

# How to Read the Bible

*For All It's Worth*

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**October 6, 2020**

Class 1: What is the Bible & How Do I Read it?



## Class 1: What is the Bible and How Do I Read It?

### Learning Outcomes:

1. An awareness of what the Bible is
2. An understanding of our place - an interpreter
3. A basic framework for Bible engagement

### Introduction

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*The Bible – banned, burned, beloved. More widely read, more frequently attacked than any other book in history. Generations of intellectuals have attempted to discredit it, dictators of every age have outlawed it and executed those who read it. Yet soldiers carry it into battle believing it more powerful than their weapons. Fragments of it smuggled into solitary prison cells have transformed ruthless killers into gentle saints.*  
– Chuck Colson

#### 1. Some basics for our class

- a. The point of this class is to act as an introduction to Scripture reading.
- b. The course is meant to whet your appetite in order that you would read, interpret and apply scripture. It will not be exhaustive in nature.
  - i. I will provide a bibliography so you can follow up and study more if you wish.
- c. Let's agree to be:
  - i. Participative
  - ii. Dilligent
  - iii. Teachable
  - iv. Prayerful
- d. Housekeeping:
  - i. You will need to register for every class.
  - ii. Notes will be provided for you upon entry to the class.
  - iii. Please adhere to social distancing measures as well as ensuring you are sanitizing your hands before entering and when you leave. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class.
  - iv. Bathrooms are available.
  - v. The entirety of this class will be recorded and put online each week. This is for you if you are unable to make a class, but also for you to pass it on to others!

#### 2. The Overview of the Class

- a. Class 1: What is the Bible & How Do I Read it?
  - b. Class 2: How To Study Well – Basic Tools
  - c. Class 3: Old Testament Overview
  - d. Class 4: New Testament Overview
  - e. Class 5: Journaling & Praying Scripture
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### 3. Introducing the Bible – What is it?

- a. It is a library of books, divided into two Testaments, Old and New. Together they form one story that centres on Jesus Christ.
- b. Holy means “sacred” or “other”; Bible, from the Greek word *biblia* means “books”
- c. Best selling book of all time – over 400 million copies distributed each year
- d. Translated into over 2500 languages; written over a 1500 year span (over 40 generations) by more than 40 authors from every walk of life (shepherds, soldiers, poets, monarchs, scholars, statesmen, philosophers, fishermen, tentmakers)
- e. Written in every place: Wilderness, palace, dungeon, hillside, prison and exile. Penned in Asia, Africa and Europe in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek)
- f. It has 1189 chapters and 31,173 verses
- g. Old Testament has 39 books, divided into:
  - i. History: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
  - ii. Wisdom: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
  - iii. Prophecy:
    1. Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
    2. Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- h. New Testament has 27 books, divided into:
  - i. Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John & Acts
  - ii. Letters: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude, Revelation
- i. It contains the story of God’s people Israel in two covenants (Old & New) under 4 basic headings:
  - i. Creation
  - ii. Fall
  - iii. Redemption
  - iv. Consummation

*The Bible: It's a big book, full of stories with big characters. They have big ideas and make big mistakes. It's about God and greed and grace; about life, lust, laughter, and loneliness. It's about birth, beginnings and betrayal; about siblings, squabbles, and sex, about power and prayer and prison and passion. And that's only Genesis.*  
-N.T. Wright

#### 4. Basic Doctrines of the Bible

- a. The Bible is the revealed Word of God
  - i. “And God spoke all these words.” (Exodus 20:1)
  - ii. God revealed Himself in Jesus. (John 1:1-3, 14) Jesus is the Word. Jesus is God (Hebrew 1:1)
  - iii. The Eternally youthful word of God
- b. Inspiration: The writers were inspired
  - i. 2 Peter 1:16-22
  - ii. 2 Timothy 3:16 – *theopneustos* – “God breathed...”
  - iii. Revelation 1:1-3
- c. Illumination: We are energized through the Holy Spirit to understand the Scripture. We need to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit
  - i. John 14:25-26, 15:26, 16:15
  - ii. 1 Cor 2:10-16, 3:1

