

Bible-Reading Toolkit

A guide for listening to God through Scripture

God gave us the Bible not just to inform us, but to transform us. The voices of faithful teachers through the centuries remind us that reading Scripture is both a spiritual practice and a life-long journey. Here's a way to read the Bible that brings together the best wisdom from John Wesley, Henri Nouwen, Adam Hamilton, and Will Willimon.

1. Read with a Listening Heart (Nouwen)

- Begin with prayer: "Lord, speak, for your servant is listening."
- Read slowly, allowing a verse or phrase to stand out.
- Ask: What word or truth is God speaking to me in this moment?
- Make space for silence so God's Spirit can work in you.

2. Keep Jesus at the Center (Willimon, Wesley)

- Remember: the whole Bible points to Jesus Christ.
- When you read, ask: How does this passage connect to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?
- Let Christ's love and example be the lens through which you interpret everything.

3. Understand the Context (Hamilton, Wesley)

- Learn about the time, place, and culture where the passage was first heard.
- Recognize that some instructions were for a specific moment in history, while others reveal God's timeless will.
- Use trusted study notes, Bible dictionaries, or group discussion to deepen your understanding.

4. Read in Community (Willimon, Wesley)

- The Bible is the church's book—read and discuss it with others.
- Listen for how the Spirit speaks through the voices and experiences of your Christian family.
- Attend Bible study, share insights in small groups, and hear Scripture read in worship.

5. Compare Scripture with Scripture (Wesley)

- Let clearer passages help you understand more difficult ones.

- Keep the “big picture” in mind: God’s mission to redeem the world through love.

6. Live What You Read (All four)

- Don’t just ask, “What does this mean?”—ask, “How will this change the way I live?”
- Apply what you learn to your daily life: relationships, decisions, priorities.
- As Wesley taught, the goal of Bible reading is holiness of heart and life—growing in love for God and neighbor.

Sample Bible-Reading Prayer

Lord, open my eyes that I may see the wonderful truths in your Word.

Open my ears to hear your voice above all others.

Open my heart to be changed by your Spirit.

Open my hands to live out your Word in love. Amen.

Encouragement for the Journey

Reading the Bible is not about getting all the answers at once—it’s about walking daily with God. Some days will feel full of light; others may feel dry or difficult. Keep going. Over time, the Spirit will shape your heart and mind, helping you “interpret the present time” (Luke 12:56) and live faithfully in it.