. Get a general feel for the passage, the main ideas it is communicating, and the flow of thought. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words, phrases, and ideas draw your attention in unique ways.

### **3. Reflect.**

Read through the text again, this time pausing at each word or phrase that stood out to you before. Allow the text to connect with you personally. Consider pondering some of these questions:

- 1. What resonates with your particular season of life, your personality, or your general thoughts and emotions?**
- 2. What do you need to know, do, or be in light of this text? What does this mean for your life today?**
- 3. Is there an invitation in this word, phrase, or idea? Is there a call?**
- 4. Does a memory surface? What image comes to mind? What feelings are evoked?**

### **4. Respond.**

Talk to God about what you're reflecting on. How are you responding to the promptings from the Spirit through God's word? Where do you feel joyful, resistant, or hesitant to obey God's direction?

### **5. Rest**

Before ending this practice and moving on with your day, pause for a moment to sit quietly in the presence of God.





# STUDY

To become a follower of Jesus is to become a student of his Word. And to become a student of his word means we have to be familiar with it. We memorize it to make its truth second nature, we read large portions at a time to know the grand story, and we meditate on it to get it deep into our hearts.

But sometimes, Scripture needs to be studied. We need to wrestle with an idea, look at the context, learn about the genre, and work our way from the text to our daily lives. To read and reread a passage, determine its context, and find modern day meaning is the practice of study.

The practice of studying Scripture is similar to the practice of meditating on Scripture, but in studying, we approach the Bible with our minds. We use our cognitive abilities and external resources to dig up the meaning of a text. Sometimes, we might use a Bible dictionary, a study Bible, or a commentary. Other times we might talk about confusing passages with friends in our community. Regardless of the process, the end goal of studying Scripture is always to gain a better understanding of who we are and who God is. We seek to know God because God wants to be known. And in studying Scripture to know God, we learn what he desires and how we should obey.

Use the next page to put study into practice.



### **1. Read — What does it say?**

Notice where God is represented in this passage. Read the passage closely and carefully. Take note of anything that stands out: specific words, contextual issues, names, repeated phrases, etc. The goal is to see what the text is presenting, not focusing on what we want to be there.

### **2. Reason — What does it mean?**

Why did the author write this, and what values and ideas are being promoted? Look up any confusing words, phrases, or questions you have. Look also at the surrounding context of the passage.

### **3. Reflect — What does it teach?**

Where am I represented in this passage? What can I learn from this passage about God, humanity, myself, or the nature of life? Focus on a few key words, phrases, or verses to meditate on and memorize the rest of the day. This repetition helps the truths in Scripture sink into our hearts by creating a chemical reaction at the synapse of your neurons. In other words, you can literally rewire your brain to center itself on Scripture.

### **4. Respond — What should I do?**

What does God want you to do, think, feel, or change as a result of this passage? Spend a few moments talking to God about what you've read, and give God a few minutes to stir your heart toward actions. It's important to allow a few moments of quiet stillness and silence in order to make room for the Spirit to guide you to a new attitude, action, or behavior.

# ***REFLECTIONS***

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# RECOMMENDED READING

## **Biblical Theology**

by Nick Roark and Robert Cline

## **Eat This Book**

by Eugene Peterson

## **Shaped By the Word**

by M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

## **Taking God at His Word**

by Kevin DeYoung

## **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth**

by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart

## **Read the Bible for a Change**

by Ray Lubeck

## **Come & See**

by Jonathan Pennington

## **The Bible Exposition Commentary**

by Warren Wiersbe

## **NIV Application Commentary**

## **CSB Study Bible**



We don't read  
Scripture to  
mark off tallies  
for God; We  
read Scripture  
to mark out  
time with God.