#### 5. The Nature of Scripture

- a. Theologian George Ladd said: "The Bible is the word of God given in the words of people in history"
- b. Because the Bible is God's word, it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God's word, we must listen - and obey
- c. Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the tension that exists between its eternal relevance and its historical particularity
- d. The Bible is not a series of propositions and imperatives; it's not simply a collection of "Sayings from Chairman God"; it is not “Basic Instructions before leaving Earth”; it is not a “Love letter from God”

#### 6. The Bible Needs Interpreting

- a. The task of interpreting involves the reader at two levels: first, one has to hear the Word they heard [*then* and *there*]. Second, one must learn to hear that same Word the *here* and *now*
- b. Every reader is in the same time an interpreter
- c. Unique interpretations are usually wrong (this is why church history matters so greatly!)
- d. The test of a good interpretation is that it makes good sense of the text
- e. A translation is in itself a form of interpretation
- f. The antidote of bad interpretation is not no interpretation, but good interpretation

#### 7. The Reader as Interpreter (Checking yourself)

- a. Pre-understanding based on:
  - i. Culture
  - ii. Past teaching
  - iii. Past experience

## 8. The Tools for Reading

- a. Good Study Bible
- b. Translations
  - i. Formal equivalent – Word for Word (Ex: ESV)
    - 1. You are left to study the text for yourself to see what it means. These are important for Bible Study
  - ii. Functional equivalent translation – Thought for Thought (Ex: NIV)
    - 1. It takes the words that are there and tries to communicate what the author intended to say through the text. These are good for reading.
  - iii. Paraphrase (Ex: The Message)

ESV	NIV	The Message
Mark 6:37 Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread?	Mark 6:37 That would take more than half a years wages!	Mark 6:37 Are you serious? You want us to go spend a fortune on food?

- c. Bible Reading Plan – search online
- d. Community – we read the Bible best with each other

## 9. A Framework for Reading

- a. Time
  - i. Text
    - 1. Read the Bible and pay attention to anything that stands out
      - a. Words and phrases – ask questions and pay attention
  - ii. Immerse
    - 1. Study the highlighted verse or phrase, by using various Bible tools/software, so you can understand it more deeply.
      - a. Interrogate it: What makes sense? What is confusing?
      - b. Genre: what kind of writing is this?
      - c. Context: what was the setting?
      - d. Sum it up: in one sentence describe what you believe the text is saying
  - iii. Ministry
    - 1. Ask God how He wants to apply this to your life.
      - a. Is there an example to follow (or not)? Any commands to obey? Error to avoid? Sin to forsake? Promise to claim? New thought about God? What is the appropriate response to God at work? How do I help someone else understand this?
  - iv. Encounter
    - 1. Take your learning and application to God in prayer. Journal, pray and listen. Enter into His presence. What does He want to say to you?

## Group and Individual Practice

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- On your own, read **John 13:1-16**.
- Using the **TIME** acronym above, do your own brief study.

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It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup>"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup>"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

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<b>Text</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the Bible and pay attention to anything that stands out</li> <li>• Words and phrases – ask questions and pay attention</li> </ul>	<b>Immerse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study the highlighted verse or phrase, by using various Bible tools/software, so you can understand it more deeply.</li> <li>• Interrogate it: What makes sense? What is confusing?</li> <li>• Genre: what kind of writing is this?</li> <li>• Context: what was the setting?</li> <li>• Sum it up: in one sentence describe what you believe the text is saying?</li> </ul>	<b>Ministry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask God how He wants to apply this to your life.</li> <li>• Is there an example to follow (or not)? Any commands to obey? Error to avoid? Sin to forsake?</li> <li>• Promise to claim? New thought about God? What is the appropriate response to God at work?</li> <li>• How do I help someone else understand this?</li> </ul>	<b>Encounter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your learning and application to God in prayer.</li> <li>• Journal, pray and listen.</li> <li>• Enter into His presence. What does He want to say to you?</li> </ul>