

How To Get Better At Reading The Bible (Resource)

*For this resource to make the most sense, read the blog post [How To Get Better At Reading The Bible](#) at jasminpatterson.com

A. Context

1. Author and Audience

Who wrote this book and who are they writing to?

2. Purpose, Themes and Setting

What is the author's purpose in writing? What does the author say within the book about why he's writing it-what prompted him to write, what situations he's addressing, etc?

What are the circumstances the audience is facing? What problems do they have? What questions are they asking about following God, etc?

What do you know about the historical and cultural setting surrounding the events in this book/chapter?

What literary form is the book written in? There are different types of literature in the Bible and that impacts how we properly read and understand each book. Is what you're reading narrative, poetry, a letter, etc.?

Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how questions.

Read the surrounding chapters and verses to grasp what is being discussed or what is happening around the specific passage you are reading.

B. Passage

1. Identify the themes

God's Nature - What does the chapter mention about God's personality/character, His emotions and His actions?

Truths To Believe - What does the chapter mention about doctrinal truths of our faith, words of encouragement that we can cling to, or promises that God has made to His people in His Word?

How To Live - What does the chapter mention about commands or exhortations to obey or sins that we should avoid?

Other - What other things did you learn from the passage that may not fit into those three categories but still stood out to you?

As you go through each chapter or section of a chapter, look for these themes and I suggest you write them down in a journal of some kind.

2. Pray the Bible As You Read

Praying The Themes

Go back through the chapter and take a few moments to pray through those themes highlighted to you in the chapter. (*Note: This works really well for the New Testament letters and for Psalms but may not be as straightforward with other types of biblical literature.)

God's Nature - Turn them into statements of thanksgiving and praise for who He is, and ask Him to help you to know and experience those aspects of His character even more.

Truths to Believe - Thank God for that particular truth in His Word and ask Him to give you more understanding of it and more experience of it in your life as applicable.

How To Live - Ask God to empower you to obey Him in the area that particular instruction is speaking about. Ask Him to reveal to you any areas in your life in which you've not been obedient to Him in that way and if He brings up something, repent and ask Him to help you walk in His ways.

Asking God Questions

Make space to ask God questions about what you're reading in His Word, whether things you don't understand or questions you have about how to apply His Word to your life.

Whatever you learn or whatever thoughts come up in your heart as you read, try to not just "think about them," but to actually verbalize them to God. It's a simple shift that makes your time in Scripture more personal and interactive with God.

C. Application

What is God speaking to me through this passage? How can I apply what I've learned to my life? Ask Him this question and pay attention to what He may highlight. You may already have a sense of this based on doing the steps above, or He may bring something else to mind.

I love this quote from George Guthrie, who wrote *Read The Bible For Life*, about what implementing God's Word into our lives can look like. *"Application can take on the form of tangible action, meditation, worship, or adjusting our theology."* Keep in mind as you pray and gather application from God's Word that applying what you learn from Scripture can express itself in any one of those ways at different times.

Write down your application, pray and ask God to help you live out what He showed you and to give you a chance to apply it within the next week.

D. Questions and Further Study

These are questions you still have and/or topics from the chapter you want to study more later. Write this down so that you can go back to them in another devotional time or extended Bible study time.

Study resources are great for diving deeper into the Word, learning more about the historical/cultural and theological backdrop of certain verses, as well as helping you compare Scripture with Scripture (cross-referencing) to find out where topics you may want to study are talked about elsewhere in the Bible.

Study Resource Suggestions

- *How To Read The Bible For All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Read The Bible For Life* by George Guthrie
- NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible
- Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary
- NIV Life Application Commentary Series
- blueletterbible.org
- biblegateway.com
- biblestudytools.com

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My Bible Highlighting System

Here's the system I use to highlight certain key topics in the Bible and make it easier for me to find them again later. I like to use Crayola Twistables colored pencils to highlight because they don't bleed through the pages. Feel free to tweak the topics you highlight and colors you use and make this your own!

- **God's Nature** (green)
- **Our Identity in Christ** (blue)
- Promises/Encouragement (gray)
- **Prayer** (light purple)
- **Worship** (pink)
- **Sins** (red)
- **Commands** (brown)
- **Holy Spirit/spiritual gifts** (peach)
- **Jesus' first coming**- prophecies/fulfillments (magenta)
- **Jesus' second coming** (orange)
- **Salvation/The Gospel** (teal)
- Trials/Temptation (dark purple)
- **Interesting** but doesn't fit in a category (yellow)