

How and why do I read the Bible – a quick guide

This talk came out of the need to do a quick overview of how and why to read the Bible. Initially for a church on a Sunday morning. I also took along lots of books and physical examples of DVDs, CDs, books, Bibles, hip-hop audio Bible, web links etc so people had a visual clue to the kinds of things that are available to help you read the Bible and the get the most from it.

Why read it?

1. Because it's God's Word and the main way he speaks. Want to hear from God? Read God's Word! Want to get to know God? Read what he says about himself and about the world!

For example we don't know much about Shakespeare but if we read what he has written then we get to know the man behind the Book. With God we also have the Holy Spirit in us who reveals God to us, but when we read what God says we get to know what God says!

2. Without it, we will be dry, empty, lacking in strength, power and purpose. Jesus is 'the Word' and so our faith without the Bible (Word) is like not having Jesus who is the Word! No Bible, no real God life!!

It's a bit like being in the desert without water – you'll start to get thirsty if you don't 'drink' from the Bible!

3. You need to get God's Word inside of you, to be more like God, to know God, to know his will, to understand life, to make the right choices, to find peace and to be all that God has made you to be.

Here's the thing – some people want to be like a certain football player or pop star and copy them. If you want to be like Jesus then get to know him!

4. Whatever is inside will come out – as you get the Bible on the 'inside' of you, the Bible will come out of you, doing all God says his Word will do (Isaiah 55.11).

If you pop a cricket ball into a throwing machine, it will pop out a cricket ball. In the same way when we put God's Word into us, God's Word comes out of us!

5. Jesus said (from Deut 8.3) that man cannot live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Luke 4.4). God describes his Word as milk (1 Peter 2.2), honey (Psalm 119:103), bread (Isaiah 55.10), solid food (Hebrews 5.12, 14).

There are a bunch of foods that we can eat but some of they don't fill us up. Other foods make us eat more of them due to their ingredients. God's Word is very healthy, very nutritious and gives us strength, energy and life.

6. Job says that, "...I have treasured the words of (God's) mouth more than my daily bread' – so in many ways, God's Word is more important than food.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, he didn't say 'hang on I feel a bit weak, I'll have a bite to eat before I respond to you.' Instead he got his energy and his strength from the Word of God.

7. God's Word also has spiritual benefits. Proverbs 4.20-22 says it is health (medicine) to a man's whole body.

One famous speaker had a skin condition that the doctors couldn't treat. Over around a year he 'took' Proverbs 4.20-22 as a medicine (speaking it over himself 3 times a day). Within a year he was completely healed.

8. Psalm 119.9 says that we can stay pure "by living according to (God's) word" and (verse 11) stop any sin against God by knowing that, "I have hidden your word in my heart."

If you're revising for a written exam, hopefully you learn and remember what you need to. Then when the exam comes, you'll be able to write down what you have learned. The Bible is like that but God promises that he'll also help you bringing Bible verses into your mind when needed!

9. It also helps us stay strong and overcome the enemy because, "the word of God lives in you" (1 John 2.14) and enables us to defend against and then attack the enemy (Ephesians 6.17), "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

All of us live because we have a heart that beats on the inside of us, keeping the blood flowing and giving us life. The Word of God is like the heartbeat of a Christian in a spiritual way!

10. It brings and builds faith – Romans 10.8-15 makes it clear that the word is near us, in our mouth and in our heart (quoting Deuteronomy 30.14). Romans 10.17 reveals how to get faith: "Consequently, faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

A good builder has a good foundation and uses the right materials to build the house. If you want to get built up as a Christian (that means you want to grow and stand and stay strong), get the Bible inside you. It's stronger than steel, better looking than the finest oak wood and sturdier than the best brickwork!

11. God wants you to get his word inside of you – John 15.7 – and there are promises attached to God's Word remaining inside of you, eg answered prayer.

If you want to see God's promises come to life, you can pray the Word of God and speak God's words into any situation. Can't get better than that surely!

How do I read and get the Word inside of me?

1. Lots of ideas (below) – doesn't just have to be reading paper Bible.

2. However, reading (if you can read) is pretty essential.

3. Read the Bible every day if practical or read some notes with the Bible in.

4. Find a good time to read / listen / watch something and create a habit!
5. Speak the Bible out loud and make it personal. For example, "By his wounds I am healed" (Isaiah 53.5) or more accurately, 'have been healed' (1 Peter 2.24). Memorise Bible verses.
6. Listen to audio / video / podcasts / YouTube / mp3s from speakers etc.
7. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you before and after you read the Bible. Read the Bible slowly – don't race through it. Pause if God says something. Write it down. Keep a diary of what God says and thank God that he is speaking to you.
8. Seek God when you're reading the Bible for who he is, not just what he can give you!
9. Always read the Bible in the context of the verses around and the Bible as a whole.

Add some of your own ideas...
