

How to Let the Bible Read You

Reading the Bible is vital to the Christian life. It exposes us to God's most explicit revelation of who He is and what He is up to. To better understand the grand narrative of scripture, it's helpful to ask three main questions of the passage we are reading: What does it say?, What does it mean?, and Why does it matter? As we expound on these questions, hopefully the Holy Spirit will bring new questions to our mind- but here are some questions to help get anyone started!

Begin with Prayer

We can't read scripture without the Holy Spirit. Spend a few minutes in prayer before you get started and ask him to open your eyes.

What does it say? (Comprehension)

You'll need some information about the book of the Bible you are reading. Its context will drastically inform how you comprehend the text. Look for answers to the following questions:

- Who wrote it?
- Who was the primary audience?
- When was it written?
- What else was going on during this time?
- What kind of writing is this? (narrative, poetry, letter, rhetoric, etc.)

You'll also want to pay attention to the details of the passage of scripture you are reading.

- What is the major theme?
- What words or phrases are repeated?
- What stood out or surprised you? ⓘ
- What questions do you have? ⓘ

If you feel like you're having a hard time answering these kinds of questions, consider consulting resources like the ESV Study Bible's introduction to each book of the bible, The Bible Project Read Scripture Videos, a Bible's cross references ⓘ, or a Bible Dictionary/Lexicon.

What does it mean? (Interpretation)

Once you have a good idea of what the passage is talking about, you'll need to get into what it originally meant. We can't get a good grasp of how the Scripture applies to our lives right now if we don't know what it meant for people back then! Try to think through questions like:

- What do you think the original author was trying to get across?
- What do you think was most important for the original audience to hear?
- What does the passage tell you about what God is like?
- What does the passage tell you about what God is up to?
- What does the passage tell you about human nature?

If you feel like you're stuck, consider looking at some commentary on the passage in an ESV Study Bible or a commentary series like *Christ Centered Exposition* or N.T. Wright's *The Bible for Everyone*

Why does it matter? (Response)

After you answer the first two questions, think about how the Bible causes you to respond to the Truth of this passage.

- What emotional response is this passage trying to stir in me?
- How does this passage challenge me to trust in God?
- How does this passage challenge what I believe?
- How is this passage freeing me to repent?
- Is there something in my life that needs to change in light of these passages? Who can I share my response to this passage with to hold me accountable?
- How could I pray for myself and for others in response to this passage? ⓘ
- How does this passage cultivate worship in me?

When we truly abide in Scripture, it will transform us and produce good works in our life. It can often be difficult to translate the truth of Scripture into action though. Know that beyond our personal interaction with Scripture, this will be done more fully in the context of biblical community. We encourage you to take the time to share these things with the people in your Gospel Community group and other believers you are close with.